



Growing Together

Keep on growing

During the past ten months, some of the things that Bob & I have most valued have been skype calls with our grandchildren, photos of them, and anecdotes from their parents about their daily lives. There's always something new in the lives of babies and toddlers. All three grandchildren are constantly developing new skills and learning about the world around them.



What about you? Many people have used the time during the various lockdowns to learn new skills, or brush up on old ones. For instance, I've improved my knitting skills.



Learning and growing also applies to our Christian lives. Traditionally, Lent is a time of self-examination, repentance, prayer and study in preparation for Easter. Many people give something up for Lent, and that is valuable if it enables them to focus more on God. But, this Lent, how about taking on something new, something that will deepen your relationship with God and be of lasting benefit spiritually? Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, falls on 17 February this year. We haven't fixed a date for reopening the church, but even if we are still unable to meet together by then, there is plenty that each of us can do as our individual lockdown spiritual Lent challenge.

The Church of England is offering a daily email during Lent, called #LiveLent: God's Story, Our Story. Sign up on their website. Bible Gateway offers a variety of Bible reading plans lasting 40 days: The Gospels in 40 days; Readings for Lent & Easter; or Daily Reading for Personal Growth, 40 days with God. See their website for more details. For something completely different, the Irish Jesuits have a daily slow paced reflection, with music, on their website www.sacredspace.ie.

If you do not find the internet helpful, why not pick a book of the Bible, perhaps one of the Gospels, and read through it thoughtfully during Lent? Alternatively, you could choose to focus on the church notice sheet Bible readings each week, picking out different verses to meditate on and remember.

Perhaps we could make this Bible passage our prayer for ourselves and each other during Lent:

I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called – his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. (Ephesians 1.17-18, NLT).

May we grow in our knowledge of God this Lent, and experience hearts flooded with light!

With every blessing, Helen

Temporary Closure of our Church

Due to the significant rise in Covid infection rates locally and our third national lockdown, we feel we must prioritise the health and safety of all our church members and close our church building temporarily.

Our worship will continue with a weekly online Sunday service and postings on our Facebook page. Our church fellowship will continue by various means, but it needs your help. Please continue to offer mutual support and prayer for each other through phone calls and messages – whatever you feel able to do. Despite the rising infection rates and despite the lockdown, God's love continues to be at work *within us, through us and in all we do.*

Please keep safe and well during the coming weeks and I look forward to when we can gather again in church as soon as it feels safe to do so.

Rev Karen Brady
Colin Keam & Rosemary Lunt Churchwardens

The birds and bees

Here is some good news: all new major roads will have wildflower-friendly verges that could boost our numbers of birds and bees. Highway England has said that vibrant road verges will be created as standard on new roads over 300 miles in England, using low nutrient soils which will be seeded with wildflowers or left to grow naturally. A staggering 97 per cent of our meadows have been destroyed since the Thirties, due to modern agriculture. This means that the 238,000 hectares of road verges across the UK could become a vital habitat for pollinators. The Government has pledged to build 4,000 miles of new road by 2025.



10th Feb: Scholastica, the persuasive sister

Scholastica (d.c. 543) should be the patron saint of any woman who can bend her brother to do her will - no matter how 'powerful' that brother might seem to other people. For Scholastica's brother was no less than the great monk Benedict, who founded the famous Benedictine order and lived at Monte Cassino. In no way over-awed, Scholastica simply became the first ever Benedictine nun, with a nunnery five miles down the road – at Plombariola. Now Scholastica greatly enjoyed her annual meetings with her brother at a house nearby, but the time passed too quickly. One year she begged him to stay longer, to discuss "the joys of heaven", but he refused. So Scholastica took swift action: she prayed up such a mighty thunderstorm that her brother was forced to spend the rest of the night talking to her. Or maybe – she talked, and he listened? No one knows for sure. In any case, Scholastica died happy three days later, and was buried in the tomb Benedict had prepared for himself. She became the patron of Benedictine nunneries.

BIBLE READINGS FOR FEBRUARY

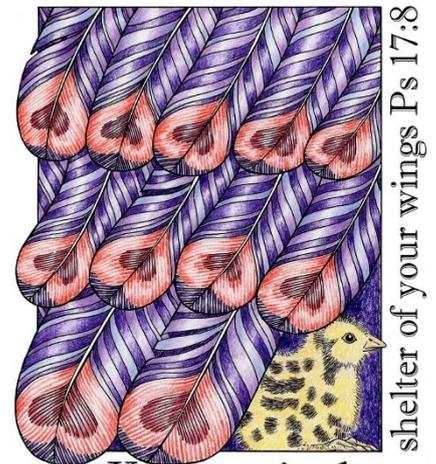
7th February
Colossians 1: 15-20
John 1: 1-14



21st February
1 Peter 3: 18-22
Mark 1: 9-15

14th February
2 Corinthians 4: 3-6
Mark 9: 2-9

28th February
Romans 4: 13-25
Mark 8: 31-38



shelter of your wings Ps 17:8

Keep me in the

Remembering John Keats



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 has 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."

It is not enough to love - you need to be loved

Sometimes we can be inclined to give and give and give to others - without asking anything in return. We may think that this is a sign of generosity - of great strength. But it can also be one of pride - we want to be seen as the one who does not need help. Or it can be a sign of very low self-esteem - we do not think we are worth receiving anything from others. Whatever the reason, when we keep giving, without also receiving, we put ourselves in danger - we will burn out quickly. It is as important to know when we need to TAKE attention and care, as when we need to give it to others. If you do not pay careful attention to your own needs - whether physical, emotional, mental or spiritual - you will not last the distance. If you want to remain a joyful giver for years to come, you need also to be a joyful taker and accept God's love, given to you through other people.

What happened to your New Year's resolution?

If you are already struggling to keep it, here is something that might help you. Psychologists advise that it is useless to say you are going to quit anything. Instead, make your resolution to change into something positive. For example, instead of "I will give up sweets," say "I will eat fruit twice a day." It seems that people with an 'approach goal' score greater success than those who see themselves quitting something they still like. As one Swedish doctor explained: "You cannot erase a behaviour, but you can replace it with something else." The most popular resolutions regard physical health, weight loss and change of eating habits. The research was

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.



It's all in the spelling...

- G - God
- R - Ran
- A - Alongside
- C - Carrying

Disperse them

A young clergyman, fresh out of training, thought it would help him better understand the harsh realities his future congregations faced if he first took a job as a policeman for several months. He passed the physical examination; then came the oral exam to test his ability to act quickly and wisely in an emergency. Among other questions he was asked, "What would you do to disperse a frenzied crowd?" He thought for a moment and then said, "I would pass an offering plate." He got the job.

Do your days rush by at a hectic pace?

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.

A man who loves his wife will love her letters and her photographs because they speak to him of her. So, if we love the Lord Jesus, we shall love the Bible because it speaks to us of Him. – **John R W Stott**

Jesus Christ: no other man has ever humbled himself so greatly; and no man has ever been more exalted as a result. – **Anon**

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.



Truth Encounter

(Luke 4:1-14, John 17:17, James 4:7)

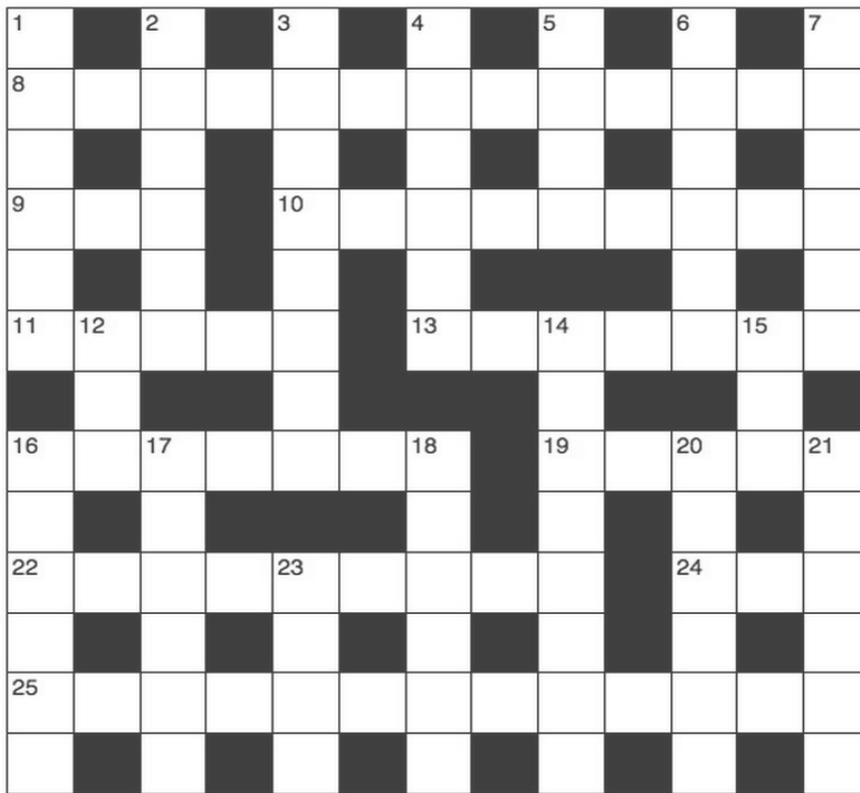
Led by the Spirit
And tempted by the devil
He wandered in the wilderness,
Hungry
And focused on God,
And the truth and power of His Word.
Truth and power enough
To resist His enemy and ours.
To go on – armed with the Spirit –
To give His life,
To give us life.

A lesson in tactics then:
Know the truth,
Submit to God,
Resist the devil
And our wildernesses will blossom.
We will bear fruit,
Fruit to be known by
As His.

By Daphne Kitching



"Don't worry, I'm not getting Covid - I didn't realise the sign meant a low door..."



CROSSWORD CHALLENGE

See how you get on with this crossword. There is no prize, but whoever gets it back to the Editor by February 22nd will be entered on a Roll of Honour in the next edition of *Growing Together*.

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)



December/January
Crossword answer

ROLL OF HONOUR

One person got the crossword answer to me and it was

Jim & Shelagh Goffin

Beating the Lockdown Blues

Pandemic Blues

First off I must confess to enjoying lockdown BUT not the reasons for it. The worry about friends and family is a constant and if it weren't for "the clear and present danger" of COVID I would be content. Why? Well it means I get to stay at home not having to go anywhere or keep appointments and my only commitment is to keep myself and others safe. Very freeing (selfish gene mode switched on). The first lockdown meant I had time to sew and have so far completed several patchwork tops ready to be turned into quilts....but that's another story. I turned my conservatory into an art studio and have painted to my hearts content, not always to my artist's content however, as several of my 'masterpieces' now languish in the recycle bin. I even decided this year to make Christmas cards for family and close friends. I haven't done this for some time now, preferring to make donations to charity but not being able to say Happy Christmas in person made a handmade card a poor substitute but substitute none the less. Then able to re-read all my favourite books and watch my favourite DVD's... it was a win win situation. I'm know there are lots of downsides to living alone but a big plus is doing what you want when you want. My two cats didn't object; they were happy having a lap to curl up on for a lot of the time. I'm also super fortunate in having a savvy tech friend who organised the setting up of Zoom meetings. Initially it was for our Cursillo group reunions but it quickly grew into meeting every day, after all, it wasn't as if we had anywhere to go! We still meet regularly at 11 o'clock.

We now have art journaling three days a week; our Cursillo meeting and Bible Study one day each and Art Club on a Saturday. There are two sessions on a Sunday. An early one to pray for all the services taking place either actual or virtual...all virtual again as I write this, and a later one for coffee and catch-up to discuss the service and 'chit chat'. The meetings have been a life line to keeping what little sanity I have in place and the lynch pin of my day. Whatever else I do or don't do, meeting at 11 o'clock is a definite. So, what's good about them? Feeling down/ depressed/lonely/under the weather [easy enough at this time of the year] or just in need of company, these meetings give me a sense of purpose and hope. It doesn't matter if you're still in your night gear or even still in bed, the comfort of talking to friends; discussing feelings, worries, fears, or anxieties lifts the spirit. Sharing small joys and answers to prayers; laughing at the ridiculousness of things and just trying to be normal in this abnormal time gives a purpose to my day and a huge serotonin boost. We humans are gregarious creatures; even introverts need company on occasions, so communication in all forms is essential for our mental well-being. Letters, post cards, emails, WhatsApp, phoning, Skyping, talking to the neighbour over the garden fence or during the warmer months, a socially distanced coffee morning, all are as vital as keeping physically well. I thank God that I have the gifts of others to help me stay in touch with friends and family during what looks like, listening to the pundits, 12 months of restrictions. Everybody talks about what will the "new normal" look like. I hope and pray for a more caring society, one that puts others before self; the environment before profit; sharing the earth's resources rather than being grabbed by the powerful and greedy. Mostly I pray for love before fear and hate. I do wonder what my "new normal" will be. I hope it includes my making more time for meditation and personal prayers (I've rediscovered Praying in Colour); for having fewer car journeys and more meetings online; of being more aware of my carbon footprint and how I can support others and of course to continue with my sewing and painting. Finally to be able to see, in person, everyone I love and care about without having any worries. So until then;

KEEP WELL KEEP SAFE KEEP SANE

Joan

What's been keeping me busy.

On 11th September we welcomed our first great grandchild, a beautiful baby boy, Theodore Mark Done (known as Theo!). I used to knit a lot when my own children and then later my grandchildren were born, so I hunted out my old patterns and needles, bought some wool and knit a few "cardis" for him. One pattern had 6p in old money on!! it, but it turned out beautifully.

Barbara & George Done

Difficult times

Life has been difficult during the pandemic with Stanley's health deteriorating , finally ending up in hospital for six weeks altogether and of course, no visiting but the wonderful support of family and friends has been really wonderful knowing that we are supported by prayer and practical actions. My prayer at this time has been one found in a book of morning prayers "**Lord help me to remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that together you and I can't handle**". How true that has been and still is.

Wendy Sefton

Christmas Nativity Frieze

At the beginning of December, one of our congregation Joan Clare came into Church and painted a frieze of a nativity scene that would have been around at the time of Jesus. We asked the children of Victoria Road School to colour in the characters from that period. Then an army of people from our congregation cut out the characters that the children had coloured in and then they put onto the frieze. The children from the school had also provided some sung carols, that we put as background music for a video that Brian Lunt has produced and you can see the finished item on our website or A Church near you.

A BIG THANK TO EVERYONE WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT



The challenge to some over-60s

Last year saw a steep rise in redundancies among the over-60s, and a lack of proficiency with digital work tools such as Zoom helped contribute to the problem. The number of workers over 60 who were made redundant increased from 8,000 between April and June to 31,000 between July and September – twice the percentage increase of any other groups. According to research by Rest Less, a jobs site for older people, older workers are less likely to receive workplace training than their younger counterparts, and once made redundant are significantly more likely to find themselves in long-term unemployment. “Contrary to popular belief, most 60-somethings are not revelling in their gold-plated final salary pensions – a long lost preserve of their parents’ generation.”

Do me a favour?

I just had an email from a clergyman, saying, “Hi” and asking me to do him “a favour”. 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 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.



February
2021

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

February Birthday

Congratulations to Nora Dean who celebrates her birthday on February 9th, also to Helen Owen who celebrates her birthday on February 24th.



Leave them be

The National Trust has urged the public to stay away from certain areas during breeding season this Spring. It hopes to mimic the effects of lockdown last year, which helped more vulnerable species. The call follows the discovery last year that lockdown did our peregrine falcons, grey partridges and other species a real favour. The tern colony at Blakeney Point in Norfolk had a bumper season, with more than 200 little tern chicks fledged, the most in 25 years. The Peak District saw more curlew, and the Llyn Peninsula saw more stoats, weasels and rabbits emerging from the woodlands of Plas yn Rhiw. Meanwhile, the ruins of Corfe Castle in Dorset became home to peregrine falcons, and a cuckoo arrived in Osterley, west London. Even Dartford warblers were on the move, some to as far as Shropshire.

INFORMATION

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**If you want to book
a wedding, baptism or funeral
please phone this number
07722470940**



Please Pray



Please remember the following people in your prayers throughout this month.

José Colley

Liz Adams

Graham & Nicola Aylett

Norah Gamon

If you would like us to pray for someone close to you please let the Vicar know. Or if you would like the Pastoral Care Team to visit someone at home don't hesitate to let them know.

....and the recently bereaved, especially any families known to you

Lillian Williamson

Frank Cartwright

Annalise Sanderson

Ernest Hill

Smart bird

Ravens have been found to be among the cleverest animals in the world. These largest members of the crow family can even score as high on intelligence tests as chimpanzees. Ravens can remember where food is hidden, can use tools to get at it, follow human faces with their eyes, and understand what people mean when they point. All in all, researchers praise their "general, sophisticated cognitive skills." The study was carried out at Osnabruck University in Germany.



Chain vicars

If you are unhappy with our vicar, simply have our churchwarden send a copy of this letter to six other churches who are also tired of their vicar. Then bundle up our vicar and send him to the church on the top of the list in the letter. Within a week you will receive 16,435 vicars and one of them should be all right! Have faith in this chain letter for vicars. Do not break the chain. One church did - and got their old vicar back!

(From a Salisbury Theological College leaflet)