

St James Church TAUNTON

St James' Church Magazine

December 2026 - February 2027



Letter from the Vicar

Rev Fabian Wuyts

As Advent and Christmas draw near, churches across the nation will be exploring the first and greatest gift of Christmas.

'For a child has been born for us, a son given to us…and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'
Isaiah 9.6 (NRSVA)

This precious gift calls us all to **celebrate**, for it is a gift available to all no matter your background, language, social status, achievements, wealth or importance. It does not wait for you to improve, get your life in order or be in a good place. It is a gift freely given while costly to the giver. The angels' message to the shepherds says it all: 'Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.' (Luke 2.10) Good news of great joy is worth celebrating.



Like any gift, it must be **received** to be enjoyed. A gift left on the table, beneath the tree or in the giver's hands cannot be ours. It needs to be unwrapped and welcomed. The same is true of Jesus. As John's Gospel puts it, 'To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.' (John 1.12)

When we receive this gift, we are invited to **respond**. The shepherds, having seen the child, returned glorifying and praising God (Luke 2.20). Their joy moved them to action. Our response may take many forms: worship, prayer, service, generosity, or a willingness to follow where Jesus leads.

And what we receive is also something to **share**. The shepherds told others what they had seen and heard (Luke 2.17). We too can share the good news. We share it with our words and through the welcome we offer, the compassion we show, and the hope we carry into our neighbourhood.

As we enter Advent, I've been thinking about the rhythms of grace we have explored together as a church. How might we keep growing in the rhythm of celebrating and receiving his presence, responding to his leading and teaching, and sharing his gifts, blessings and promises with others?

Each part of this rhythm matters. Receiving without responding can fill our minds while leaving our hearts unchanged. Celebrating without sharing can stir our feelings without strengthening our witness.

So, this Christmas, as we draw near to God through Jesus and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, may we be a people who celebrate his love, receive his grace, respond to his call and share his hope.

With every blessing for Advent and Christmas.

Fabian

(See also David Manning's article about how we present ourselves to others, how we share the gift of Jesus. And Bishop Michael has written about the gifts also: see the Bishop's Letter on page 5 – Ed.)



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Many thanks to all the contributors to the Magazine. If you have something to share for the March - May 2027 edition, do contact the Editor - details on page 44.

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Several articles in this edition talk about the gift of Christmas, CofE's theme this year. But there are also some ideas of activites you can get involved in during Advent - Simply Pray has a candle-lit session and you can 'do' an Eco Advent! David Smith has contributed an interesting article about events in the Christmas story, espcially the significance of the dreams.

There are obituaries for two stalwarts of St James and you can also read about a visionary past vicar writiing in 1946. In addition, there are a couple of articles challenging the way we present ourselves to others in an ever changing world.

It is good to have reports about what younger members of St James' are up to - thank you to all those who work with them, the future generation. Our regular articles keep us up to date with the more ongoing activities. Do read as there is some important information in them.

We look forward to 2027, to a new Lent course with Simply Pray and a new Murder Mystery evening from St James Players. But, for now, all that remains is to say...



Ed.

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.org***

The views expressed in the magazine may not necessarily represent those of the Editor or those of St James' Church



DIOCESE OF
Bath&Wells

Living the story. Telling the story.

Letter from Michael Beasley
Bishop of Bath and Wells

There is no better gift

Anthropologists study human culture. Among their studies is gift exchange – of how within human societies, gifts are given, received and reciprocated. Volumes of academic theory have been about how we give and receive gifts and why. Much more practically, gift exchange is what most of us are engaged in this month. We've the Christmas shopping to be getting on with!

Our tradition of giving and receiving gifts at Christmas lies in the story of the Magi who brought to the infant Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Our practice originated in a desire to reflect in human lives the Magi's story. In the past, this happened on the day after Christmas. That's why it's called Boxing Day.

For many of us, giving and receiving gifts at Christmas is something fraught with feelings of hazard. Have I got the right thing? Have I bought for the right people? Have I spent too much or too little? We know that sinking feeling that happens when someone gives us a gift and we've not got them something to offer in return. I wonder if our challenge at Christmas is to recalibrate what we think we're about. For look at the Christmas stories and you'll see that carefully calculated reciprocity isn't their concern at all. Rather what happens is that people receive the gift of Jesus and it turns their world upside down. The shepherds experience outright glory, joy and wonder. The Magi offer homage. They give to the infant Jesus their very hearts.

For both shepherds and Magi, the result of receiving the gift of Jesus is not that they give back, but that they are sent out. The shepherds make known what has been told to them about the child. All who hear them are amazed. The Magi return to their own country. I doubt they kept their experiences a secret when they got there.

We can't hope to match what Jesus gives us. What we can do is receive the gift of his life, love, joy and wonder and pass it on to our loved ones and the people we meet. There's no better gift we can give than that.

Michael Beasley
Bishop of Bath and Wells

It is a Road

It is a road, whether grassed, lane-green & draped
with wild strawberries bountiful, sweet to the taste,
or tarmacked, puddled & cantankerous with stones,
pot-holed, heavy-paved or dusted with dandelions,
but always before us, a Star:

here may be poplar & plane; perhaps our way is hugged
by chestnut, fed by hawthorn & hazel, or guided
by the thoughtful oak, the road rowan-lined; sometimes
it is a hollow way, murky with fern, moss-cushioned,
but always above us, a Star:

some roads are starred with cyclamen, daffodil-drilled,
& we are lit with rose & toadflax, cuckoo pint,
cow parsley, hips, haws & great droops of elderberries,
hedges to shelter, blackberries to nourish, & butterflies.
but always ahead of us, a Star:

sometimes palms rattle their stories in the breeze,
the sand's path shifting, warm or gritty underfoot,
cacti sentinel the wilds, boughs of mustard chatter
with birdsong, cedars evening-glowing, fragrant cypress,
but always leading us, a Star:

as we walk, we gather fellow-travellers along the way,
peel off to find ourselves in dead-ends, mazed, seemingly
trapped on unfamiliar tracks, up to our knees in floods,
scaling mountains' unforgiving hides, or stumbling, valley-hearted,
but always shining for us, a Star:

despite dusk, despite nettles & thistles, our hearts pricked
by the world's words & shabby misdealings, we follow His star;
ditch-stumbling, wind-beaten, hungry or well fed, there is more
in the light than the shadows: the Spirit holds steady, unwavering,
always guiding us, His star:

& our goal, where all our hearts' footsteps tend, is a stable, lit
by a brighter hope than torches or brash claims – by Love
Himself, the Creator of both star & path; though heaven-high,
the Beloved yet holds out His hand in grace to lead us,
monarch or infant, home at last.

Philippa Johnson



The first Simply Pray meeting in 2027 is Saturday 16th January 10.30-midday as part of St James' Prayer weekend



The Famous Old Boy

The town I grew up in had a higher and a lower village about one and a half miles apart. The lower village once had a stream running under the road but that was covered in by at least 1880. Just beyond the railway line it had drained into a marsh that William Lever drained to build his factory village to house the workers at his new soap works. It has 900 houses built in the Arts and Crafts style laid out as a Garden Village. It is said that every chimney stack has its own design. His collection of artworks in the Lady Lever Art Gallery are now part of the National Gallery system. But my main memories are of the 30 yard wide fountain pool in front of the gallery where we would sail our model yachts in the summer holidays, and the swimming pool heated by the waste heat from the soap factory cooling systems.

The lower village had four roads running into it. From the east, the old Chester road came down the hill past the Mayer Library, the butcher's and the pub. It continued over a small hill towards the station. The history of the area is preserved in the shared name of the two roads – 'The Village'. The third road Acre Road was the route of the stream that fed the former marsh and the bridge over it for Village Road is buried under over 10 feet of earth and tarmac. The 4th road runs downhill for over a mile, draining a vast area of 1930's and 1950's housing as well as the grounds of the local grammar schools.

The Wirral Grammar School for Boys has a famous 'old boy' who became Prime Minister in the 1960's. When his appointment was announced, the former deputy head master was living across the road from my uncle who was in year 1 when Harold Wilson was head boy. The deputy head rang my uncle's doorbell and as the door opened he couldn't contain his excitement. 'Brown' he expostulated, 'isn't it wonderful that an old boy of the school is Prime Minister?' My uncle was taken aback to be addressed as though he was still a pupil at the age of 40.

However, he recovered himself and invited the deputy head into the house as the hallway had 3 of those yard-long school photographs showing all the pupils and teachers. They looked at the one with Harold Wilson as head boy, then the mood changed as the deputy head began to identify the boys on the photograph who had not survived the war. Some killed in the bombing of Merseyside and other towns, those killed in action, in training exercises and some by infectious disease.

After about 20 mins my uncle pointed out what every boy in the school knew. 'Roley' was on both ends of the photograph. The photograph was taken by

forming the pupils in a curve and the camera was rotated by a motor and at the same time the film was slowly wound on. It took several seconds to turn the camera around the whole line up. Roley has been on the left-hand end and had quietly sprinted behind the school to appear at the other end. Had he been caught he would have got six of the cane across his backside and been expelled without a school testimonial. Severe punishment indeed!

The deputy head master's reaction over 35 years later was to EXPLODE. Why did he not know? Why was he not told? My uncle relished being the one who broke the news to him.

The village centre had some stones set in a brick wall. One read 'take 45 from 45 so 45 remains' I leave it with you to work out how you can do that.

The other stone had a series of letters. Can you decipher the message?

AR
UBB IN
GST ON EF
OR AS
SES

I'll give the answers in the next edition. Have a puzzling Christmas.

Andrew Wright



Eco Advent is an exciting project devised by Bath and Wells that combines the spirit of Advent with their commitment to the environment. This year they invite you to join them on this eco-friendly journey to the manger.

Every day, as you count down to Christmas, explore ways to reflect on and appreciate God's creation, and share simple actions you can take to care for it better. Through Eco Advent, make each day leading up to Christmas meaningful, both spiritually and environmentally. Get ready for a green and spiritual adventure! To find the resources you need, go to:
https://bathandwells.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/the-eco-advent-downloadable-document-1.pdf

Restarting...



Back in May, we showed the People's Emergency Briefing film at St James[1] and this clearly struck a chord with many in the church. Our PCC responded and considered how we might best use this response to reinvigorate our approach to creation care. In October, they agreed to endorse and be guided by the five key commitments from the A Rocha Eco Church survey[2]. These are:

Worship and Teaching category: Our church recognises and teaches that creation care and action to address the climate and nature crises are integral to Christian faith, life and worship and has made a visible commitment to A Rocha UK's Eco Church award scheme.

Buildings and Energy category: Our church has recognised the climate and nature crises and the fundamental injustice these represent. We have committed to reducing our carbon footprint year-on-year, in line with our denomination's commitment to net zero (if appropriate).

Land and Nature category: Our church recognises the significant contribution churches can make to the UK's target of 30% of land protected for nature by 2030. We have established a plan to manage our land for nature to help us do this in the most impactful way.

Community and Global Engagement category: Our church recognises the impact of the climate and nature crises and has a plan or strategy to take action locally and/or nationally and/or globally.

Lifestyle category: Our church has a strategy or plan to promote ethical and environmentally aware consumption patterns by individuals and households.

PCC also endorsed the formation of a reconstituted Eco Group, asking that they assess the impact of achieving the good practice necessary for gaining an award and to then bring more specific recommendations to them in the New Year.

The key here is the good practice; we are not simply looking for an award for

[1] There is more information about the film at https://www.nebriefing.org/ if you missed it.
[2] You can find details about the whole survey at https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/eco-church-survey/

its own sake. The primary aim is to improve creation care within the everyday practice of St James, and then to use the Eco Church survey to measure and evaluate the quality of our practice.

An Eco group…

Almost a decade ago, when we first looked to what we could do, we felt that a formal group might not be appropriate but saw ourselves more as a network of those working in specific areas. However, it feels that a more structured approach would be right for our current situation to best respond to the PCC's request.

Through this we hope to resuscitate our work to support creation care and help St James, collectively and individually, address the current climate crisis. Could you be part of this? We're not looking at lots of meetings, rather that any proposals can come with a collective voice. Interested? Please get in touch with me.

So, who are A Rocha?

A Rocha UK (https://arocha.org.uk/) is a Christian charity working to equip Christians and churches to protect and restore the environment – for God, nature and all people. They aim to inspire and equip both individuals and churches, build partnerships and both manage land for nature and people and support other Christian land-managers.

As well as educational resources, they publish worship materials for the Season of Creation (Creationtide) each year. Eco Church, with which we have had involvement for some years, is a further expression of their work in this country. They describe it as a learning community of churches of all shapes and sizes which can provide a framework to support a church and its leadership to take practical action on caring for God's earth.

A Rocha UK is part of a worldwide network of A Rocha groups working in more than 20 countries in six continents: Ghana to Switzerland; Peru to Lebanon.

Richard Carpenter

Nativity Stained Glass Windows

I've always been fascinated by stained glass windows in churches. They tell stories, commemorate events or people and often reflect the social activities, clothing and the artistic styles and designs of the time.

The cover picture of the Magazine is part of the east window at St James'. It shows the Nativity scene – Mary holding the baby Jesus, shepherds to the left and Magi to the right, adoring the child and bearing gifts. This window was donated by the Liddon family in memory of Louisa Liddon who died in 1858. Apart from its dedication to Louisa, it was also '...designed to promote the Glory of Almighty God...'

In past times, the purpose of these windows may have been, in part, to educate the then illiterate church-goers and were something lovely to look at perhaps during boring sermons! Mediaeval glass has survived in many churches and cathedrals; it can often give clues to contemporary dress and activities. Some modern windows show more abstract work designed to let the viewer interpret the image for themselves.



This window from the small church of St Nicholas in Corfe is from around the same time as our window, this shows a similar interpretation and style. Mary is shown in a red dress rather than the 'traditional' blue but there are shepherds and wise man. No angels – but it is a very small window...



Compare both these with the glass in Birmingham Cathedral by Edward Burne-Jones. Again mid-late 19th century, this one is in the Pre-Raphaelite style. Visually more dynamic, the roof of the cave in which the holy family is placed is set at a steep angle, dividing it from the outside world shown above where the shepherds are told of Jesus' birth by the angels. There are no wise men here – they arrived on the scene later. There are also no animals in the cave – a stipulation of the benefactor, who also wanted no oxen in the scene at all; she thought them to be too 'brutish'.



In Barcelona, the magnificent stained glass in Gaudi's Sagrada Familia is much more recent and shows the more modern, abstract style of window. Gaudi chose the colours before he died in 1926, decades before this part of the nave was even built: morning light on this side passes through blue and green glass, evoking dawn and new life, matching the birth of Christ carved into the Nativity facade on the front of the cathedral.



Around the summer solstice, morning sun lines up almost perfectly with these Nativity side windows, throwing pools of blue and green light across the columns and floor. To show this effect on a smaller scale, I took my photo of the east window when the sun had moved slightly from the east – look at the stones to the left of the glass. In some churches, these cascades of light create an abstract but enthralling pattern, and this is spectacular in Barcelona (much more so than my photo!). At Le Calvere in Brittany there's a very simple window. It lights up the floor of a cave in which is also a statue of the holy family.



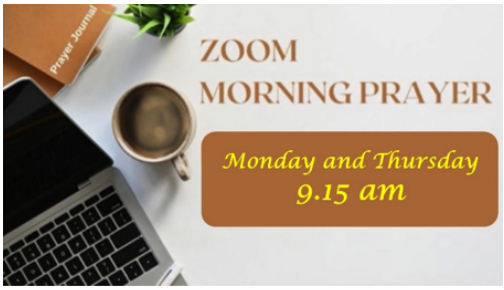
Many windows are so detailed it is sometimes difficult to take it all in (it's a good idea to take a pair of binoculars when looking at large, high up windows). But perhaps that's what the medieval craftsmen were about. Keep the viewer occupied, give them detail so they can find the story for themselves.

There's not a great deal of stained glass in St James', but the east window is particularly important showing both the birth of Christ and, above it, his death on the cross. To quote from Jenny Wakefield's lovely booklet about the windows at St James' (copies available at the back of the church):

> *The story of Jesus is central to what we believe as Christians: 'God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten son that whoever believes in Him shall have eternal life' – John 3:16. This is a simple but profound statement summarising the Creator of the Universe's deep compassion for mankind.*

I would urge you to navigate past the screens in the chancel to go and look at the east window and marvel at the craft, but also at the message that it gives especially at Christmas time.

CD



Zoom in - Get lifted!

Join us for Morning Prayer on Zoom

- *every Monday & Thursday at 9:15am.*
- *30 minutes to start the day with God and each other.*

On the front page of the St James' website, scroll down until you see this picture and follow the instructions.

Online Morning Prayer at St James' began back in 2020 during the early days of the Covid lockdown. It was the brainchild of Nicky Bradford and still continues every Monday and Thursday at 9.15am. It lasts approximately 30 minutes and it's so easy to join via our website – see the instructions above/below

It has evolved over time but the essentials are still there – those gathered share God's word and pray around the framework of the C of E Daily Morning Prayer. It includes reading the Psalm of the day and a passage from the Old and New Testaments. This is followed by a reflection on the readings by whoever is leading (usually Fabian) which is then opened up to whoever has joined. Anyone can add their own insights which I find so enlightening. We have a time of shared prayers for what is on our heart before ending with The Lord's Prayer.

The pace is gentle, giving time to ease into the day and I'm sure I am much better at listening to the Word read to me as I have grown in confidence to share what He's saying to me from the pages of the Bible. I do believe my day is brighter for the time I've shared in the company of our small caring group and would encourage you to 'click the link' and give it a try.

You can catch up with talks from previous events on the Bible Reflections page. Well worth a listen too!

Lyn

LENT SCAPES

LANDSCAPES OF PENANCE, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Rooted in the Gospel of John, we invite you on a journey of looking, listening and learning from the world around us

Through scripture, global voices and stories from diverse landscapes, we offer Lent not as a season of heaviness but as a path of honesty, healing and renewed hope

Each session runs from **10:30 - midday**
in the Side Chapel at St James' Church
(next to the County Ground)

Thursday 18th February
Thursday 25th February
Friday 5th March
Thursday 11th March
Thursday 18th March

Those of any faith and none are welcome to join us

For more information contact:
Lyn 07772 881463 or
Felicity 07508 287808
or go to: **stjamestaunton.org**

SIMPLY PRAY
St James Church Taunton TA1 1JS

Image of an icon at Alnmouth courtesy of
The Society of St Francis - www.spiritoffrancis.com

Obituaries

Joan Cobb



On Friday 24th September we said farewell to one of the living stones of our church family, Joan Cobb. Joan was one of those quiet gentle people who radiated her Christian faith and was a joy to spend time with.

Joan and her husband had led a busy life prior to her retirement to Somerset. Both had people-centred careers, John in the YMCA and Joan as a teacher and educationalist. She had been at the forefront of the development of communications systems for children with additional needs. They had three children, living in Wales, Argentina and Somerset, and Joan was an active and involved grandparent, including visits to Buenos Aires.

Joan and John moved into Pegasus Court around 2009, but sadly John died only 6 months later. However, Joan had a strong sense of God's hand and purpose in her life having experienced a series of 'God-instances' that had directed her and John. She felt a sense of peace about the future, finding that she had confidence to speak about her faith and what it meant to her.

Joan first came to St James' on a dark, wet and windy night for an evening service with only a handful of people there; but remarkably one of them was Edward Hosken, the son of old friends from her Norfolk days. Yet another God-instance. Friendships and a sense of belonging and purpose followed. She helped with coffee, Messy Church and school services right up to the Covid epidemic. Into her eighties failing health led her to go into a nursing home nearer to family and where her quiet faith and joyful spirit made her a popular resident. She will be greatly missed but remembered as a shining light for Jesus.

Jenny Wakefield

Arthur Drowley

In 1962, when Arthur became vicar of St James, you would not have recognised the church which had drifted from its evangelical tradition. He came in like a breath of fresh air, or perhaps a sweeping gale. In his time lay ministry became important, not just in the team of Readers, but also in so many groups where lay people volunteered and were allowed responsibility. He had links with the South American Missionary Society and so began our links with foreign missions, including Pastor Christopher, a Sudanese minister, who we lost trace of during a time of persecution; unfortunately continuing to this day. Our missionary support was then, as now, organised by lay people.

While he was here the church use of drama began. His sons were involved in a production of 'Godspell' and there were other uses of this medium. In his second year there was a parish ramble on Easter Monday, a tradition which has continued with

only a couple of years' gap. When the dreadful snow of 1962/63 meant that only a few Sunday school teachers turned up for the morning service, the group adjourned to the vicarage and talked about what could be done for teenagers. The church has had a ministry amongst them ever since, and he would be pleased to see our new appointment of Youth Pastor.

Above all it was that Arthur valued the Bible, basing his ministry and that of the church on it. I would also point to the number who began their Christian journeys as a result of his personal touch on their lives, whether it was baptising their child or preparing them for marriage. I must not forget the work of his wife, Doreen, who was ever ready to talk with those needing a sympathetic ear. The St James' of today owes much to Arthur Drowley.

Mike Gillingham



Arthur Drowley and 'the football team'

At the service where I announced Arthur Drowley's death, there was some interest in the photograph, so below is more information. How many of these faces do you remember?

Back row left to right
Bob Rhodes, still alive and worshipping in Wellington.
Lesley Grimwade, ordained in 1979 with encouragement from David Saville (a previous vicar at St James and Rural Dean of Taunton North until 1980), retired to Taunton for his last years.
John Dykes, ordained around the same time and again retired here for his last years.
Ken Cleves was a reader here until his death a few years ago
John Foster-Turner, an architect who played a large part in re-ordering the church in the 1980s and died a while back.

Middle row left to right
Mike Gillingham, still serving at St James'!
Peter Witchell, retired back to his native Yorkshire.
Brendan Crosskery, left for Newfoundland and I gather became head of RE there.

Front Row left to right
Horace Brentnall, was a Reader under the previous vicar but remained, despite the change in churchmanship, and continued to serve faithfully.
Rev Arthur Drowley, vicar from 1962 until 1973.
John Harewood, once Head of English at Richard Huish, ordained, again at the instigation of David Saville. He retired to Budleigh Salterton for his last years.

I might believe in your Redeemer if you looked more redeemed...

I have known Christ in my life from a very early age. However, a wise Christian said to me the above words in my teenage years; not about me but about others who called themselves Christians. This is, I believe, so important in the 'image' we give off to others. Andy Hall was talking about 'impact' in his article in the previous edition of the Magazine. *(see also Lilian's article last time – Ed.)*

So often people have remarked on my smile and, indeed, I find as I walk through Taunton people who I don't know smile back at me! Also, a smile will sometimes open up a conversation with others quite by chance.

When I watch 'Songs of Praise' on television, I very often wonder if the words they are singing actually come from the heart! The faces very often look miserable and, as I have said to others, they look constipated. Now please don't think I am being crude or vulgar. Remember what God said through the prophet Malachi when the priests were all 'show and no substance':

> *'Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will smear on your faces the dung from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it.'*

The priests' faith and obedience were not just to be seen by what they did but by the inward motivation and commitment. We are now God's 'priests' and as Paul tells us,

> *'We all...are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.'*
>
> (2 Corinthians 3:18)

In the Sermon on the Mount we read Jesus preaching about 'salt' and 'light'. Have you ever thought why they are put in this order? 'Salt' is first because, just by you being there, those around should be affected without a word ever being said. 'Light' is only allowed to beam out the

gospel verbally to others because it has already been seen in that person. It is no good trying to share the gospel if the inward joy of being a Christian does not show itself without a word. Remember the quote attributed to St Francis of Assisi, *'Preach the gospel at all times; if necessary, use words.'*

So...look at Songs of Praise, look at members of our congregation, look at those leading our services, look at those in the worship group and those reading the lessons! Do we look redeemed to those who are strangers and come within our walls? Over the years, very sadly, I have introduced four persons to St James' who never came back because each said that nobody spoke to or smiled at them! Indeed, there are still some in our Church family who will walk past me on a Sunday without a simple, 'Hello!'

'Preach the gospel at all times; if necessary, use words.'

Each of us from time to time has problems but that should not prevent us from still radiating the Spirit within. James tells us to 'count it all joy...' (James 1:2-4)

Also, Google search says it takes six muscles to smile and thirty seven to frown! Whatever our situation, good or bad, and I have had many difficulties in my life and my family's life, God shows His 'peace' (John 14:27) through our obedient reaction to Jesus' command not to 'worry' (Matthew 5:7) by our faces.

A genuine smile, not a put on grin, can, I believe, do wonders in sharing the good and precious news which our Lord has entrusted us with in His generous and gracious love and confidence. We are indeed His children, 'Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.'

David Manning

Christmas is weird - what other time of the year do you sit in front of a dead tree and eat sweets out of your socks?



image courtesy of coolhewitt23 at rgbstock.com

How Does St James' 'Do' Mission Support?

There have been some changes to our mission partnerships recently, so this article provides an explanation of what's involved.

Our financial commitment
We have long committed to give at least 10% of our stewardship income (including Gift Aid) to support our partners' work as a corporate expression of our gratitude to our God.

Why do we support mission?
As receivers of God's love and forgiveness, we have a responsibility to share that love as widely as possible in word and deed. This is enshrined in the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican tradition – to Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform and Treasure:

- We seek to be God's people in sharing the good news of Jesus everywhere
- We seek to grow in faith, following Jesus and doing the kind of things he did
- We seek to be with people in need
- We seek to stand up for what is right
- We seek to care for all God's creation

We therefore look to ensure that, between all our partners, we support work across the full range of the Five Marks.

Internationally and Locally
Mission is both at home and abroad, so we work with a range of local and international organisations. Many of our congregation are actively involved in the local bodies we work with, which provides a more dynamic connection. International organisations provide a two-way street:

- providing direct support and giving an insight into God's work on a global scale
- providing opportunities for giving and prayer and a reminder that we are part of the Great Commission to go into the whole world.

Who do we support?
Locally we partner with Open Door, Taunton Besom, Street Pastors, Taunton Team Chaplaincy, Taunton Area Debt Advice, Transforming Lives for Good (mentoring in school) and Taunton Youth for Christ.

Internationally, we prioritise organisations with which we have a personal link. So, we support Action for Children (Uganda), which focuses on children's disabilities; Ruth Preater has an active role. Our long-time support for Tear Fund's relief work continues. There is now a proposal before the PCC that we add SAT-7, which provides satellite broadcasting and online access in countries where it is hard for people to hear the gospel. This charity is connected to the Ascott family, who have connections with St James'. Regarding the 5th Mark of Mission, there is a proposal that we support A Rocha's conservation and education work in the UK; we have engaged with their Eco Church programme for several years.

The PCC's review of our mission partners shows that we need to move on from some of them, for various reasons. Recently we decided to cease financial support to Barnabas Fund and Samaritan's Purse, though we are continuing with the latter's 'Operation Christmas Child' shoeboxes.

How do we keep you informed?
- Each organisation has its own page on our website
- Through the monthly focus slot in our morning services and magazine, and information posted on the mission board
- Having 'champions' in the congregation who provide information, updates and prayer requests

What part can you play?
Prayer is one of the things essential to these organisations, so please do use the prayer diaries and information updates. If you would like to form a specific prayer circle that would be great.

Volunteering in a local organisation is a great way to find out more and really feel involved. The reps will always be able tell you how to go about it.

Jenny Wakefield / Richard Carpenter / Mike Gillingham

"To sleep, perchance to dream…"

The above words from Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' sum up a universal human experience. Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus is no exception.

Matthew tells the story of Jesus' birth briefly, (Matthew 1:18-2:23) concentrating on the essentials. Joseph accepts the explanation for Mary's pregnancy, and the unborn child is described in extraordinary terms with remarkable predictions about his future. The long journeys, taxation and homelessness of Luke's dramatic account are absent. The implication is that Joseph and Mary lived in Bethlehem and owned property there.

After naming the child Jesus as instructed, they seem to have resumed everyday life until the Magi arrived in Jerusalem, naively asking to see the next 'King of the Jews' – hardly a prudent request of a possibly psychopathic, insecure fraud such as Herod. Having ascertained the likely location of the child through a study of scripture by Herod's advisors, the Magi proceed to Bethlehem where they see the child and offer sumptuous gifts that have significance for his future role. Having second thoughts about honouring a deal to report back to Herod, they return home avoiding Jerusalem.

Joseph, suspicious of Herod's intentions, decides to flee to Egypt until the King's death is announced. Although the immediate danger has receded, Herod's dynasty still controls Judea so the family settles in Galilee in a town called Nazareth.

As Sir Tim Rice might have said after penning the lyrics of the hit gospel rock show Joseph with dreams an essential part of the plot, 'There's also lots of dreaming going on' in the Christmas story.

Five dreams are recounted in Matthew's Gospel concerning events surrounding the birth of Jesus. The first concerns Joseph being assured that he should take Mary as his wife; that the child she has conceived was of the Holy Spirit. The second warned the Magi of the perfidy of King Herod and the need to return home avoiding Jerusalem. The third dream was a call for immediate action; Joseph was directed to flee because his family was at risk. All these essential to God's plan. Failure to perceive the importance would have dire consequences. The fourth was an 'all clear' from an angel instructing Joseph to return with his family to Israel. The fifth dream advised settlement in Galilee.

These dreams likely occurred during REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, when our dreams are most vivid. Sigmund Freud used dream interpretation to help patients explore repressed thoughts, often linked to childhood experiences that continued to affect them in later life. In this psychoanalytic view obsessions, compulsions and phobias may stem from confusing or painful experiences in early life. Revisiting these experiences through dreams may help individuals come to terms with intrusive thoughts and adjust their present behaviour.

Joseph's dream regarding Mary may have been based upon an incident involving a woman of his acquaintance who, finding herself pregnant, was cruelly treated. Likewise matters of personal safety for individuals caught up when powerful men threatened may have initiated a dream based upon a childhood experience that prompted flight to a safe place. The warning to the Magi may have had similar origins.

Comparing these dreams with those of Joseph in Genesis – the butler, the baker and Pharaoh – suggests a similar psychoanalytic explanation for their content. Yet without divine intervention we cannot explain how these seemingly random recollections of earlier experiences led to such meaningful outcomes. To our sophisticated modern minds communicating through dreams may seem inefficient. How often do we wake without remembering a dream or, on reflection, dismiss it as nonsense? God needed these individuals to grasp the significance of their dreams and the consequences of their response. Past experiences held in the subconscious reinforced the meaning of the dreams, making His message impossible to ignore. Thus, the Son of God was born and protected in childhood through His Father's work with chosen men who happened to be dreamers who took their dreams seriously.

The prophet Joel (2: 28, 29) had it thus: 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days.'

Once again, God reveals that He not only created all things but also governs their workings, including the processes of the mind.

David Smith



image Roman Samborskyi/shutterstock.com

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

As I write this, the news on my radio is talking about the threats of Artificial Intelligence, or AI for short. Some designers of AI are warning about the dangers of unregulated progress with AI.

AI is defined in the dictionary as, 'Software used to perform tasks to produce output previously thought to require human intelligence, but using machine learning [i.e. computers] to extrapolate from large collections of data.' I only get a general idea of AI from this, and have no expertise in it, so please feel free to disagree with this article!

Some of the dangers of AI are alleged to be:

- If left uncontrolled, AI could cause extinction of the human race in 10 years;
- AI is 100 times more intelligent than the cleverest human being;
- AI could design viruses to attack humans which are resistant to any known antibodies;
- AI could destroy jobs on a massive scale.

On hearing this, I felt threatened and angry, particularly on behalf of younger people in society. I felt powerless, too. I don't remember voting for AI at any election!

But…wait a minute…it's said we shouldn't believe everything we hear in the media. In that case, you may wonder what's missing from this list. People with faith may ask, 'Where does God, our creator, come into this?' Indeed, people without faith may be curious whether God comes into this.

Perhaps we should be asking the fundamental question: 'Is mankind at the centre of everything, or is God?' The Bible says we are all made in the image of God. Pierre Tielhard de Chardin, the French priest and philosopher captured this when he wrote: 'We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.' News reporting seems to disregard this fact.

These days it's very common to hear people say we live in an increasingly unstable world. Climate change, nuclear weapons, wars, and now AI are mentioned. How good it would be to explain in our own words that, as Christians, we believe God and Jesus have the answer.

‘Artificial’ is first word in the title of this article. Human progress does not always depend on being rational. I assume AI works by being rational. Some of the great achievements for humanity have been from people using their skills. AI may be able to copy what human beings have designed in the first place, but the creativity of each human being is an unique gift given by God. We should be ever thankful for that.

In the Garden of Eden, the first humans, Adam and Eve, were deceived by the serpent into believing they could become like God, knowing everything. They were tempted by power. To me, AI feels like a similar temptation if it falls into the hands of people with evil intent.

How does the Bible give us comfort in the face of these various threats to our civilisation?

Although AI obviously didn’t exist in the 1st century AD, in a way I think Paul’s letter to the Romans, Chapter 12 verse 2, had something to say about it. He writes:
‘Don’t copy the behaviours and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how pleasing and perfect his will really is.’
I think by machines learning what humans do and think, AI copies the behaviours and customs of this world. If so, that’s a real concern.

We are blessed by having a God who doesn’t even think like us, and has our best interest at heart. We can’t begin to compare what we may describe as ‘intelligence’ in the human sense with his thoughts and ways. God spoke to Isaiah (Chapter 55 v8) saying, ‘My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.’

We are not powerless in the face of threats, like AI and others. In the sermon on the Mount Jesus said, ‘God blesses those who realise their need of him.’ I suggest we pray that those people who are developing and making decisions about AI will realise their need of God. Because the promise is that God will bless them.

And we can pray for opportunities to talk to our non-Christian friends about the hope we have in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit for our uncertain world, because deep down they know it’s in a mess.

Andy Hall

A prayer for our time

Father, we come to you in a time of volatility,
a nation fractured by politics, a church at risk
of confusing your kingdom with our tribes.
Forgive us where we have reached for a flag
before we have knelt before the cross.
where politics has discipled us more
than you have.
In the noise, keep us God-centred, not
politically positioned,
kingdom-oriented and not culture-war focused.
Let our first loyalty be to Christ, and
Him crucified, not to any party,
platform or nation.
Make us brave – willing to speak truth and
stand for justice even when it costs us.
But guard us fiercely from anger dressed up
as conviction.
Where others meet division with judgement
and accusation, let us respond with
kindness, for love, not outrage, is the mark
you gave us to be known by.
Like David before Goliath, let our courage
come not from natural strength but from
knowing you.
Give us discernment to know which battles are
truly yours to fight.
Raise up a generation who look more like Jesus
than like the loudest voice in the room.
In Jesus' name,
Amen

By Steve Uppal, leader of All Nations Church. As printed in the Autumn issue of Idea, the magazine of the Evangelical Alliance.
(Thanks to Martin Wakefield for sending this in - Ed.)

ACTS Uganda – Recruiting New Trustees

Actions for Children's Trust (ACTS) Uganda is seeking new Trustees to strengthen their Board as they continue to grow and develop. If you have a heart for supporting children with disabilities in a majority-world context, they would love to hear from you.

They are particularly looking for a Treasurer: looking after finance, book-keeping, and managing Gift Aid and it would be desirable to have some Charity governance experience.

They seek Trustees who are committed Christians in good fellowship with a worshipping Christian community and who are committed to the aims and ethos of ACTS Uganda, willing to give their time and skills voluntarily.

Send your application to: The Trustees, actionsuk@gmail.com

Ruth Preater-Gillard is happy to give you more information about ACTS Uganda. If you want a copy of the full advert and outline of what's required, contact the Trustees via their email address actionsuk@gmail.com



Ideas of their time

In a quiet moment during our heritage open days in September, I was looking through a copy of a St James' parish magazine from 1946. I was struck by a valedictory letter by Rev Walter Green on his moving from St James prior to Edwin Hirst taking up the position of vicar here.

Much of the letter is an exhortation to the congregation he leaves to keep in mind a matter that clearly had been much on his heart. His focus is on evangelism together with elements of what we have come to understand as every-member ministry.

In this he cites the 1945 report, 'Towards the Conversion of England'. Though focussing on the task outlined in its title, it has much to say about the role of the laity and how their ministry must become central to the work of the church. The report also drew attention to its economic context and the need for structural justice. Though welcomed and applauded at the time it was, sadly, by and large ignored as the years passed. The message it developed would only reemerge as we moved towards the end of the century.

Back in 1946, Walter wrote to the congregation of St James in these words:

> Remember, the clergy are not 'the Church'. They are the officers of the Church, but every one of us is meant to be a living and shining member of the holy fellowship. There was published about a year ago a report on the present condition of the Church drawn up by a very responsible committee specially appointed to enquire into that very matter. It has had an enormous sale, and I have spoken of it several times in my sermons. It is worth close study. It is called 'Towards the Conversion of England'. It carefully analyses the present state of religion in our own country. It is sad reading of the enormous number of people amongst whom we dwell who are almost oblivious of the claims of religion. But is does more than that. It suggests the methods of improvement, and time after time it urges that the means of such reform can only come by the lay members of the church co-operating with the clergy in the fulfilment of the task which lies before us.
>
> It is impossible for the clergy alone to do this work. They are far too few amidst the millions of people that make up our overflowing

> population. The lay people must also bear their part and their witness. This is what was done in the early church, and it was in this way that it had its apparently miraculous success, as the report says: 'The most numerous and successful missionaries of the Christian religion were not the regular teachers, but the Christians themselves, by dint of their loyalty and courage.'
>
> This fact is reiterated several times throughout the long report, and I am sure in this it is correct. We must not leave everything to the clergy. In the army it is not only the officers who fight, but victory comes by every private doing his (sic) full work to the best of his ability and courage.

When reading both Walter's letter and the report he endorses, we must keep in mind that they were written 80 years ago and do reflect the culture of the time. Much though remains true for us today. His words perhaps sound rather like 'come and help the clergy' rather than saying that we all as Christians have our own calling, but remain a strident call to action.

We may think of the church back then having plentiful clergy, but the report notes that 'The basic fact is that the parochial clergy are now all too few.' The numbers may have been significantly higher than today but were themselves a major reduction from the high point of the Church of England in the days just before the First World War when clergy numbers had topped 20,000.

Over the past 50 years or so, we have come to realise that all Christians have a calling from God and a ministry to exercise. It's not just a case of a congregation being more ready to help their vicar. Such ministry stems from an understanding that the primary sacrament of calling and vocation for all Christians is baptism. An idea distilled in the following words from the 2017 General Synod report 'Setting God's people free',

> *'Until laity and clergy are convinced, based on their baptismal mutuality, that they are equal in worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission, we will never form Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.'*

Richard Carpenter

School News

St James' Church School

School terms come and school terms go faster than ever and as the church magazine goes to print St James School will be busy preparing for their Christmas celebrations; services, festive food and events that mark this very special time of year.

Our TLG team of six are in the process of meeting their new coached children, Mike and Fabian have been in to take assemblies and the prayer group has met twice. The school celebrated Harvest in October and it was, as ever, a real joy to see the children packed into the church and to welcome their parents and families who came to join in. The singing was 'roof raising' and the choir had clearly been working very hard.

At the November PCC meeting we were joined by Head teacher, Nigel Johnson, and Chair of Governors, Cerys Randell, who gave an informative update on the school and the challenges and successes that they were experiencing. While the school is full to bursting in the upper form, the lowering birth rate is impacting numbers lower down the school in Nursery and Reception (a factor affecting the whole town). The number of countries and ethnicities represented remains high with many parents coming to the area to work in the NHS or Care sector making for a very rich and diverse community.

Nigel and Cerys warmly welcomed the close links between church and school and involvement of church volunteers. They shared the need to increase the opportunities for activity clubs, particularly at lunchtime, to help children settle better into their afternoon learning. Volunteers from church to help with these would be VERY WELCOME. No experience necessary, although if volunteers had particular hobby skills that would be a plus. Please pray about this and if you are interested please have a chat with David Jordan, Fabian or me.

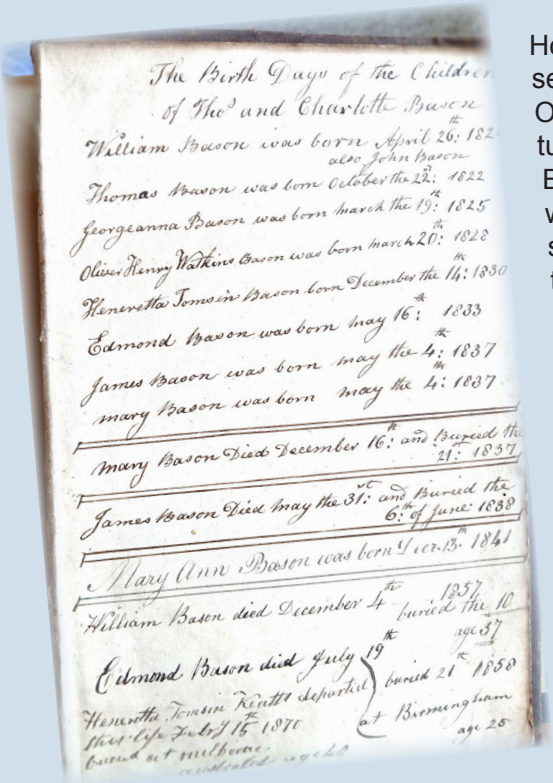


Jenny Wakefield

The Curious Tale of a Well-Travelled Bible



Hidden away in the caretaker's cupboard at St James Church School was an old box, in which were two big, old bibles. They were discovered when the school gave permission for their archive logbooks, photo albums and registers to be deposited in the County Record Office. The bibles, however, were a mystery. There was no known connection to the school, and their dilapidated condition and unknown provenance meant that the Record Office could not accept them.


The Birth Days of the Children
of Thos and Charlotte Bason
William Bason was born April 26th 182
also John Bason
Thomas Bason was born October the 23d 1822
Georgeanna Bason was born March the 19th 1825
Oliver Henry Watkins Bason was born March 20th 1828
Henerietta Tomsin Bason born December the 14th 1830
Edmond Bason was born May 16th 1833
James Bason was born May the 4th 1837
mary Bason was born May the 4th 1837
Mary Bason Died December 16th and Buried the 21st 1837
James Bason Died May the 31st and Buried the 6th of June 1838
Mary Ann Bason was born Dec 13th 1841
William Bason died December 4th 1857 buried the 10
Edmond Bason died July 19th age 57
buried 21st 1858
Henerietta Tomsin Knott departed this Life July 15th 1870 buried at Melbourne age 25 at Birmingham

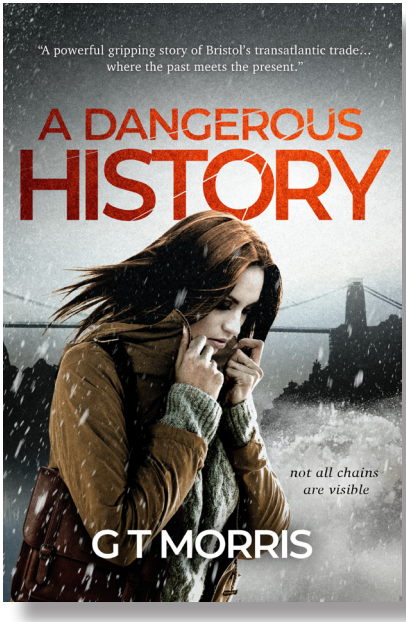
However inside one was a name and a series of dates of births and baptisms. Online detective work through 'Ancestry' turned up a descendant of Thomas Bason, Parish Clerk, to whom the bible was presented in 1837 by his vicar. The school's Headteacher gave permission to reunite the family bible with its family. There was only one problem – the head of the family lived in Australia. "Funny," says our amateur sleuth, "I'm going to Australia in the autumn perhaps I can bring it over and post it." And then we found that our route went past the end of their road, so we delivered it personally! It turned out that they knew there had been a family bible but that it had gone missing; but how it had travelled from the family home in Dorset to the caretaker's cupboard is a mystery! Any ideas?

Thomas Bason would have shared his bible with his whole family, his wife and children and likely read from it to them daily; the family may not have had many other books in the house. Out of curiosity I counted up the number of bibles and new testaments in my house – 18 and there may be more hidden away gathering dust. I wonder what Thomas Bason would have made of that?

Jenny Wakefield

A Dangerous History

Glyn Morris is a member here at St James'. In the past, she has written books for children and now also a supernatural thriller novel. Set across Bristol and Jamaica, it is called 'A Dangerous History' and intertwines suspense, historical mystery and the haunting legacy of the slave trade.



This novel follows Cassie, who uncovers the remains of a house ravaged by fire on the Bristol Channel coastline. Her discovery launches her on a perilous journey marked by eerie connections to local landmarks and the unsettling echoes of Bristol's historical slave trade. Cassie develops a mysterious bond with the apparition of a lost soul, leading her and her husband Mark into a gripping quest to unravel a dark mystery.

Spanning locations from the UK to Jamaica, the story unveils secrets surrounding a slave's malevolent twin and the threat of a looming catastrophe before the New Millennium. The theme of redemption and confronting the past's chains are central, blending historical realities with supernatural suspense.

Critically the novel has been praised for its well-drawn characters, atmospheric storytelling and thorough research into Bristol's history. The book offers both a chilling supernatural experience and a poignant exploration of historical injustices. Readers have said they appreciate the thrilling and haunting narrative that keeps them engaged from start to finish.

Published in July 2023, 'A Dangerous History' is available in paperback and eBook formats and is available on Amazon.

(There are some talented members of St James. In the past we have reviewed books by James Haddell and now Glyn Morris.

If you'd like to find out a bit more about the book, do talk to Glyn, I'm sure she'd be happy to chat – Ed.)

St James Players present

Murder on the Home Front

A Murder Mystery by Andrew Hull

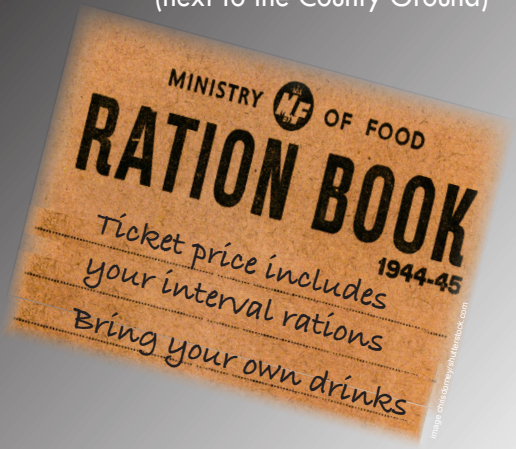


Image: Everett Collection/shutterstock.com

Friday 5th
Saturday 6th
February 2027

Doors open 6:30pm for 7pm

St James' Church, Taunton
(next to the County Ground)



Tickets:
£10 - Adults
£8 - 14-18 year olds and full-time students

from Church Office or 07796248369 or Ticketsource

1940's period costume welcome!

Proceeds donated to Open Door

Huge thanks are due to all those who helped in a variety of roles – refreshments, tower tour guides, historical characters, stewards – at the Heritage Open Days at St James' in September. Thanks also to those who came and brought their friends.



St James' was one of eight places locally which were open to the public. The theme this year was Everyday People which gave a lot of scope to delve in our archives for stories from our past as well as enabling people to meet church members from the present. Visitors were keen to climb the 132 steps of the tower and in doing so were entertained by 'Mr. Chapman', Bellringer and Sexton (aka Rick Bowers), who regaled them with tales from the Victorian era. Down below they were able to meet a Monmouth rebel, a Royalist militia person, Mr Bellchambers or Mrs Montague from the school, the Governor of Wilton Gaol, a master mariner who circumnavigated the world and built Plymouth breakwater, a choir mistress who staged a sit in when she was threatened with replacement, a chimney sweep's wife and a Napoleonic war veteran!





In addition, there was material on the everyday men and women who gave their lives in the First and Second World Wars and a wonderful display by Cherie White on the career of her great uncle, Private Stanley Hartnell. The flower team had also produced a fantastic array of displays on a shoestring budget.



Events like this give a great opportunity to share our story with people who don't normally spend their time in a church. The conversations covered a wide range of topics as our visitors received a warm St James' welcome. Well done, folks.

Jenny Wakefield



Great Wood Away Day

The family away day on Saturday 26th September was for families – members of the church and those 'on the edges'. We went to play and worship together, to build friendships and feel more like a church family. Sixty adults and children included families that have been in the church for years plus some who have joined more recently.

We had a fun time exploring to find stickers at each point of interest, from the archery area to the low ropes and outdoor chapel. There was time to worship and as children rolled dice and made jigsaws, the adults had time to talk around their own discussion sheets. The sun was warm, drying the grass outside and making the picnic lunch very pleasant.

Later there was a walk up the hill and another to explore further in the woods. There was also a large game of 'rounders' while younger children played, used the games room, etc.

All enjoyed the worship and the walk and younger children loved playing in the stream. One lad enjoyed cave man games with a piece of stick which he also used it to play a ball game with me. Children really enjoyed being able to play games with adults or do a puzzle, plus the freedom to play by themselves without structure.

Lilian

Light up the Night

After not having had one for many years, the children's team decided to hold a Light Party this year as Halloween fell on a Saturday in the school holidays. We let church families know and shared the event with the community via Facebook, but we really weren't sure if many people would come. We were delighted to count twenty-three children with parents who attended, and over fifty people in the hall!

It was great to see a number of families that do not usually come to St James' for Children's Church on a Sunday. Some remembered Rachel doing 'Praise and Play' for toddlers years ago (before Covid). They all engaged with the various activities and I chatted to someone I remembered from running toddler group seven years ago. Her daughter is now a chorister at the Minster.

I was busy on the cookery table as the children loved rolling out and cutting their stained-glass biscuits. I did two trays (a six and a four) and later another tray of six. Jenny appeared to be knee deep in pumpkin waste as the pumpkin carving was in high demand. Jo helped the families produce some stunning jars with tissue stars plus handles with beads on them and a battery tea light inside.

There were games and other activities so the halls were buzzing! Families were really appreciative of a space to be that evening. It felt like an event which had been inspired by God and one we'd love to try again.

Lillian (and Rachel)

(Sounds like these were really successful, fun-filled events – Ed.)

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)

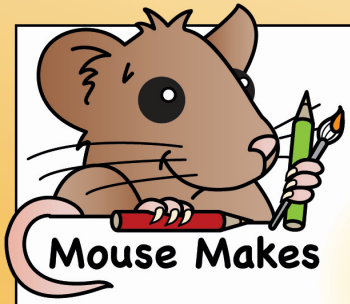
Down

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)

This Christmas, when your family gets together, remember: a certain friction between the generations is inevitable. After all, the young and the old have all the answers and those in between are stuck with all the questions.

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.



JESUS, LIGHT OF THE WORLD!

"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world... to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name He gave the right to become children of God."

from John 1:9-12

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

The Orange
- the world.
John 3:16

The Fruit
- God's goodness and provision.
James 1:17

The Candle
- Christ light, Jesus, light of the world.
John 8:12

The Sticks
- God's love reaches out to the four corners of the world.
Psalm 139: v7-12

The Ribbon
- the blood of Jesus shed for us.
Matthew 26:28

A	D	C	A	N	D	L	E					
E	R	C	H	R	I	S	T	L	E			
A	M	S	O	R	A	N	G	E	O	W	I	
J	E	A	R	I	B	B	O	N	V	G	A	
K	S	V	O	S	L	I	F	E	E	O	D	
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CHRISTINGLE
CHRISTMAS
ORANGE
RIBBON
FRUIT
CANDLE
LIGHT
LIFE
GIFT
WORLD
GOOD NEWS





SAVIOUR
CHRIST
JESUS
MESSIAH
GOD
PEACE
LOVE
JOY
HOPE
REJOICE
ADVENT

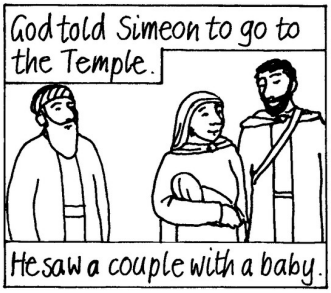
Dec26© deborah noble • parishpump.co.uk

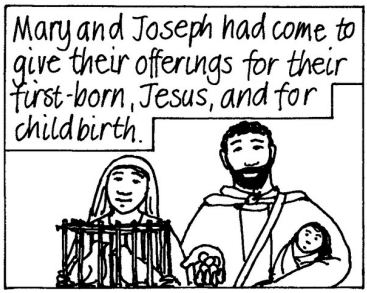
Bible Bite

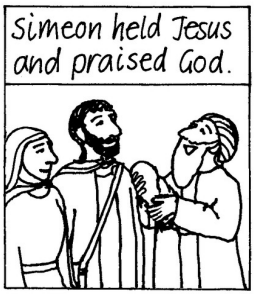
A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke 2 verses 22-38

God promised the Jews that when times were bad, He would send a Leader to save them. He told Simeon it would happen in his lifetime.

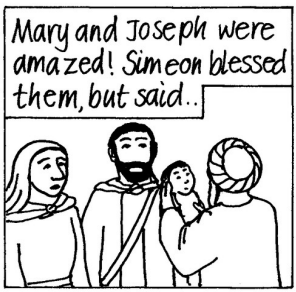












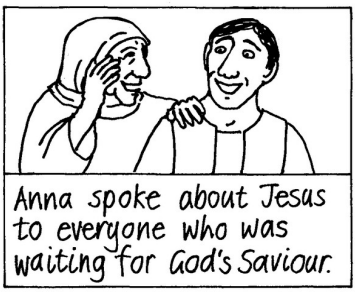














The PCC has been discussing…

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

Youth Church Pastor

The PCC was pleased to hear of the appointment of James Haddell as Youth Church Pastor. This is for one year initially, as James discerns the future direction of his ministry.

Safeguarding

Each month, this section of the PCC meeting begins with the formal approval of every appointment of a volunteer, following the Safer Recruitment procedure. This applies even where the person is already volunteering in another capacity.

The biannual full Safeguarding Report to the PCC noted that the Parish Dashboard continues to have a small number of 'red' items, which are due mainly to overdue training renewals and questionnaire returns from team leaders. It helps Jenny and Jacqui enormously if everyone can respond quickly and positively to these routine, but important requirements.

The report also recorded three notable incidents in the last few months, which together have led to a closer relationship with the local community police team: verbal abuse from a regular 'visitor'; disturbances associated with some of the rough sleepers in the churchyard, and a break-in to the office (which has led to our CCTV coverage being extended).

Stewardship

The PCC identified three financial messages that it needs to get across:

- Our income is not meeting our full expenses and we are having to draw on reserves for one-off costs and the employment of new staff.
- There are few people under the age of 60 in the Stewardship Scheme, which is not good for maintaining our ministry into the future.
- We would like as many current members as possible of the scheme to transfer from giving by Standing Order to participating in the Parish Giving Scheme, which smooths cashflow over the year and prompts members to increase giving in line with inflation.

If you have not done so already, please pick up a copy of the Regular Giving leaflet from the display at the back of the church, or have a look at the *Information/Money Matters* pages on our website.

Miscellaneous Matters

Deanery Update: the diocese is starting an *Investing for Growth* initiative to enable growth in local mission, using CofE funding. The St James contingent at the local launch identified that our proposals to develop the churchyard as a community space may qualify for a grant.

Admission of baptised children to communion: Sessions have been held with both the young people and their parents. A list is being prepared.

Churchyard car parking: the parking bays in the churchyard have been resurfaced, and a chain placed across the entrance. The four bays on the almshouses side are intended for residents with mobility vehicles, carers and contractors working on the premises. The two bays on the church side are an overflow for those involved in church events. If we continue to get rogue parking by people with no connection to either the church or the almshouses, we will fit a padlock.

'Be Ready': the PCC has begun to look at how the church should respond in the case of emergencies. We are already signed up to Somerset Council's *Place of Safety* scheme, and we will look into the *Somerset Prepared* partnership that helps local parishes, towns and volunteer groups build disaster plans and run resilience training.

Policies: The PCC continues to keep its policy documents under review. In this period, we looked at the Wages, Fees and Charges Policy, the Financial Policies, the Health and Safety Policy, the Risk Assessment Policy and Guidance, the Fire Risk Assessment and the Disability Access Statement. Most of these are available on our website.

Elsewhere in this magazine …

… there are articles giving more details of some PCC discussions:

School News: The PCC welcomed Nigel Johnson, the head teacher at St James Church School and Cerys Randell, the chair of governors, to continue the discussion about church-school links.

Mission Support: Please see the Mission Focus article for details of changes we are making to the organisations we support.

Eco Group: In October, our 'Big Picture' (Vision) review looked at the questions raised by the *People's Emergency Broadcast* film. We decided to put our own Eco Group onto a firmer footing.

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 Fiona Hope
Church Wardens



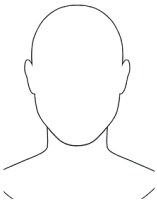
Richard Carpenter



Roger Fenton



Mike Gillingham



Vacancy



Lyn Jones



David Jordan



Ruth Preater-Gillard



Mike Newberry



Chris Rickard



Richard Sainsbury



Johan Smit



David Smith



Jenny Wakefield



Martin Wakefield



Celia Wojcik

photos: Richard Sainsbury

Concerts at St James in December







...and looking forward to 2027



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