



February 2021

Parish of Stockport and Brinnington St Mary St Thomas St Luke

STOCKPORT PARISH CHURCH

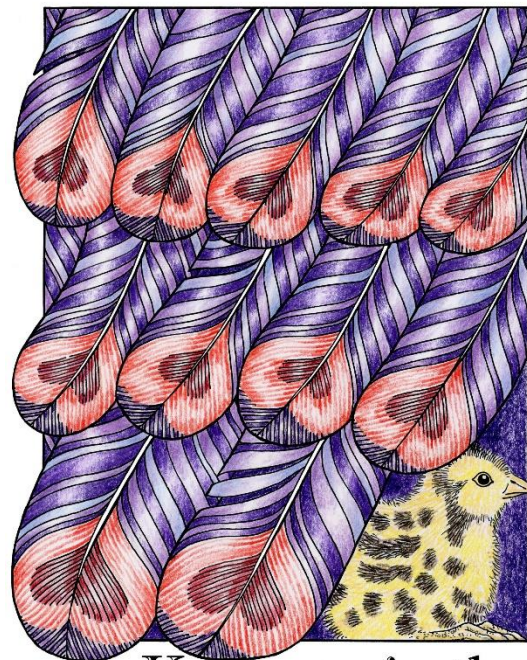
Welcome to our parish news sheet for February 2021.

Frequently thought of as the last month of winter, February allows us to look forward to our days being longer (in terms of day light) and there being signs of Spring. Those early bulbs and flowering shrubs.

February is the second month of the year in the Gregorian calendar as it was in its predecessor, the Julian Calendar. The old Roman calendar however considered the winter season a “monthless” period, and the year consisted of only 10 months - with January and February added later (to reflect a standard lunar year). It is the only month that has less than 30 days, with 28 in common years and 29 in a leap year. Did you know that there were on at least two occasions when a calendar existed that included a 30th February? Sweden added the date to its 1712 calendar following an earlier calendar error; the Soviet Union introduced a revolutionary calendar in 1929 (1930-31) which featured five-day weeks, 30-day months for every working month, and the remaining five or six days were “monthless” holidays. The abolition of the seven-day week in favour of a five-day week was intended to improve industrial efficiency by avoiding the regular interruption of a non-working day. However, the Gregorian calendar continued to be used in the Soviet Union during this period and the Soviet revolutionary calendar was discarded. Of course, the 13th century scholar Johannes de Sacrobosco claimed that February had 30 days in leap years in the Julian calendar, when February was shortened to give the month of August the same length as the month of July. However, historical evidence relating to the Julian calendar refutes Sacrobosco, who was critical of that particular calendar, so we won’t worry too much about that.

For those with birthdays and anniversaries on the 29th February – we’ll send you a card in 2024! No – not happy with that – well leap day babies (leapings, leapers or leapters) still get to celebrate their birthday in common years – some celebrate on the 28th February, some prefer the 1st March. Does it matter which day? Perhaps it does, many countries have laws defining which date a person born on the 29th February comes of age in legal terms. In New Zealand, the official birthday falls on the 28th February, in other countries like the UK, leap year babies have to wait until the 1st March.

Coming up in February: Valentines Day this year falls on Quinquagesima Sunday, (Shrove Sunday, or the Sunday next before Lent) which as we all know is the 14th February. Shrove Tuesday is on the 16th February and then Lent is upon us once again with Ash Wednesday on the 17th.



Keep me in the

shelter of your wings Ps 17:8

With another month of lockdown ahead, this and similar restrictions seems to have become a way of life and pass relatively quickly day by day (already approaching twelve months since we first closed our doors and headed off into an uncertain future), but in other ways these rules, regulations and guidelines seem to be dragging on and on. It is still too early to know for sure how the pandemic is going to turn out; when we will be back to a normal pattern of worship and able to attend events in our churches; when we will be able to roam freely once again.

Many of you may already have been invited to attend a vaccination centre for one of the most welcome vaccines now being speedily rolled out all over the world – so we have the hope of this quickly saving lives and protecting us all as the vaccination programme continues over the next few weeks/months. It may seem quite a wait yet for those lower down the list to be called, but we can look forward to the day when everyone able to have the jab, has some protection from Covid 19.

We will keep you updated as to what is happening in the Parish on our Facebook pages and Web-sites as well as by phone and email where we can. Our “on-line” presence is improving all the time – do continue to join us on Stockport Parish Pew Tube. SMH.

All in the month of February

It was:

200 years ago, on 23rd Feb 1821 that John Keats, the poet, died of tuberculosis, aged 25. **125 years ago, on 1st Feb 1896 that the premiere of Giacomo Puccini’s opera *La boheme*, took place in Turin, Italy.** 75 years ago, on 11th Feb 1946 that The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published. It was the first major English-language update of the Bible since the King James version published in 1611. **70 years ago, on 27th Feb 1951 that the 22nd Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified. It limits the President to two terms in office.** 65 years ago, on 11th Feb 1956 that two members of the Cambridge spy ring, British diplomats Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, announced that they had defected to the Soviet Union. They had both vanished in mysterious circumstances in 1951. **50 years ago, on 15th Feb 1971 that the UK’s currency was decimalised.** 40 years ago, on 24th Feb 1981 that Buckingham Palace announced the engagement of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. **30 years ago, on 28th Feb 1991 that the Gulf War ended at midnight when a ceasefire came into effect.** 25 years ago, on 15th Feb 1996 that the oil tanker Sea Empress ran aground near Milford Haven, Wales, causing a major oil spill along the coastlines of Wales and Ireland. **20 years ago, on 19th Feb 2001 that the first case of foot-and-mouth disease in the 2001 UK outbreak was detected at an abattoir in Essex. The EU subsequently banned all British meat, milk and livestock exports.** 10 years ago, on 22nd Feb 2011 that the Canterbury earthquake in New Zealand took place. 185 people were killed and up to 2,000 injured., and there was widespread damage across the city.

What we want during the pandemic

What have men and women been thinking about during the pandemic? According to recent data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), men have been preoccupied with takeaway food and pints, while women have been keeping in touch with their friends.

In a study on the social impact of coronavirus, the ONS found that women are only half as likely to leave home for a takeaway or drinks, and much more likely to go out in order to meet a friend. Women are also far more likely to form a lockdown support bubble and to adhere to government advice than men.

Joining the Ministry Team

We're delighted to be hosting Geoff Reyner on placement with us until Easter. Here's a little bit about him; he will obviously be involved in online activity only at the moment, but hopefully will be able to meet more folk as restrictions are lifted. LSC



"Hi, I'm Geoff, an Ordinand working on a Theology Diploma through the Diocese of Chester. I'm from the Parish of Dunham Massey, where I live with Sandra and 2 grown up children. I run my own product development consultancy, play golf and have worked extensively in the theatre. I've been a Christian for over 50 years and for the last 13 years have been the Lay Minister at Dunham where I have had an all-age ministry. My faith, alongside encouragement from congregations, has given me the desire to offer myself for ordained ministry. I would see this placement in the Parish of Stockport and Brinnington as the next step in my journey; I'm very much looking forward to meeting you all and to being with you in the parish until Easter."

Give a thought to the garden birds:

National Nestbox Week

Our birds are short of nesting holes, and no wonder: gardens, parks and woodland are much neater than they used to be, and modern homes offer few crannies for nest building.

National Nestbox Week, which is celebrated from 14th February each year, aims to encourage us to put up more nestboxes, and to consider planting shrubs or trees with fruit that birds eat. These can make all the difference to birds struggling to survive, especially blue tits, great tits, house sparrows, robins and starlings.



The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) offers a variety of ideas for building and placing nestboxes. Go to: <https://www.nestboxweek.com>

Here's a new web-site for you to look at:

One Stockport is an initiative conceived by Stockport Council to be supported by, and delivered in partnership with, representatives from Stockport's many diverse communities. The aim is that by working together we can we all help to build a better future for everyone by connecting communities, promoting health & well-being and supporting our local businesses.

LET'S COME TOGETHER www.onestockport.co.uk



Pandemic dreams

The pandemic is affecting our dreams. More people are reporting nightmares which relate to 'contamination' and 'cleanness'. A recent study has found that the more anxious a person is in their waking life, the more vivid will be their dream images. The findings, published in the journal *PLUS One*, explain that "Pandemic dreams show a higher proportion of anger and sadness words; these features seem to be associated with mental suffering linked to social isolation."

Are you having dream experiences?

I didn't want to get up the other morning, I'd been dreaming a lovely dream (not that all my dreams are nice ones and fortunately most I forgot before I remember – gone as soon as my eyes open) but this one was different. I was with people, talking to people, in the same space as people. That must have been a pandemic dream! There was something about finding a safe parking space where I could keep an eye on the car (no idea where that came from considering that I can't see the car in the drive unless I go out and look at it, but I had just renewed the car insurance and added into the policy a courtesy car should mine be stolen) and I half-remember looking for a fridge – well there was a programme on television the night before where they couldn't find the fridge (but they did in the end). I woke to a dull and chilly lockdown day in Stockport. Highly unlikely I'd see a human being in person (except to say that the window cleaner appeared and needed to be paid in cash) or likely to need a parking space (although the window cleaner did ask if I wanted to move the car in order for them to get a ladder to the bathroom window – offer declined) but the fridge was definitely where I left it when it was time to make that ever so nice first cuppa of the morning (Yorkshire tea of course).

My housemate, companion, and little bundle of joy (most the time) quite happy that his windows have been cleaned, barking and tail at full wag. This little Yorkie dreams too I'm sure – I wonder what his dreams consist of – does he have pandemic dreams too – walkies in the park where there are other dogs, chasing sea gulls, sitting at his desk at church. He hasn't told me, but he might tell you!

SMH

Beware hand sanitiser!

Don't let vulnerable members of your family accidentally poison themselves with hand sanitiser. It can kill them. Poisonings from swallowing alcohol-based hand sanitiser have more than doubled in the past year, to nearly 400. Doctors from the Centre for Evidence Based Medicine at the University of Oxford urge that more needs to be done to protect children, the elderly or anyone with mental health issues, from mistaking the sanitiser for a drink.

Want to feel better? Cuddle your pet

If you think you feel better after cuddling your dog or cat, there is a good reason: you really *do* feel better. After only three minutes of cuddling your pet, your levels of oxytocin, the 'love' hormone, increase, according to a recent study from Australia's Monash University. And just five minutes of cuddling will also raise your levels of the two wellbeing and happiness hormones, endorphin and dopamine. So says a recent report in the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*. In her recent book, *Your Pet, Your Pill*, vet Margit Gabriele Muller says that caressing a dog or other pet provides exactly the same health benefits as skin-on-skin contact with another human. The hormones that are released "are the same as when you're breastfeeding or cuddling a partner." Furthermore, a study at Liverpool University last year found that dog owners are four times more likely to be fit than other people.



Roggie Dog

Here I am – sitting on the dining room table surrounded by files and paperwork (together with a can of Dettol disinfectant spray for anything delivered that looks as if it may benefit from a quick anti-bac treatment) whilst Mummy is at the keyboard. January/February are busy months in the office. Well there is always lots to do, but as a new financial year begins so old “year-end” returns need to be completed, accounts balanced off, new files opened and old ones closed.

Personally, I am a bit fed-up of nothing much to do – lockdown continues and I am spending most my time sleeping (sometimes I do indeed dream – Mummy says my little legs move), not watching television (as Mummy seems to be doing when she isn’t working) and continuing my hobby of people, dog, cat and bird watching - as well as playing with my ball of course. Annoying Mummy by barking every time she speaks to someone on the phone or opens up a Zoom meeting is another pleasure, but one that doesn’t seem to be welcome. Mummy says that the present situation is causing me to have “issues” – I’m being bossy and disruptive and our clock is all upside-down. Well I would agree that waking Mummy up in the middle of the night to play isn’t ideal, but it is fun, and I was poorly one night and needed Mummy to look after me. She always says as we kiss goodnight – wake Mummy if you need anything – well I did – and do! I am of course determined to have my own way at all times

I have been allowed to go down to the Parish Office once but had to sit in the car whilst Mummy delivered Flash, Anti-bac spray and bin bags. I was allowed to visit one favourite bush at the edge of the car park but on a very short lead – laughed at by all the Sparrows looking down on me. Lockdown seems to have been of great benefit to the wild life around here (well everywhere I guess). Mummy feeds the birds at home – mountains of seed delivered with our supermarket order every week - and they aren’t for me (and I’m pretty sure Mum isn’t eating them either). We have the fattest Woodpigeons in the world - well I think that is what they are, - certainly not Seagulls which as you know I’m not too keen on – but whatever they are I don’t think we are preparing them for dinner although they are the size of a small chicken. We have Robins, Blue Tits, Blackbirds, Sparrows and I think I noticed a Thrush (or something on those lines). The Magpies are just annoying and naughty – they are on my list of birds to chase.

There has been a most serious incident in the office area of our living room. Mummy tripped over the rug with a mug of hot tea in her hand – it went up in the air and landed on the floor but not before soaking the computer desk (with an open laptop and independent keyboard/mouse taking the full force of the spillage). Mummy went into frantic mode as you can imagine – I went under the television out of the way. I can’t remember her asking if I was alright – I was as it happened. Mummy turned the laptop upside down and out poured tea (milk no sugar), She turned off the mains but couldn’t get the battery out without having to first find a very small screwdriver. The screen went off and the backlights on the keyboard flashed until eventually Mummy released the battery. Doomed you would have thought, but a session with the hairdryer and a few hours sat on the top of the radiator and believe it or not it started up again – then promptly displayed an error screen and a message to say it was trying to find out what was wrong with itself – it’s never done that before – more to the point it didn’t seem to recognise its own symptoms. Computer said “ ” nothing. It didn’t seem to know that it wasn’t programmed as a hot drinks dispenser. Perhaps computers aren’t as clever as they think they are!

Stay safe – keep your computer dry... and take care to avoid scam emails. Love Roggie Dog...

Do me a favour?

David Pickup, a solicitor, considers scam emails.

Reading this article hit home as only a few weeks ago a similar email appeared on the church account at St Mary's supposedly received from a member of the Ministry Team. The circumstances were remarkably similar to those experienced by David.

SMH

I just had an email from a clergyman, saying, "Hi" and asking me to do him "a favor". I replied to say yes, of course. I then began to wonder why he had not said what sort of favour it was, and why he was asking me.

I decided to telephone him and find why he had not explained. His wife answered and said: "Is it about the fake email?" I could tell from her tone of voice that I was not the first caller.

This was a scam of some sort and probably the favour was to send money. The same day someone else in the same parish had their accounts hacked. The email addresses used were correct, but if I had looked carefully I would have noticed he would not spell "favour" like that and not say "hi".

This all makes me quite cross, because these scammers are playing on church members' kindness. A friend of mine also got the email and was upset that someone else was in trouble. We need to be aware of the risks and look out for messages of any kind which seem strange.

Criminals target churches and pretend to send emails from people in authority such as clergy, churchwardens or treasurers. They prey on our credulity and charity.

What should we do?

If you get a telephone call or email you and you are not sure if it is genuine, use another form of communication to check.

It is a crime, so report it to the authorities. If it is connected to a church, tell your diocese or governing body.

The scammers must have got these addresses from somewhere. How easy would it be to get a list of the names and addresses of your minister, leaders and treasurer?

Lastly, carry on being generous and kind. These scammers should not stop us.

What are you doing during lockdown?

Why not write around 100 words - 'A day in my life under lockdown' - how you are spending your time at home, and what you actually like about it.

OR

100 words on 'The three things I most want to do when coronavirus is over.

Email to st.marysstockport@gmail.com and we will share as many stories as we can next month. Closing dated for entries 22nd February.

As Valentine's Day approaches, Canon Paul Hardingham considers romantic love.

As we mark Valentines' Day this month, it's good to ask the question: *what does real love look like?*

The Apostle Paul says: *'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.'* (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8).

Love is unconditional: At heart, love is not just feelings but action! Paul talks here about unconditional love, using the word *agape*, which demonstrated in God's love for us: *'We love, because He first loved us.'* (1 John 4:19).

Love is forgiving: According to the film Love Story, *'Love means never having to say you're sorry.'* This is rarely true in our experience! According to Paul, love is being ready to forgive others and *'keeping no record of wrongs'* (5). We can only forgive others because we know God forgiveness in our own lives.

Love is sacrificial: Paul says that agape love is not selfish or self-seeking, but selfless and self-sacrificial, putting the needs of other people first. This is modelled by Jesus giving His life for us on the cross. Take the words from 1 Corinthians and instead of the word *love*, substitute your own name. Now substitute the word *Jesus*. This is the Jesus who is available to you to make your love for others grow and flourish.

Someone once compared love being like a group of porcupines huddling together on a cold night. The closer they get, the more they jab and hurt each other. *'To love at all is to be vulnerable.'* (C S Lewis).

A February Rose

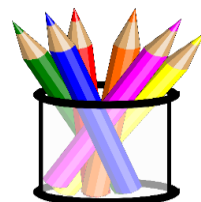
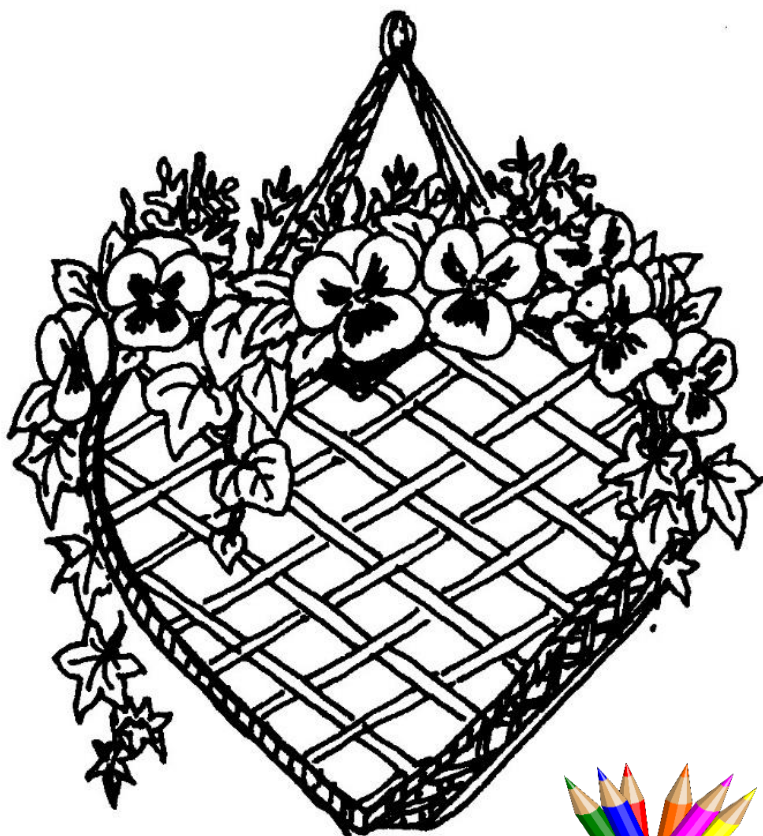
My love, she likes a red, red rose
Of deep magenta hue,
A gift for Valentine that shows
That someone's love is true.

But think on this, my bonnie lass,
As you admire the bloom –
That flower's been forced on under glass
You ought to wait till June!

By Nigel Beeton



Artwork by Francesca Ross



Taking a mature look at Valentine's Day

The Revd Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the CofE, considers romantic love.

You do not see many Zimmer frames, wheelchairs or hearing aids on Valentine's Day cards. They mostly seem to be full of young love, hearts and roses. Young love is wonderful and beautiful, full of optimism, and plans and hopes for the future.

But love in later life is precious too. It is a love that has been forged through years of shared experiences and joy, maybe raising children together, perhaps enjoying grandchildren. It's a love that's stood the test of time, and deeper, much deeper, than any shop-bought Valentine's Day card can describe.

That long-term love can also be shown by the devoted wife or husband who visits their spouse in a care home each day, gently talking with them when they are, perhaps, deep into dementia. Or sitting for long hours by a hospital bed. Or dutifully caring for them at home.

Love is a marathon, not a sprint. It starts with white lace and promises and grows over the years.

Mature love is about the commitment that spans decades and is seldom shown on the cards on sale in the High Street this Valentine's Day.

As a priest, when I marry a couple and take them through their wedding vows, I hear them make their lifelong commitment "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part..."

It's so wonderful to see the bride and groom smiling, and enjoying this precious moment, making vows that will, hopefully, span the rest of their lives. I love taking weddings – it's an immense privilege to be part of a couple's special day.

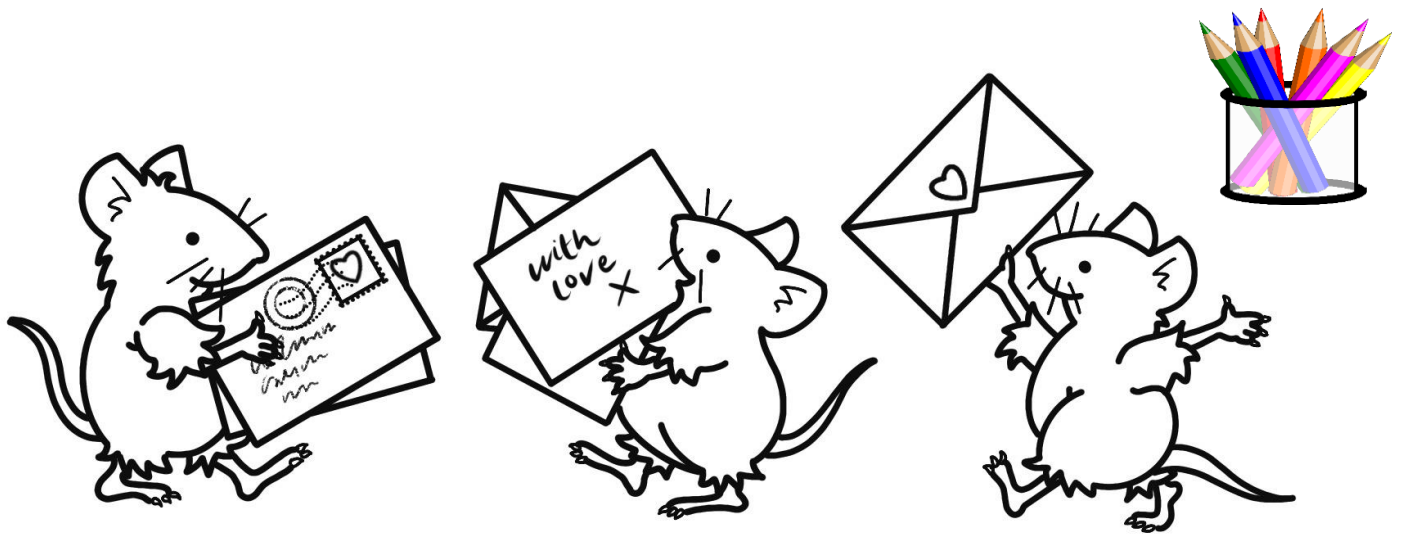
And I find myself pondering what the future will hold for them. I wonder what shape that lifelong commitment will take, as I pray a blessing on their marriage. How much wealth or poverty will come their way? Will it be sickness or health that will accompany them through the years? How will they support each other as the years go by?

'Love is patient. Love is kind.' These are familiar words from the popular wedding reading in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. That patience, that kindness are qualities that can develop over years of marriage.

Just how much patience will be needed in the years ahead cannot usually be known on the wedding day.

So, this year, as I look at the rows of red or pink Valentine's Day cards on sale in the shops, I shall look out for cards that have a deeper message. I shall seek out cards that celebrate long-term love. Cards that say something about the joys and challenges of growing older together.

Cards that go beyond hearts and roses to the deeper love that transcends love's first blossoming. I just hope I can find some...



Remembering John Keats

Tim Lenton looks back on a well-loved poet.

It was 200 years ago, on 23rd February 1821, that John Keats, the Romantic poet, died in Rome of tuberculosis, aged 25.

Keats was a generous, likeable and hard-working man who had much experience of suffering in his short life. He also had a love of civil and religious liberty. Most of his best work was done during the year 1819, when he was already sickening after an exhausting walking tour of the Lakes and Scotland the previous summer. In that same year he had also been nursing his brother Tom through tuberculosis – the disease that killed their mother. But in 1819, after Tom's death, he moved to Hampstead and fell in love with a neighbour, Fanny Brawne, who was 18. By this time Keats was devoting himself to poetry, having originally trained as a surgeon following his mother's early death. He is most famous for his Odes, all of which (except the one to Autumn) were composed between March and June 1819. All of them ponder the clash between eternal ideals and the transience of the physical world. His most famous lines: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."



Artwork by Jean Valdar





Signs of an early Spring. Indoors!

Purely by accident, whilst filling up the bird feeders, I snapped off a large branch from the Magnolia tree – then I found another, cut off when the tree cutting people did a clear up in the back garden. What a shame I thought, but rather than leave them on the ground or put them in the green wheelie bin - I brought them indoors and snipped into appropriate lengths thinking that I would just leave them standing in a vase of water. I didn't really expect anything much to happen, but behold from my dead looking twigs buds started to open. My view across the room became an early Spring – cheating slightly I suppose – but a glimpse as to what will follow out in the garden when we turn the corner of dull dark days of rain, sleet and snow. AND they are real – not the temptation to buy a few artificial sprigs and pretend Spring is round the corner – it is! Although that would have been less cleaning up to do and the flowers drop – but guess what – there are signs of green leaves and not a greenfly in sight!

As for the “Secretary Bird” in lockdown – the above photo of a door is the view from “home desk” - when it comes to parish administration, it is very much business as usual, with a typical day simply being a question of getting up, making a cuppa and travelling to “home desk” (two steps out of the kitchen) – and preferably not spilling anything on the journey to work (really don't want the laptop to get another soaking of tea). Presently working totally from home rather than from church premises is fine, most the time, except for the mountains of files cluttering up the living room.



Log off the laptop (or put it in sleep mode) and the Secretary Birds reverts to being “me” - in home-alone (with a dog) mode. The first lockdown started off with all sorts of plans as to what needed to be done – most remain undone! The cupboard in the back bedroom needs sorting out, the garage is a dumping ground. The idea of having the cleanest house in Stockport soon failed – although more cleaning than normal has been achieved.

Early lockdown was lovely weather and I enjoyed spending time in my own garden. Taking up painting again resulted in ordering canvass boards, and getting out the oil paints, but that remains on the “to do” list too. I've watched “Landscape Painter of the Year” for inspiration – but didn't really get any, then watched “Pottery Throw Down” and regretted never converting the garage into a pottery studio. I did have a wheel in there once – but it blew up! Never unfortunately a kiln of my own. I like being at home, most the time at least, I especially like not having to go out to meetings (at all if I'm honest but particularly on cold, wet evenings in the dark) – yes (sorry and all that) I really quite like Zoom nowadays – long may Zoom meetings continue – so much easier than travelling here and there – switch on – switch off – brilliant. Bored – well you could mute yourself and watch television in the background - no I haven't honest - tempted – maybe!

What I am looking forward to doing most after lockdown – I'd like to be “me” again – not to think twice before leaving the house – to not have to “avoid” people. I'd like to see faces I've not seen for months I'd like to see the road sign **A55** as I whiz past “border control” (last crossing between English/Welsh Covid rules September 2020), visit the hairdresser (last professional visit 14th December 2019) and enjoy a meal at my favourite restaurant (can't remember when I last did that). Trimming your own fringe and home delivery just isn't the same!

SMH

In this Lenten Time renew us

This may be sung to the tune 'Rhuddlan' (Judge Eternal, Throned in Splendour)

Jesus, in the wilds You tarried
Forty days and forty nights
By the Tempter often harried
You the victor in each fight!
In this Lenten time renew us
Make us perfect in Your sight!

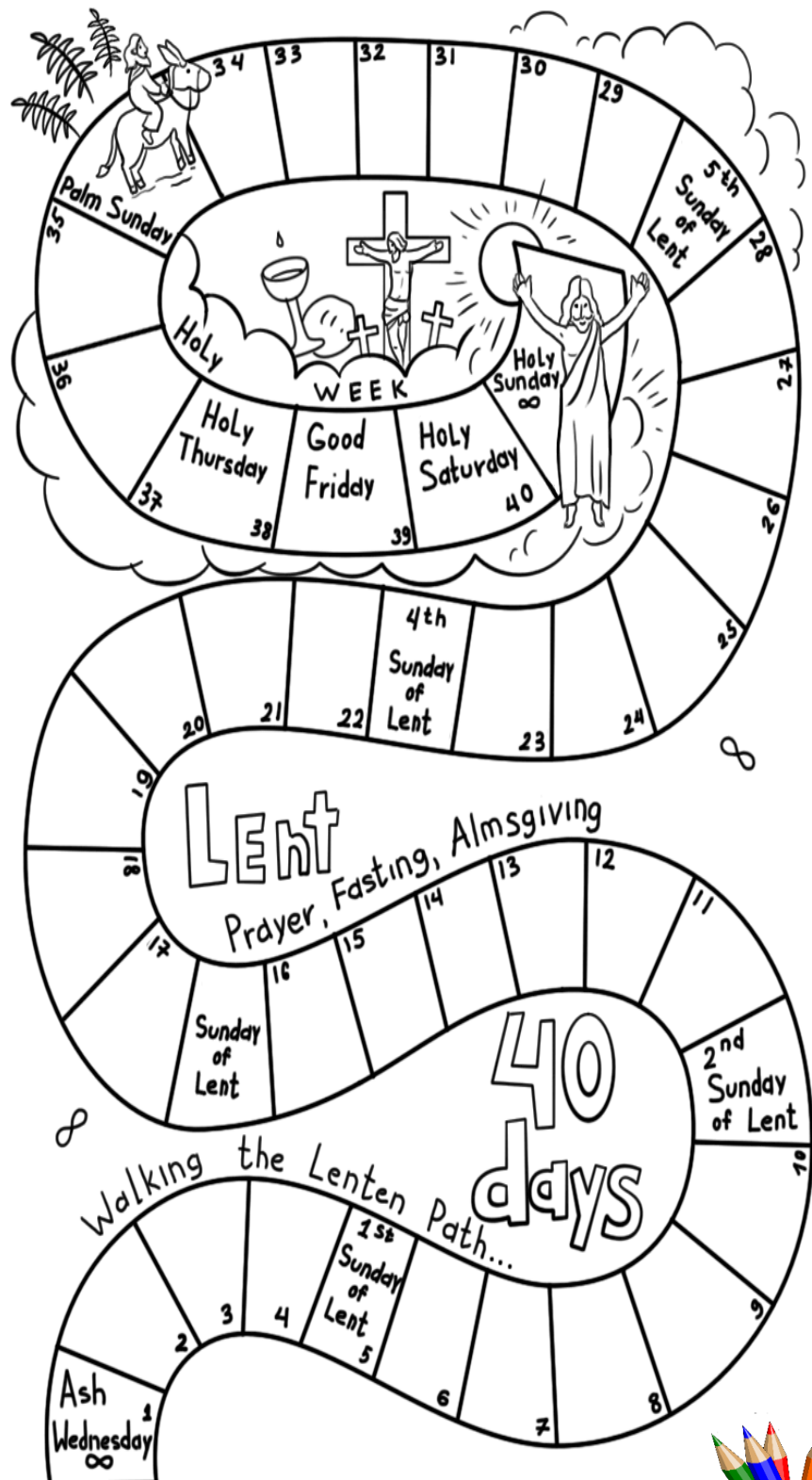
Bread alone cannot sustain us
But each word from God above
Worldly goods can nothing gain us
If we lack our Father's love
In this Lenten time renew us
Come upon us like a dove!

God our judge should not be tempted
He alone is fully just
His laws can't be circumvented
Satan's world will turn to dust!
In this Lenten time renew us
Teach us where to place our trust!

All Earth's kingdoms are but trifles
If our Lord we can't adore
Worldly wealth our worship stifles
And, in truth, it makes us poor
In this Lenten time renew us
Guide us to Your Heav'nly shore!

God Almighty, everlasting
Perfect all that you create
Be with us in feast or fasting
Cleanse our hearts from greed and ha
In this Lenten time renew us
That our joy may ne'er abate!

By Nigel Beeton



HOW TO HANDLE TEMPTATION

Canon Paul Hardingham considers the temptations of Jesus.

"I can resist everything but temptation" (Oscar Wilde). During Lent we remember Jesus' experience in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), when *'He was led by the Spirit.. to be tempted by the devil.'* (1). Temptation is a test of *obedience*, whether we do things our way or God's way. After 40 days of fasting Jesus was tired, hungry and vulnerable. Like Him, the Devil will attack us at our most vulnerable moments, especially during this pandemic.

The first temptation was to turn stones into bread: Jesus' ministry was not about meeting His own needs, but being nourished by God's Word. *'We do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'* (Deuteronomy 8:3). Like Jesus, we are called to make God our priority and trust Him completely.

The second temptation was to put God to the test: Jumping off the Temple pinnacle would have been a dramatic way for Jesus to gain popularity, but this is not God's way! *'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'* (Deuteronomy 6:16). We too need to learn this lesson!

The third temptation was to worship Satan: Finally, the devil took Jesus to a mountain to offer Him worldly power. In contrast, His calling as Messiah was marked by suffering and honouring God. *'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only'* (Deuteronomy 6:13). This is often our experience in living for God.

Jesus stands with us in our temptations. As we claim the promises of Scripture, we will find strength in the power of the Spirit and the victory of the Cross.

'If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you'll be at rest!' (Corrie Ten Boom).

Have you done something which haunts you? *Lent, of course, is a time for spiritual self-examination.*

Do you ever worry that your past failings mean that God will not accept you now? Some of us have done many things which we regret, things that have caused us, or others, great pain.

We've given our children short shrift, we've betrayed our marriage partners, we've been dishonest at work, we've been ruthlessly greedy and ambitious, no matter what the cost to anyone else. And now the memory of the wrong we've done lingers, and makes us ashamed. Our past failings make us very reluctant to turn to God. Why should He forgive the damage we have done?

If you think this way, then you have a big surprise waiting for you: God isn't like that. You haven't yet encountered His GRACE. God knows all about you, and most of all He knows you need His help. Jesus said that He came into the world to reach sinners, to help anyone who turns to Him in true repentance to find forgiveness, and a new start.

You can't do anything to turn yourself into a good person. But you don't have to. All that God asks of you is that you turn to Jesus in prayer, and say you are sorry, and ask Him to forgive you, and to put His Spirit within you. Then you find His GRACE – which means His loving-kindness, beginning in YOUR life. Just try it.

Today let God begin to set you free from the past!

Stanley Spencer's 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions'

The Rev Michael Burgess

Forty days and forty nights

On the 17th of this month, we enter the season of Lent: those 40 days when we follow Jesus into the wilderness and prepare ourselves to celebrate His Easter victory. In the last century an artist called Stanley Spencer planned to create a series of 40 paintings, each depicting a day in the wilderness. In the end he completed nine, one of which is this month's painting from 1939: 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions.' It is currently held in a private collection.

Stanley Spencer lived and worked in the village of Cookham in Berkshire. The village and the local countryside were the setting for many of his paintings, and the village's inhabitants his models. Through their everyday life he was trying to glimpse and convey the transcendent. 'Angels and dirt' he called it: the divine seen in the ordinary. So, in a painting of Christ carrying His cross, Jesus has the face of the local grocer.

Another villager modelled for this Jesus in the wilderness: a strong, hefty, broad figure. This is a great contrast to the Christ of stained-glass windows who often seems too good to be part of our world. Here is real life: a large man filling the canvas with his head, his hands and his feet. This figure of Jesus comes as a shock: a very human model, ordinary with nothing handsome or special about him, apart from his tunic which seems to sprawl and undulate like the hills around. Here is a Jesus born into this world and one with this world.

There are two focal points in the painting – the neat, little scorpion and the massive, unkempt head contemplating each other. One is life in all its hefty reality; the other a tiny creature able to squeeze that life out by one swift flick of its tail.

Jesus is shown in the wilderness pondering the life and ministry called of Him by God – a life and ministry that will take Him from the countryside into the towns and villages and take Him also to the death of Good Friday. Will He find the strength and renewal to embrace that ministry during His time in the desert? During Lent as we follow Jesus, we seek to live for God. That may mean dying to all that separates us from God.

He has a ministry, a calling for each of us. As we contemplate that calling in this season of Lent, we may find it is a calling that leads us through these 40 days to life and Easter life – we may find it a journey that calls us to die to self to find our God.

Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions'. It now hangs in a private collection.

You can see it at: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/christ-in-the-wilderness-the-scorpion>

The parable of the Shrewd Manager



JESUS OFTEN TOLD
STORIES WITH
HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONCE JESUS TOLD A STORY
ABOUT A RICH MAN...

...AND HIS SERVANT, WHO
MANAGED THE RICH MAN'S
PROPERTY.

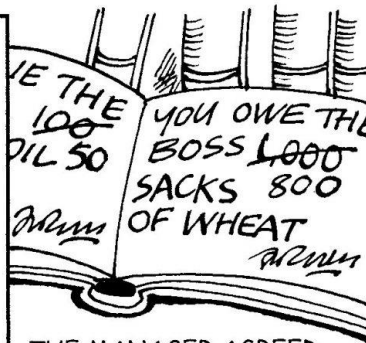


THE RICH MAN HAD HEARD
THAT THE MANAGER HAS BEEN
WASTING MONEY.

SO HE CALLED THE MANGER TO
ACCOUNT FOR HIMSELF!



OH NO! I AM GOING TO
GET THE SACK!!

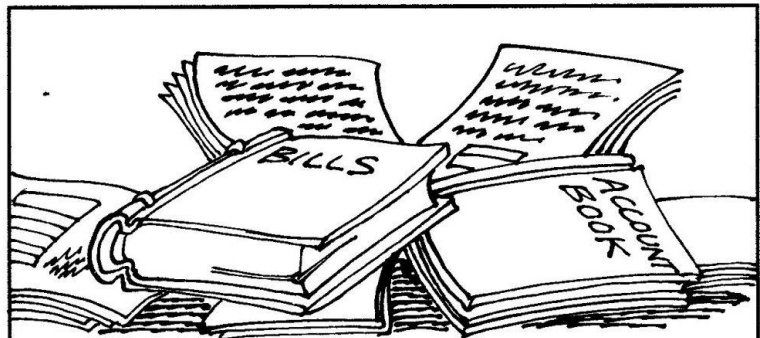
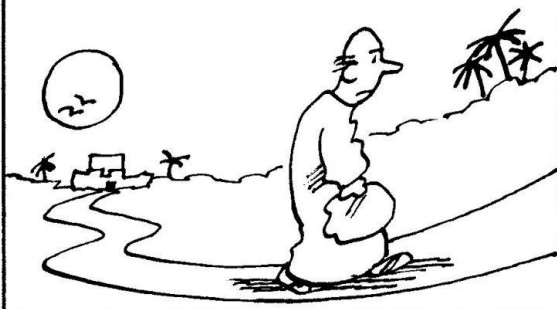


THE MANAGER AGREED
TO LET THE RICH MAN'S
TRADERS FIDDLE THEIR
BOOKS!



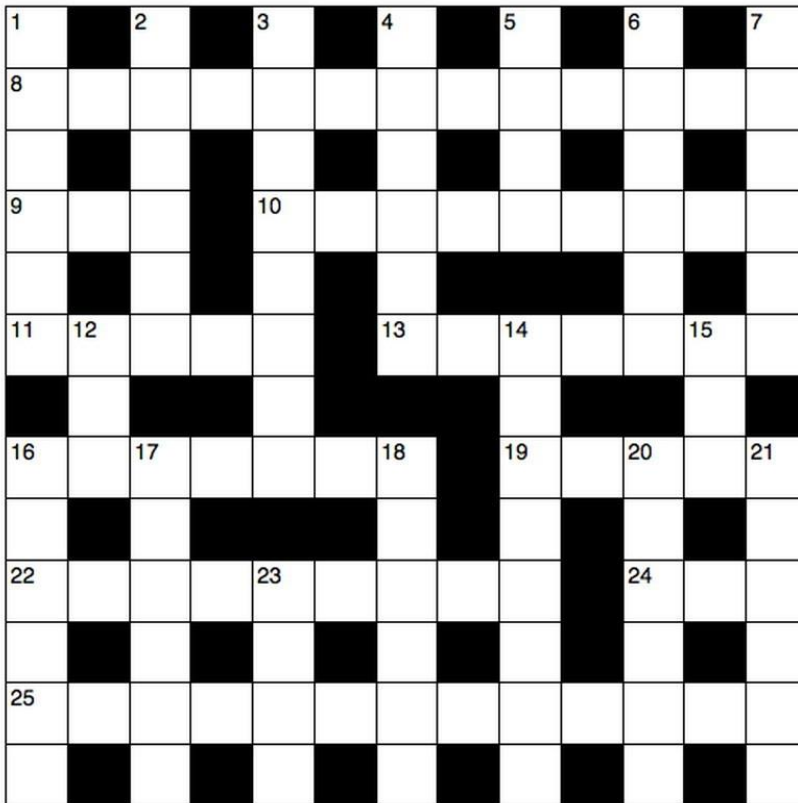
SO THEY ALTERED THEIR
DEBTS - AND STAYED
FRIENDS WITH THE
MANAGER.

JESUS EXPLAINED THAT THE MANAGER
HAD BEEN WISE IN MANAGING HIS
FUTURE... EVEN THOUGH HE WAS BEING
DISHONEST.



JESUS WAS TRYING TO ENCOURAGE THE PEOPLE TO
THINK ABOUT THEIR OWN FUTURES TOO. BUT IT'S A
HARD PARABLE TO UNDERSTAND!

Crossword



Across

- 8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)
- 9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)
- 10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)
- 11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)
- 13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)
- 16 Went to (John 4:46) (7)
- 19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)
- 22 David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)
- 24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1) 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)

Down

- 1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)
- 2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)
- 3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)
- 4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)
- 5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)
- 6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)
- 7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)
- 12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)
- 14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)
- 15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)
- 16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)
- 17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)
- 18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)
- 20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)
- 21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)
- 23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)

Wordsearch for February

February opens with Candlemas – the naming of Jesus in the temple. Simeon and Anna praised God to see the promised Messiah, sent by a loving God to save his people. February also celebrates the love between a man and woman: Valentine cards and romance abound. ‘Love’ as in social compassion is also remembered: Fair Trade fortnight, Holocaust Memorial Day, World Leprosy Day, and National Nest Box Week.... Love is truly needed by everyone!

Naming	Christ
Candlemas	Simeon
Anna	temple
Love	Valentine
Romance	Matthias
Fairtrade	Fortnight
Coffee	bananas
Chocolate	justice
Poverty	nest box
Marriage	wedding
Holocaust	leprosy

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

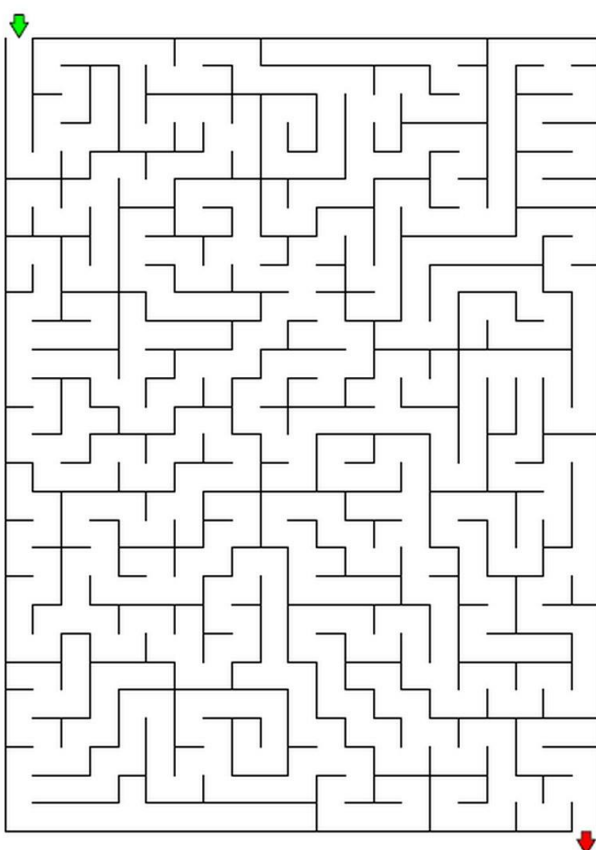
Sudoku

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

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

Maze





The last letter of one word
is the first letter of the next

E				⚡
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What two things did God create first? <i>Genesis 1:1</i>				
		S		

- What two things did God create first?
Genesis 1:1

		S	
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the Earth without? <i>Genesis 1:2</i> • What came before morning? <i>Gen 1:5</i> 		
			G

- What was the Earth without? *Genesis 1:2*

- What came before morning? *Gen 1:5*

				G
Who is the creator?				
Genesis 1:1				D
What was separated from light? Gen 1:4				

- Who is the creator?
Genesis 1:1

- What was separated from light? *Gen 1:4*

S	• Which day did God finish work? <i>Gen 2</i>			
	• Who was created in God's image? <i>Gen</i>			
			H	

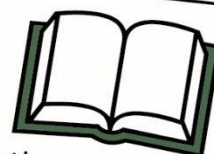
- Which day did God finish work? *Gen 2:2*

- Who was created God's image? *Gen1:27*

			H	
• Who moved over the water? <i>Gen 1:2</i>				
			S	

- Who moved over the water? *Gen 1:2*

T					S	
---	--	--	--	--	---	--



By the **seventh** day
God finished the
work He had been
doing. God *blessed*
the seventh day
and made it *holy*.
When God gave
Moses the Ten
Commandments the
fourth commandment
said to *remember*
the seventh Sabbath
day, to *keep it holy*
and set apart
for God.



DID YOU KNOW?
The first

The first word of the Old Testament in Hebrew is **bereshith** which means "*in the beginning*". The Greeks translated this word as **GENESIS** which means *creation, origin and generation*



**FIND THE
CREATION PAIRS**
from Genesis 1 and 2

EARTH	MORNING
LIGHT	FRUIT
DAYS	SEA
TREES	NIGHT
LAND	FISH
EVENING	YEARS
ADAM	HEAVENS
DAY	DARK
BIRDS	WATER
SKY	EVE

T					S	
---	--	--	--	--	---	--

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

Can you find these words
in the word search?

GOD • HEAVEN • SPIRIT
FLY • DEEP • EARTH
DARK • DAY • LIGHT
NIGHT • STARS • SKY
SEA • LAND • BIRD
CREATURE • HUMAN
TREE • PLANT • SEEDS
FRUIT • GOOD • TWO

Do your days rush past in a hectic pace?

Revd Dr Herbert McGonigle.

Have you ever stopped to think that your mobile phone and emails have not given you *more* time? Just *more things to do* in the same amount of time.

We leave our messages in one place while we take our bodies elsewhere. Instead of doing one thing after another, we shoot out a variety of tasks, and then swoop down on them later, needing to deal with them all at once.

In a four-minute clip from a street scene from an old Orson Welles film and a similar clip from a more recent film, you will see an amazing difference. In the early film, the camera records 'real time' – people get out of their cars, walk across streets, wait for lights, speak to other people, enter a bank. In the more recent film, a similar sequence was reduced to a half a dozen quick cuts. Transition time was eliminated.

Modern life teaches us that 'down time' is wasted. Time is money. So mobile phones, emails, etc, enable us to 'waste' less time. The tempo of cultural life picks up, the heartbeat of daily life races, and our own body rhythms respond with adrenaline, cramped muscles and heart attacks.

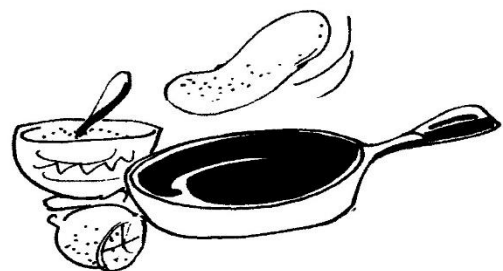
To take time out for daily prayer, for a quiet walk that is not to the next meeting, for daydreaming or for Bible study becomes a cross-cultural act. Following Christ, waiting on Him, is a countercultural act.

One lovely biblical phrase is 'in the fullness of time, it came to pass'. This suggests four things: that time crests like a wave; that there is a right moment for things to happen; that it's not ours to plan that moment, but to recognise it; and that we are not the primary agents of what happens in the world.

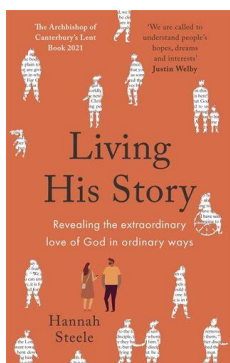
So, feel free to accept God's offer of rest when you are weary; receive each moment of your life as a gift from God's hand; pray to discern what each new encounter you make requires of you, and freely entrust everything else to God's care.



Artwork by Jean Valdar



Book Review:



Living His Story – revealing the extraordinary love of God in ordinary ways

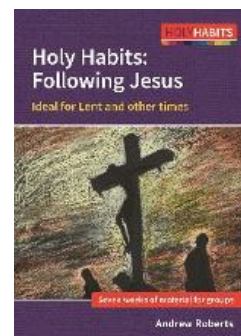
The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2021.
By Hannah Steele, SPCK, £7.99

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2021, *Living His Story*, explores evangelism as a way of sharing God's love with people. How can we convey the love of God to our neighbours in a post-Christian world that has largely forgotten the gospel of Jesus Christ? Hannah Steele uncovers liberating and practical ways of sharing the gospel story afresh. With warmth and encouragement, she shows us how we can live Jesus' story in our own lives simply by being the people God made us and allowing people to be drawn to him through our natural gifts. *Living His Story* is a Lent devotional that will change the way you think about evangelism, show how ideally suited it is for the world we live in and fill you with confidence in sharing God's love with the people around you. Set out in six sessions to take you through Lent, the book can be used as a single study for individuals or small groups to prepare for Easter. It will help you find space to see evangelism from a new practical perspective.

Seven weeks of material for Lent

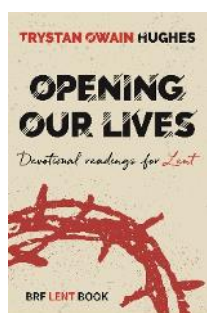
By Andrew Roberts, BRF, £6.99

A welcome new addition to BRF's growing collection of Holy Habits resources, *Holy Habits: Following Jesus* provides seven weeks of material for Lent. Although written before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, many of the applications, questions and take-home ideas are highly relevant to the pastoral needs, challenges and opportunities created by it. In his introduction Andrew Roberts writes: 'No one can know with any certainty the range and scope of challenges that will be present when you use this material, but I believe that whatever they are, the life and example of Jesus and the way He responded to the challenges he faced will always be of utmost value in shaping our lives as we seek to follow in his footsteps.'



Opening Our Lives

By Trystan Owain Hughes, BRF, £8.99



Lenten disciplines are evolving, but whether you intend to give up, give to or take up something for Lent, BRF's 2021 Lent book will add another dimension to your devotions. Trystan Owain Hughes offers six weeks of reflections designed to encourage and challenge readers to open their lives to God: to His presence, His call, His love, His will, His compassion and His peace. The final reflection, for Easter Day, invites us to open our world to God's hope. *Opening Our Lives* is rich and wide-ranging; it's imbued with Welsh culture, language and landscape and resonant with insights, from Merton to Blackadder, Meister Eckhart to Mark Kermode and Thoreau to Trystan's *taid* (grandfather).

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O	G	E	L	A	H	N	O	R	L	O	C	I
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C	R	O	S	S	E	X	A	M	I	N	E	D
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