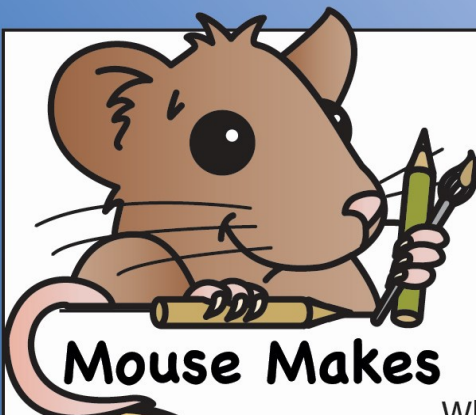


InSpire



Issue 89 January 2025
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Junior InSpire



After Jesus was born in Belthlehem, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem looking for the child born to be king of the Jews. They had seen his star and had come to worship him. King Herod was troubled so met with the wise men to tell them to let him know when they found him.



When they saw the star rest over where Jesus was they rejoiced and gave him three special gifts. God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod so they went home by another way.




J E W S
M A R Y
W S O N
O T N A

How many other words can you make from:
EPIPHANY

EPIPHANY is the Greek word for **MANIFEST** which means 'to show'. God shows us who He is through His son Jesus Christ

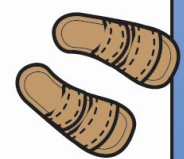


Herod wanted to destroy Jesus, but God told Joseph to flee to Egypt to be safe.
Where did Jesus finally grow up?


READ
the story of the wise men in *Matthew 2:1-23*



E G O D
B O R N
F L E E
L D G E



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

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Good plans for the New Year

'For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will hear you. You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart.' - *Jeremiah 29: 11-13*

Would you prefer to receive InSpire online?

You can register to receive InSpire via email each month OR download individual issues!

www.capelandockleychurch.org.uk/inspire-magazine

With many thanks to
this month's sponsor

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CHURCH SERVICES AND EVENTS - JANUARY 2025 at St John the Baptist, Capel & St Margaret's, Ockley

JANUARY

Sunday	5th	The Epiphany
	9.3am	Matins - Ockley
	10.30am	Family Communion - Capel
Sunday	12th	The Baptism of Christ
	9.30	Holy Communion (CW) - Ockley
	10.30	Cafe Church with guest speaker Gail Lawther - Capel
Sunday	19th	Epiphany 2
	9.30	Parish Communion - Capel
Sunday	26th	Epiphany 3
	9.30	Holy Communion BCP - Ockley
	10.30	Morning Worship - Capel

FEBRUARY

Sunday	2nd	Candlemas (The Presentation of Christ in the Temple)
	9.30	Matins - Ockley
	10.30	Christingle Service in aid of The Children's Society- Capel



*Don't forget you can find details of all events & services on
our website!*
<https://www.capelandockleychurch.org.uk/events-calendar/>



Rev Liz writes

Dear friends,

Happy New Year! Where did last year go? Looking back over the last year in my diary I am reminded of another wonderful year in Capel and Ockley. What a joy and honour it is to be called to serve both communities as your village priest! There have been several themes last year - one particularly popular in Capel was the celebration and occurrence of quite a few 'big birthdays' - mine included! What to do to celebrate? Look no further than The Crown who hosted the most marvellous 'noughts' party one very hot July afternoon for all those who wished to join in. It was a wonderful occasion!

The year has been full of ups and downs like any other I guess and the villages have lost several much loved longstanding residents. Their funerals and services of thanksgiving have given many a chance to pay their respects and support the bereaved. On a happier note we have had some beautiful weddings and baptisms. Such a joy to celebrate with our couples and families! Now that couples can be married by a celebrant at reception venues the number of weddings we conduct are fewer sadly.

Then there was the 80th Anniversary of D-Day with a range of memorable community events over that time. I particularly enjoyed the Rude Mechanical Theatre Company's production of The Dressing Book. It was so different and highly entertaining despite the constant drone of aircraft!! Later on, we also had the excitement of the Capel Military Show which attracts many to our village and the wonderful Capel Show. Everyone involved works so hard. Our communities have so much to offer and 2024 was another successful year for all those who volunteer, give up their time and talents to work hard for the rest of us. It seems very fitting therefore that the year ended with the brilliant Christmas Capel Old Friends lunch. Such a wonderful occasion and quite how you produce such a delicious meal for over 100 people I don't know. But Emma and her team do so magnificently with so many delightful little touches for everyone. So a very big THANK YOU to everyone who have given us such a wonderful year of events.

Our Church Christmas trees have generally withstood the storm and once again brought the community together to bring in the festive season. Christmas can be a very difficult time for so many despite the jollity and I hope that we all may have been able to reach out to those alone or who find the festivities just too much. As we begin another new year remember who it is that is hidden underneath the surface, the glitter, the decorations and too much turkey.

As we travel through the season of Epiphany celebrating that God was revealed in Jesus, as a model for us today. That baby born in a stable grew up to befriend poor and marginalised people, to value women, to heal outsiders and followers of other faiths. Jesus, angry at the rigid rules of the establishment, invites us to call God our Father, promising to be with us always, then dying for us, and rising again. I pray that 2025 will bring you joy and peace as we travel onwards, knowing that like the Magi, who followed the star, who travelled a long way in search of answers, they unexpectedly stumbled across the Saviour of the world born in a humble stable.

With my love and prayers as ever

Liz

liz@myhostserver.co.uk 01306 711260

Vicar St John the Baptist, Capel and St Margaret's, Ockley

NEWS from the Pews

The Vicarage Nativity Scene

The Nativity scene has been very popular this year with many stopping or drawing up to see the Holy Family on the Vicarage front lawn. We also collected nearly £140.00 at the Crib service on Christmas Eve which will be sent to Leatherhead START, our local homeless shelter and charity. Thank you to Christina Curtis and to Doug for their assembly of the stable and figures once again this year!

If you wish to donate to the above-mentioned charity or another homeless charity, please do. But besides all that, it is simply our gift to you!

Happy New year!

Rev Liz

Capel Christmas Fair

Would you like to be on the Fair Committee?

If anyone would like to join our Christmas Fair committee, we would love to hear from you!

We start planning in the New Year and would be grateful for more help!

Thank you

Suzanne, Helen & Kerena
The Capel Christmas Fair
committee

Email:
info@capelchristmasfair.co.uk
www.capelchristmasfair.co.uk



The Pavilion Café

Every Wednesday at Ockley Cricket Club Pavilion
9 am until midday



Come and enjoy a warm welcome and a delicious range of homemade cakes and savouries - including gluten/dairy free. Bacon butties every fourth Wednesday and freshly made teas and coffees.

The Pavilion Café was originally the idea of Kindred Spirits, the women's outreach group from Ockley, Okewood and Forest Green Parish, 11 years ago. It is run by a team of volunteers in support of charities, local charitable causes and Ockley events.

If you would like to volunteer, please let Liz know on either 07951 710176 or lizthorne2053@hotmail.co.uk

SAFEGUARDING NOTICE

This notice will appear each month in InSpire

'The care and protection of children, young people and adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the life of the church. If you are concerned that someone you know is at risk of, or is being abused, or presents a risk to others, please seek advice from a Safeguarding Adviser or if necessary report the matter to the Local Authority Social Care Services or the Police without delay.'

If you have any concerns please contact our Safeguarding Officer: Leigh Smith 732825908
leighdesouza@yahoo.com

or Revd Liz Richardson 01306 711260 liz@hostmyserver.co.uk

Update January 2024: New diocesan contact number for reporting safeguarding concerns:
safeguarding@cofeguildford.org.uk

Café Church— JANUARY 2025

New Year's Resolution, anyone?



Are you in the habit of starting each year with a resolution or promise to yourself that something is going to change for the better in your life? It's something I gave up a long time ago knowing only too well that, while the sentiment was genuine, my willpower was about as fragile as a politician's promise! At the same time, there are many situations that need urgent resolution. Maybe there is a schism in a family relationship, maybe there are difficulties at work. On a national scale we are told on a daily basis that problems in the NHS, housing, public services and social care all need resolution. And if we look beyond the shores of our own, small island then we see endless areas of conflict where people are praying for resolution and peace. It all feels somewhat overpowering.

The world is full of people who, at this point, start to condemn a supposedly loving God for not intervening and sorting everything out. What they conveniently overlook is that the way God works is by using His people. We are, quite literally, His hands and feet on this earth through which he wants to reach out to a chaotic world.

So, how can we make a difference? Well, certainly not in our own strength. The reason that most of the problems exist in the first place is because we think we know best! God, in His infinite wisdom, has got this covered. In the book of Galatians there is a list of all of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. For Christians these are available as part of our walk of faith but whether you share a different faith or no faith at all these are clearly qualities that we should *all* aspire to. The key to the resolution of our personal, national and international problems starts with us. If we all make a New Year's resolution this January to nurture and put into practice one or more of these "fruits of the Spirit" then the world will start to look very different. I think that means that my weak willpower is going to have to give way to a more focused faithfulness. I'm going to try - how about you?

Bob Cranham



Dorking Foodbank has sent a Christmas e-card wishing us all at Capel and Ockley every blessing for a Happy Christmas.

Thank you to all who donate to them throughout the year.





Independent review into Church's handling of Smyth case shakes the C of E

The independent review by Keith Makin into the Church of England's handling of allegations of serious abuse by the late John Smyth was published last autumn.

Keith Makin, who led the independent review said, "The abuse at the hands of John Smyth was prolific and abhorrent. Words cannot adequately describe the horror of what transpired.

"Many of the victims who took the brave decision to speak to us about what they experienced have carried this abuse silently for more than 40 years.

"Despite the efforts of some individuals to bring the abuse to the attention of authorities, the responses by the Church of England and others were wholly ineffective and amounted to a coverup.

"The Church and its associated organisations must learn from this review and implement robust safeguarding procedures across their organisations that are governed independently.

"This has been a long process but a necessary one to uncover the extent of John Smyth's despicable behaviour and how the Church reacted to it.

"I would like to sincerely thank the victims for their courage, grace and dignity and I would like to remind everyone reporting on this review about their right to anonymity and privacy."

The Church of England's Lead Safeguarding Bishop, Joanne Grenfell, and the National Director of Safeguarding, Alexander Kubeyinje said, "We are deeply sorry for the horrific abuse inflicted by the late John Smyth and its lifelong effects, already spanning more than 40 years.

"The review concludes that Smyth is arguably the most prolific serial abuser to be associated with the Church of England. We know that no words can undo the damage done to people's lives both by him and by the failure of individuals in the Church and other institutions to respond well. We are also aware that the time the review has taken, which the reviewer addresses, as well as the details now in the public domain have been retraumatising for survivors.

"We highlight the comment in the review from a deceased cleric (David Fletcher) who was aware in the 1980s, along with others, of the extent of the abuse: 'I thought it would do the work of God immense damage if this were public'.

"We are appalled that any clergy person could believe that covering up abuse was justified in the name of the Gospel, which is about proclaiming Good News to the poor and healing the broken hearted. It was wrong for a seemingly privileged group from an elite background to decide that the needs of victims should be set aside, and that Smyth's abuse should not therefore be brought to light.

"Every member of the Church is responsible for a culture in which victims are heard, responded to well, and put first: there is never a place for covering up abuse.

"We are aware of criticisms in the report of individuals and organisations and names of clergy were passed to the National Safeguarding Team, NST, from the reviewer (see below Terms of Reference).

"Of those who were interviewed 25 were questioned about their knowledge of Smyth and had their safeguarding risk assessed. The reviewer also had a duty to pass on information to statutory authorities including police if appropriate. Permissions to officiate were removed for some clergy while their actions were considered. Some seriously criticised in the report are deceased, others are not.

"The NST will now consider if there is any new evidence in the report that needs to be considered to assess if there is any ongoing safeguarding risk and if there is evidence to support any disciplinary process.

"The report also highlights Smyth's abuse in Zimbabwe, where a boy died and many more were abused. It is clear that Smyth went abroad in the early 1980s following the discovery of his abuse here and in full knowledge of the church officers named in the report. The reviewer urges the Church to consider commissioning a report into Smyth's actions both in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

"We will now seek to progress this in appropriate ways (noting the recommendation for international information sharing) and liaise with counterparts there who would need to lead on any subsequent investigation, which we would fully support.

"We also note the criticism of the Church's response in 2013 and 2017. We apologise unreservedly that the needs of the victims were not at the forefront in terms of thinking and planning and the response was not trauma informed. We will continue to learn lessons about responding well which is reflected in our revised guidance and survivor engagement framework.

"We welcome all the recommendations and will consider them now in detail, noting work already underway. We wholeheartedly endorse the reviewer's emphasis that safeguarding must be everyone's responsibility in the Church, working closely with safeguarding professionals."

Statement on the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury

Following the publication of the independent review by Keith Makin into the Church of England's handling of allegations of serious abuse by the late John Smyth, the Archbishop of Canterbury resigned on 12th November. He said:

"Having sought the gracious permission of His Majesty The King, I have decided to resign as Archbishop of Canterbury.

"The Makin Review has exposed the long-maintained conspiracy of silence about the heinous abuses of John Smyth.

"When I was informed in 2013 and told that police had been notified, I believed wrongly that an appropriate resolution would follow.

"It is very clear that I must take personal and institutional responsibility for the long and retraumatising period between 2013 and 2024.

"It is my duty to honour my Constitutional and church responsibilities, so exact timings will be decided once a review of necessary obligations has been completed, including those in England and in the Anglican Communion.

"I hope this decision makes clear how seriously the Church of England understands the need for change and our profound commitment to creating a safer church. As I step down I do so in sorrow with all victims and survivors of abuse.

"The last few days have renewed my long felt and profound sense of shame at the historic safeguarding failures of the Church of England. For nearly twelve years I have struggled to introduce improvements. It is for others to judge what has been done.

"In the meantime, I will follow through on my commitment to meet victims. I will delegate all my other current responsibilities for safeguarding until the necessary risk assessment process is complete.

"I ask everyone to keep my wife Caroline and my children in their prayers. They have been my most important support throughout my ministry, and I am eternally grateful for their sacrifice. Caroline led the spouses' programme during the Lambeth Conference and has travelled tirelessly in areas of conflict supporting the most vulnerable, the women, and those who care for them locally.

"I believe that stepping aside is in the best interests of the Church of England, which I dearly love and which I have been honoured to serve. I pray that this decision points us back towards the love that Jesus Christ has for every one of us.

"For above all else, my deepest commitment is to the person of Jesus Christ, my saviour and my God; the bearer of the sins and burdens of the world, and the hope of every person."

The Bishop of Stepney Joanne Grenfell said: "As Lead Bishop for Safeguarding for the Church of England, I have been acutely aware of the impact of the Makin report and the retraumatizing effects of its publication on victims and survivors of John Smyth's awful abuse.

"With sadness, I fully respect and understand Archbishop Justin's decision today to resign. Although Archbishop Justin has helped the Church of England to achieve much in relation to safeguarding during his tenure, because of the failings identified in the Makin Report, it is now necessary for others to take up the baton.

"I have worked closely with Archbishop Justin since I took on this role and have greatly valued his personal commitment to good safeguarding and his desire to see the whole Church make this a priority."

This is my song

For those that were at the Remembrance Service on 10th November the choir sang the anthem 'This is my song' sung to the tune 'Finlandia'.

Finlandia has been used as the tune for many words. It is often thought of as the national anthem of Finland, but that is 'Maamme' – 'Our Land'. Maamme was originally written in Swedish as one of a set of heroic ballads set at the time of the War of Finland (1808-09). As a result of that war Sweden ceded Finland to Russia. The words of 'Our Land' were set to music by a German and has since inspired both the Hungarian and Estonian national anthems.

*This is my song, O God of all the nations,
A song of peace for lands afar and mine.
This is my home, the country where my heart is,
Here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine.
But other hearts in other lands are beating,
With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.*

*My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,
And sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine.
But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.*

Sibelius wrote 'Finlandia' as patriotic music in 1899 and was performed in 1890 as the last of a series of pieces to accompany portions of Finnish history. The opening of Finlandia signifies the struggle of Finnish people against the Russians with the later melody bringing hope and resolution. It was a piece of protest music that was played during Russia's occupation of Finland, and often slipped into concerts with Russians present under different names and arrangements.

It is the struggle and hope that the music brings that makes it suitable for 'This is our song' as well as its words being similar to 'Our Land'. 'This is our song' was written by Lloyd Stone (1912-1993). Stone had many jobs. Initially a "well puller" for Associated Oil and for short period of time in a circus and as a jewelry designer. He worked as a pianist-composer and

teacher in a film studio and later taught orchestra and drama at Honolulu Public Schools and poetry at the University of Hawaii. He designed and illustrated his own stationery and greeting cards and wrote 18 books. The first two verses of 'This is my song' were included in his 'Sing a Tune' collection of 1934. This was a short period of peace between two world wars when there were already gathering signs of war in Europe. It acknowledges a love for his own country, and reflects that others around the world have a similar love to his for their own nations.

The USA Wesleyan Service Guild had used Stone's verses for many years but wanted something more religious as a supplement to them. They turned to the Methodist theologian Georgia Harkness (1881-1974) who added two more verses in the late 1930s. She was one of the first women ordained in the Methodist Church in the USA and a leading ecumenical theologian of her day.

Our version of 'This is my song' omits her final verse which is based upon the Lord's Prayer.

*So let us raise this melody together,
Beneath the stars that guide us through the night;
If we choose love, each storm we'll learn to weather,
Until true peace and harmony we find,
This is our song, a hymn we raise together;
A dream of peace, uniting humankind.*

*This is my prayer O Lord of all earth's kingdoms
Thy kingdom come on earth Thy will be done
Let Christ be lifted up till all shall serve Him
And hearts united learn to live as one
O hear my prayer Thou God of all nations
Myself I give Thee let Thy will be done*

Written by Stuart Cole

PRAYERS, PROSE & POEMS

New Year 2025

If we put our hand in God's hand
As we enter this New Year
Not knowing what the future holds
But that our Friend is near.

We shall not fear what lies ahead
If He is by our side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If He will be our guide.

The Sinless One from heaven came
To dwell with us on earth,
He sought and bought us with His blood
And offered us new birth.

Now as we travel through this year
He knows the things He's planned,
So let us trust and know just this -
Our times are in His hands.

By Megan Carter

Prayer of the Master (John 17:13-26)

Spirit of joy
Oh, protect us,
As we work hand in hand
Through the world.

Sent by the Son
And the Father.
Fruit-bearers,
Called and commissioned.
Witnesses to the world
Of the Word that speaks
Hope into despair,
Wholeness into disintegration,
Forgiveness into fault.

Spirit of love
Overwhelm us,
That the world might believe
And be changed.

Activate the prayer of the Master,
Make us one.

By Daphne Kitching

Prayer for the Middle East

Dear God,

We cry out to you on behalf of the people seriously affected by the conflict in the Middle East. Our hearts break at the devastation and suffering that we see, and we know it breaks yours, too.

We ask that you would stretch out your mighty hand to bring an end to this war.

We cry out for people who have been injured or traumatised, who have lost loved ones or their homes. Please provide everything they need and be their comfort, their hope, their healer, and their safe refuge.

We pray for your peace to reign. We look to you as our Saviour and the hope of the world.

Amen.

© Tearfund

Day & Night Blessing

May God's blessing be yours,
And good be it sent;
May Christ's blessing be yours,
And good be it meant;
Spirit's blessing be yours,
For life's good intent,
Day arising indoors,
Night lying down spent.

Ancient Celtic Prayer

Looking back - and forwards

A man had spent many years as a drunkard and a layabout. But through the Salvation Army, he turned to God, and his life gradually changed. He joined a local church, and became known for his honest, if unusual, prayers.

As the New Year dawned, he stood up in church and prayed: "Lord, we're not what we wanna be, we're not what we oughta be, and we're not what we're gonna be - but thanks to You, Jesus, we're not what we used to be!"

©Parish Pump

Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham considers 2025

At the start of the New Year

2025 is a year of Jubilee in the Roman Catholic Church, a year which takes place every 25 years. It's a special year of forgiveness and reconciliation, in which people are invited to come back into right relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. This acts as a challenge for all of us:

How can we spend more time talking and listening to God through reading the Bible and prayer?

How can we grow our love for our family and friends?

How can we make more impact at work, by demonstrating an attractive faith to colleagues?

When Joshua led God's people to the banks of the Jordan, ready to cross over into the Promised Land, he said: *'you have never been this way before'* (Joshua 3:4). At the beginning of a New Year, when we don't know what the future holds, how can we grow in our relationship with God?

Keep our focus on God: The people were told to follow the Ark, symbolising God's presence, as they crossed the river. Let's keep our focus on God and His Word throughout this year and keep in step with where He is leading us.

Consecrate ourselves: Joshua said, *'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.'* (3:5). God has exciting opportunities ahead for us in this coming year! Let us dedicate our lives afresh to Him, as we let go of known sin and keep our eyes open on seeing God at work in all of our lives.

Will 2025 be a good year for us? *'In the end, it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years.'* Abraham Lincoln

Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible, which will run until the end of 2025.

What's the Big Idea? - an introduction to the books of the New Testament: Acts

The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke, a physician-friend and fellow-traveller of Paul. It complements his gospel, both being written for Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), in around AD 63, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

While Luke's gospel records what Jesus *began* to do and teach, Acts tells us about what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through the disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit (1:1-3).

Luke's aim is:

To present a history. Christianity has a firm historical foundation. The life and teaching of Jesus Christ are recorded in the Gospels; Acts provides an account of the spread of the Church, as the result of the work of the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

To give a defense. We read speeches to both Jews (eg 4:8–12) and Gentiles (eg 25:8–11), showing us how the Early Church challenged pagan and Jewish thought, the Roman government and Hellenistic culture.

To provide a guide. We see basic gospel principles being applied to specific situations in the context of problems and persecution. These same principles are applicable for us today.

To depict the triumph of Christianity in the face of bitter persecution. The success of the Church carrying the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome and planting local churches demonstrates that it operates under the rule of the exalted Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (1:8). Just as the Holy Spirit empowered the first Christians in their witness, so He will do the same for us today!

A NEW series for 2025

Editor: It can be hard to pray sometimes, and most of us need all the help we can get! This new series, which will run all year, is by the Revd Dr Herbert McGonigle, formerly of the Nazarene Theological College, Manchester

Praying with the prayers of the Bible

In this series we will be looking at 12 prayers found in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. Some are prayers for personal circumstances, while others relate to family or church or nation. In studying all 12 prayers the emphasis will be on what we can learn about prayer and how we can be encouraged to pray more regularly, more fervently and more expectantly.

Praying about the Unknown Future: "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Genesis 15:2-3.

This is the Bible's first prayer. That doesn't mean that no one before Abraham had prayed, but this is the first time we have a record of someone praying to God.

We learn as early as Genesis 4 that "men began to call on the name of the Lord" (v.26) but it does not explicitly say that they prayed. We can hardly believe that godly men like Enoch and Noah never prayed. Enoch 'walked with God' and in his long pilgrimage of three hundred years of fellowship with God (Gen. 5:22) he must have prayed many times.

Even before Abraham's first prayer is mentioned we are told that God appeared to him, that he built an altar for sacrifice and worship and that he called on the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:7; 13:18). But now he faces a real crisis in his life.

When God first appeared to him, he had been promised that from his family a great nation would emerge (Gen. 12:1-3). Now many years later he still has no children and custom dictates that his chief servant, Eliezer, will inherit everything. Has God forgotten him? Were all those promises of being a father just make believe or self-delusion?

So he cried to God, "What will you give me?" It was a desperate prayer from a desperate heart. What was God doing? Why had He not kept His promises? Had He forgotten? Was He not able to do what He had promised? We have all been where Abraham was when he prayed that prayer. We want to believe but *why is nothing happening?*

Then God answered! "Your own son shall be your heir" (v.4). This wonderful answer was sealed with a dramatic illustration. God directed Abraham to look up into the night sky. "Number the stars if you can," God said. "So shall your descendants be." Abraham would one day have as many offspring as the stars in the sky! Impossible? Incredible? Far-fetched?

But it happened! The next chapter records the birth of his son Ishmael, and two chapters later we read of the birth of Isaac, the son of promise. And history, both biblical and secular, confirms that the illustration from the stars was no exaggeration!

So, the Bible's first prayer helps us in several ways. First, when our hearts ache because of fear or doubt or uncertainty, take it to God in prayer. Second, God's delays are not denials. Third, with Abraham who 'believed the Lord' (v.6), let us trust quietly in our sovereign and gracious God.

*Yesterday has gone for ever,
Forget it, let it go,
Look forward with a happy heart,
Tomorrow's yours, you know.*

*The future is an open gate
With pathways leading on,
And there's a bright horizon now
The troubled past is gone.*

*Tomorrow's just a dream away,
So make that dream come true,
With flag unfurled take on the world,
Tomorrow is for you!*

By Iris Hesselden

Taken from The Friendship Book, A thought for each day 2016.

How the New Year and Resolutions began

1st January was not always the start of a New Year. The Babylonians began their New Year on 23rd March. For them, it was a logical choice, as with the arrival of Spring, crops were being planted, and a new cycle of life was beginning.

For centuries the Romans agreed with them, but they chose 1st March for New Year. It was the Romans who brought in the idea of making resolutions at New Year, mostly along the lines of acting more noble, and doing good to others.

Then in 46BC Julius Caesar changed the Roman Empire's calendar. His new Julian calendar realigned the year to the sun, and also began on 1st January. Caesar wanted to honour Janus, the two-faced god who looks backwards into the old year and forward into the new. January 1st didn't have any astronomical or agricultural significance, it was just a random date selected by Caesar.



Holocaust Memorial Day 'particularly significant' in 2025 - 27th January

The UK Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) Ceremony brings together the civic, faith and political leadership of the country, alongside survivors of the Holocaust and more recent genocides.

HMD 2025 will be a particularly significant year, as it will mark 80 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and 30 years since the genocide in Bosnia.

More than 1.1 million people were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, over 90% of whom were Jewish. An estimated 100,000 people were killed during the conflict in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995.



Left out in the cold

A member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services each week, stopped going.

After a few weeks, the minister decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The minister found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his minister's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace and waited. The minister made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs.

After some minutes, the minister took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination.

As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead and dark.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The two men sat on in reflective silence.

A little while later, just before the minister was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the minister reached the door to leave, his host said, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I shall be back in church next Sunday."



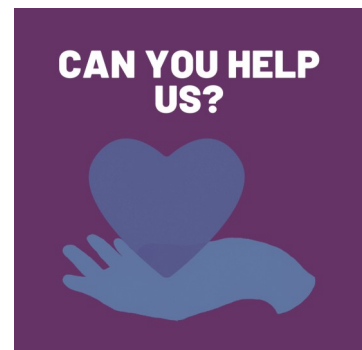
Could you sponsor an issue of InSpire in 2025?

We are grateful to all our sponsors of the 2024 issues! It is that time of year again when we appeal for sponsors for the year ahead.

If you would like to sponsor an issue in 2025, please speak to Suzanne or Helen Burt our Treasurer. We'd love to hear from you. Often, sponsorship can be shared with someone else to halve the costs!

Our sponsors enable us to keep the magazine free of charge for our readers.

Thank you for considering and thank you to all past sponsors.



Editor: The Revd Dr Jo White considers the job of packing up Christmas.

Reflecting Faith: taking down the Christmas tree decorations

Last month we considered the decorations we put on our Christmas trees, both at home and in our churches.

Many churches keep their decorations – or at least their nativity scene – in place until Candlemas at the beginning of February, but most of us take our domestic ones down around Epiphany, on 6th January, when we recall the arrival of the Three Kings.

But how do we manage them for the rest of the year, after we have taken them down?

Our Christmas ‘baubles’ come in all colours, in matt and shiny, in all shapes and sizes. They can remind us of people, who also come in all shapes and sizes, colours and tones. Baubles are very fragile, like we are sometimes.

This year as you take down your decorations, have a good look at them and think about the care that you take to store them safely, so that they will not break.

How much more care do you take in looking after the people who make up your life? Your family, friends, neighbours, church, colleagues, local shop keepers, and so on?

It’s quick and easy to pick up the decorations and just drop them in a box, but without some gentle care, will they be okay for next year?

It’s too easy to pass folk by, and get on with what we are doing for ourselves, our own plans and goals; but aren’t people worth more than that?

Who do we know that would greatly benefit if we gave them just a bit more time, a bit more consideration?



Editor: What does the year ahead hold? Here are some tips on how to prepare yourself for whatever lies ahead...

Pray with your shoes

With the rush of Christmas almost over, we tumble into the New Year, sleep for a couple of days, take down the decorations and plod back to work, school or our normal routines. There’s a pleasure about getting back to normality, but there’s also the challenge of looking forward to what the year will bring.

Not all of us welcome this new year. For some of us, we know it will bring separations and loss: children growing up and growing away, moving away, family and friends moving on.

For some of us, it will bring extra work, new responsibilities, study for exams, looking after others. For others of us, we will have to start again; to learn to be on our own, perhaps through moving away or the loss of those we have lived with for many years and decades.

Just for this month, when you put on your shoes each morning, ask God to be with you in the day ahead. Ask Him to walk ahead of you, to be by your side and close behind you, to surround you with His presence. For it is *His* day that we are walking into and not ours. Let His will be done, and not ours.

And then, as you take your shoes off, see what you can thank God for from that day together. To help to remind you, why not leave a single shoe by the main door – that might get visitors asking too!

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear friends,

May we meet this new year bravely, sure in the faith that while men come and go, and life changes around us, God is ever the same, guiding us with His wisdom and protecting us with His love.
- William Temple

The above is just one inspiring quote regarding New Year which you can find on page 24 in 'Observations for the New Year'. I hope everyone enjoyed their Christmas however they spent it. It was lovely to see our church with a larger congregation for the Nine Lessons & Carols service and Midnight Mass and I believe the Crib Service was also well attended. The Nativity scene on the front lawn of the Vicarage has apparently proved a hit too! We thank Liz and Doug for this lovely scene every year and for the help of Christine Curtis who put it together with Doug. I'm sure we all join in in thanking Liz and Doug for another year of Ministry and service to our united Parish of Capel and Ockley. We also give thanks for Gill Christie's ongoing training and send our prayers with her as she starts her placement shortly.

There are lots of seasonal articles in this issue including the **'Reflecting Faith: taking down the Christmas decorations'** on the opposite page, together with **'How the New Year and Resolutions began'** on page 16, **'At the Start of the New Year'** where Canon Paul Hardingham considers 2025 on page 12 and **'6th January - What about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?'** on page 29. There are also some puzzles to help keep you amused and challenged!

The Advent Group which was studying the book 'Women of the nativity' by Paula Gooder will be starting again on Monday 7th January at 3pm. The venue is 1 Old Barn Drive, thanks to the kind hospitality of Mairi Inglis-Jones. The book is 'An Advent and Christmas Journey in Nine Stories' and has been very informative so far. We are hoping to do a Lent Group with Rev Liz's leadership after we complete this course. If anyone is interested in joining, do have a word with Rev Liz or see you on 7th January at 3pm!

There is an interesting and thought provoking article on page 19 regarding the persecution of Christians around the world. There is also a link in the same article <https://www.opendoorsuk.org> where you can find out more and there are ways to pray for regions such as Syria. On that note, there is also a new series ***Praying with the prayers of the Bible*** on page 13 with Revd Dr Herbert McGonigle. He says *'In this series we will be looking at 12 prayers found in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. Some are prayers for personal circumstances, while others relate to family or church or nation. In studying all 12 prayers the emphasis will be on what we can learn about prayer and how we can be encouraged to pray more regularly, more fervently and more expectantly.'* We look forward to featuring this series through the coming year.

We are now actively looking for sponsors for the 2025 issues of InSpire so if anyone is interested in doing so, please let Helen Burt or myself know. We would be very grateful. Our generous sponsors allow us to keep the magazine free of charge for our readers. It is often possible to share sponsorship of an issue too which helps to keep the cost down.

On page 26 there is an article on T. S. Eliot who died 60 years on 4th January. I now leave you with some of his words as we move forward into the new year ...

"For last year's words belong to last year's language and next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning." If there has been some kind of ending in your life, perhaps now is the time for a new beginning. I hope it will be a happy, healthy and successful one for each of you and a year of peace and goodwill for our troubled world.

With my best wishes,

Suzanne
inspire@capelandockleychurch.org.uk



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 – 18th to 25th January

It is now 1,700 years since the First Council of Nicaea. Not many people know that.

Anyway – so what?

Because the Council of Nicaea, in 325, was the very first ecumenical council that the Christian Church ever held. A serious heresy had crept into the Eastern Church: Arianism, which taught that Jesus Christ was not divine, but only human.

To resolve the crisis, the Emperor Constantine called a council and summoned both the Western Church and the Eastern Church. Constantine knew that the Church had to get together and pull in the same direction. They did, and out of that Council came the Nicene Creed.

Get together and pull in the same direction. That is a good description of what Christ's Church on earth should be doing. That is the hope of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

For 2025, the theme of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity focuses on belief, in commemoration of the Council of Nicaea, held so long ago.

The Scripture passage chosen for the worship service is Martha's confession of faith in Jesus, as narrated in John 11:17-27. Jesus had said: 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord,' she replied, 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'

Jesus is the Messiah. He is divine. Mary believed in Him, and so did the Council of Nicaea in 325. And so do hundreds of millions of Christians today.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from the 18th to 25th January – the 'octave' of St Peter and St Paul. This year's resources can be found at: <https://ctbi.org.uk/resources-for-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2025/>

To make you smile ...

In place of cabbage

On Sunday after the church service, a woman told the minister that when she had sent her husband to buy a cabbage for lunch, he had fallen and broken his leg. "That's terrible!" said the minister. "What did you do?"

"I opened a can of peas," she replied.

Bible

A father was approached by his small son, who told him proudly, "I now know what the Bible means!" His father smiled and asked him to explain. "It's easy. It stands for Basic Information Before Leaving Earth."

Good idea

A young theologian, fresh out of university, thought it would help him better understand the world if he served as a policeman before going on for ordination. At the police interview he was asked: "What would you do to disperse a frenzied crowd?"

He promptly responded, "I would pass around an offering plate." He got the job.



Persecution of Christians worldwide – new World Watch List coming

On 15th January Open Doors publishes its well-known World Watch List for 2025, naming the countries where it is most dangerous to be a Christian.

More than 365 million Christians worldwide face persecution and discrimination for their faith – that's a staggering one in seven believers.

The Open Doors website shares the following data from around the world:

North Korea remains at number one as the most dangerous country. It has been at the top 23 times in the past 24 years.

In 2023, 4,998 Christians were killed for their faith. According to Open Doors research, around 90% of these were in Nigeria (just over 4,000), where Christian communities are attacked by armed bandits and Islamic militants. The country with the next highest number of deaths is DRC, with 261.

Militant Islamists are exploiting the chaos in Africa. The sweeping violence against Christians in sub-Saharan Africa is being aided by economic instability, climate change and fractures in governance and security across the region.

But right across the world, as autocratic governments increase their control, Christians are being targeted: in China, Iran, and now Nicaragua, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

An alarming rise in the closure of churches and buildings. Some 15,000 churches or public Christian properties were attacked or closed in 2023 – that's seven times the number recorded in 2022. Two-thirds of these were in China (around 10,000).

Christians squeezed out of the Middle East and North Africa. The situation in Syria has worsened, and believers face extreme persecution. Ongoing conflict, pressure from the Islamic majority, the influence of extremist groups and a collapsed economy contribute to the vulnerability of Christians.

Meanwhile, Libya has reached third on the World Watch List, due to an increase in violence against Christians. And in Tunisia, pressure on Christians continues to grow as President Kais Saied's rule drifts into authoritarianism.

More at: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org>

Understand church language

PROCESSION: The ceremonial formation at the beginning of the Service, consisting of altar servers, the celebrant, and late parishioners looking for seats.

RECESSIONAL: The ceremonial procession at the conclusion of the Service, led by parishioners trying to beat the crowd to the carpark.

RELICS: People who have been going to church for so long that they actually know when to sit, kneel, and stand.

TEN COMMANDMENTS: The most important Top Ten list.

USHERS: The only people in the parish who don't know the seating capacity of a pew.

Observations for the New Year

May we meet this new year bravely, sure in the faith that while men come and go, and life changes around us, God is ever the same, guiding us with His wisdom and protecting us with His love. - *William Temple*

Let us thank God for all the blessing of the year that is past, and let us ask Him to take our lives afresh into His keeping as we face the unknown future. Let us ask Him for His grace for whatever lies before us in the days to come. - *Frank Colquhoun*

Why are people constantly searching for lasting peace and contentment yet never fully satisfied? Many people express this particularly when a New Year approaches. The Bible says this happens for a very good reason: We are incomplete without God. If we leave Him out of our lives, we have an empty place in our souls, a yearning deep inside us that only God can satisfy. So, start the New Year off with a sure thing - God's promise to give you a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). - *Billy Graham*

The most important resolution you can make as another year begins is this: to open your heart and life to Jesus Christ, and commit your life to Him. Don't waste your time on resolutions that don't ultimately matter; resolve instead to live for Christ. - *Billy Graham*

With Epiphany in mind...

We need to see in the Babe born in Bethlehem the eternal star, which will lead us to the place where truth and love and mercy meet. - *George Appleton*

Let us kneel with the shepherds and the kings, and find our heart's joy and peace in Jesus Christ. - *George Appleton*

We should all be concerned about the future, because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there. - *C F Kettering*



"That's two t's in Matthew", said Osric



"It's worth getting to church an hour early to grab a pew by the electric socket."

High Days & Holy Days in January

NEW *31st John Bosco, founder of the Salesian Teaching Order

John Bosco is the saint for anybody concerned for deprived young people.

Bosco never trained as a youth worker, as he was born into a peasant family near Castelnuovo in Piedmont, northern Italy, in 1815. He never belonged to a youth group - he was out in the fields shepherding his family's sheep. But he longed to work with young people, and so in 1835 he was accepted at the seminary in Chieri, where he was ordained a priest in 1841.

Bosco had had a vision, in which he saw a young child, and heard the words: "Not with blows, but with charity and gentleness must you draw these friends to the path of virtue." He knew then that God had given him a specific vocation: his life's work was to be serving deprived youngsters.

And so Bosco headed for the dreary slums of Turin, where he began his ministry in the poor Valdocco quarter of the city. He was haunted by the wretched lives of the many youngsters there, and reached out to them, showing a kindness which they had never encountered before. Soon, as well as his church services, Bosco launched evening classes and training workshops in various trades for the boys in his neighbourhood. For those boys who were homeless, he opened a boarding house, installing his own mother as housekeeper.

Bosco had uncovered a great social need, because his 'Oratory' grew from 20 boys in early 1842 to 400 boys, only four years later, in 1846. By 1859 the 'Pious Society of St Francis de Sales,' commonly known as the Salesians, had been born. The municipal authorities, at first suspicious, soon greatly valued the work that Bosco and his Salesians were doing.

By the time he died in Turin in 1888, the Salesians had 250 houses throughout the world, housing and educating 130,000 poor children. 6,000 of the boys went on to become priests.

19th January - Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester

Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester from 1062 to 1095, occupies a unique place in British church history.

He was the last surviving pre-Conquest bishop, the first bishop to pay homage to William the Conqueror after the battle of Hastings, and one of the few Saxons to keep high office to the end of William's reign. On top of that, he seems to have been a truly good and holy man.

Wulfstan was born about 1008 at Long Itchington, Warwickshire. His uncle was Archbishop of York, and through his help, Wulfstan studied at the monasteries of Evesham and in Peterborough. Because of his Christian dedication, his superiors recommended him for the priesthood. Wulfstan was ordained in 1038 and joined a Benedictine monastery at Worcester.

Wulfstan was appointed prior of the monastery and from 1034 also served as the parish priest of Hawkesbury, Gloucestershire. He was made bishop of Worcester in 1062.

As a bishop, Wulfstan made some significant contributions to the English church. He had a passion for pastoral care and was the first English bishop to be known to have made a complete visitation of his diocese. He was a gifted administrator, increasing the effectiveness of his archdeacons.

He was highly influential in monastic reform, overseeing laws and canons to reform the role of the clergy.

He was a powerful preacher – with a great gift for explaining the teaching of Christianity. He encouraged a wider understanding of public penitence and taught against the many pagan customs throughout the land.

He had a strong social conscience, and soon became a bitter opponent of the slave trade. Together with Lanfranc, Wulfstan was mainly responsible for ending the slave trade in Bristol, and also for abolishing the slave trade between Worcester diocese and Ireland.

He had a passion for buildings, and founded Great Malvern Priory, as well as overseeing the large-scale rebuilding of Worcester Cathedral, Hereford Cathedral, and Tewkesbury Abbey.

Wulfstan died in January 1095, apparently during his daily ritual of washing the feet of 12 of his parishioners.

BOOK REVIEWS

by Parish Pump

Stop the Spiral Devotional - 100 Days of Breaking Free from Negative Thoughts By Jennie Allen, SPCK, £17.99

Are your thoughts holding you captive? Are you worn out from getting stuck in patterns of anxiety, distraction, or cynicism? If so, do you know that God built a way for us to escape that downward spiral?

Stop the Spiral Devotional, inspired by the New York Times bestseller *Get Out of Your Head*, is your invitation to begin noticing negative spirals - every day. In this book, you'll find one hundred days of devotions to inspire you to stop toxic thinking patterns and remind you of God's power to set you free.

Each day's reading includes: verses for meditating on God's Word, a 'Rewire the Spiral' statement to repeat throughout your day, a personal prayer for sparking deeper intimacy with God.

Let this hundred-day devotional guide you in refusing to be a victim to your thoughts and in realizing that you have already been equipped with God's power to live free.

Jennie Allen is the founder and visionary of IF:Gathering, as well as the New York Times bestselling author of *Get Out of Your Head*, *Find Your People*, *Made for This*, *Anything*, and *Nothing to Prove*.

When Faith Gets Shaken: 3rd Edition By Patrick Regan, SPCK, £10.99

What do you do when life falls apart and it feels as if God has left you? How do you keep going when your faith is rocked to the core?

Sometimes things get so hard we're not sure where God is - or what He's up to. Patrick was facing pain, illness and loss in his family and community; then a series of excruciating operations took him to the brink - physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Writing during his journey of recovery, Patrick reflects on the true nature of courage as he explores:

- how we find God in times of suffering
- how we can know God's peace when life is anything but peaceful
- how we allow ourselves the grace to rest when we're running on empty

- how we can stay fully present in the moment.

In doing so, he heartens and encourages us to grasp the love of God at an ever-deeper level.



100 Ways to Get Your Church Noticed - 3rd edition By Neil Pugmire, Church House Publishing £18.99

First published almost 20 years ago, this practical guide by a media professional has helped countless churches to raise their profile in their local communities and more widely. Packed with simple, clear advice and ideas for generating publicity for your church and its mission, this revised third edition engages with the rise in online worship in the wake of the pandemic, and includes many low-cost, effective ideas for churches feeling financial pressures.

The book offers advice on: Developing an effective communications strategy · Deciding the messages you want to convey · Creating or updating your website · Making the most of print, social media and online channels of communication · Putting your building to work, inside and out · Giving your publications a makeover · Liaising with the media and more. Illustrated throughout with examples that have worked successfully, this makes communication expertise readily accessible for churches in all contexts.

Further support available at www.getyourchurchnoticed.com

But Is It Real? - Answering 10 Common Objections To The Christian Faith

By Amy Orr-Ewing, IVP, £9.99

Amy Orr-Ewing gives thoughtful and credible answers to common objections to the Christian faith.

Objections such as: Is God real? Is it possible to know anything, let alone know Him? Why do bad things happen to people who worship this God? What about the spiritual experiences of other faiths?

Amy Orr-Ewing writes, "I hope that the thoughts offered here will help you see what the Christian faith has to say amid all the pain, confusion and complexity of life."

Killing Comparison: Reject the Lie You Aren't Good Enough and Live Confident in Who God Made You to Be

By Nona Jones, Zondervan, £16.86

If you find yourself with feelings of insecurity, sure that others are better off or more worthy than you are...then you're in good company! In today's image-driven world, nearly all of us deal with the struggles of comparison and self-worth.

Nona Jones knows this mindset all too well. Throughout her life and in her recent career as an executive for the world's largest social media company, Nona discovered how true confidence can only be achieved by defeating comparative thinking and securing our identity to God's approval alone.

Join Pastor Nona Jones as she provides a fresh, biblically rooted perspective on the age-old human habit of comparing oneself to others. *Killing Comparison* will give you the tools you need to: determine your true source of self-worth; develop practical ways to conquer daily comparison; learn how to control social media instead of letting it control you; and discover how to accomplish your dreams without comparing yourself at every turn.

Through practical insight and down-to-earth encouragement, Nona helps you avoid the despair of comparison and pursue a life inspired by the one who made us in his image.

The Sacraments: Responding to God's Loving Invitation

York Courses, By Jane Williams, SPCK, £14.99

This lively course on the sacraments by Jane Williams, one of the founders of St Mellitus College, is widely accessible, like all York Courses.

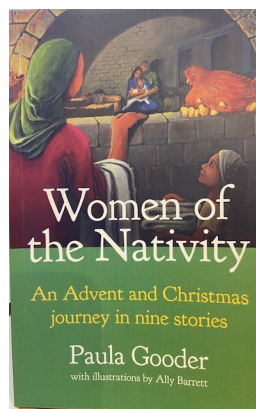
The course book contains the transcript of the accompanying audio/video, in which Jane is joined by a number of guests from various backgrounds, as they discuss the themes of The Sacraments.



Whilst thinking of reading, the Advent group are continuing to meet on Tuesday afternoons at 1 Old Barn Drive, Capel.

The group meetings will start again on **Tuesday 7th January 2025 at 3pm** and we will be continuing to look at **'Women of the Nativity'** An Advent and Christmas Journey in nine stories' by Paula Gooder.

If you have any questions please do speak to Rev Liz.



God in the Arts

Editor: For 2025, the Revd Michael Burgess considers the sacred in Art.

'The Annunciation' - by Domenico Veneziano

During this year, we shall be 'visiting' different art galleries and museums in England to explore their treasures. Our first visit is to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Founded in 1816, it is a wonderful building in Trumpington Street that houses a wealth of art and antiquities.

Our painting this month is *The Annunciation* by Domenico Veneziano, who died in Florence in 1461. It is part of the Magnoli altarpiece, and other panels are on display in Washington and Berlin. The scene has been much loved of artists throughout the ages. We can read the account of Gabriel announcing the good news of motherhood to Mary in chapter two of St Luke's Gospel. In the simplicity and beauty of Veneziano's work, we see Gabriel kneeling with lilies, the traditional symbol of our Lady, who is standing on the far side of the canvas. It is early morning, but the two squares on the wall show the blackness of night. They stand either side of a garden where the door is closed.

An enclosed garden, like the lilies, is a medieval symbol of Mary. 'A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed' we read in the Song of Songs. We might think of the Garden of the Hesperides or the apple orchard of Avalon, or perhaps a monastic herbal garden. They are all images of fruitfulness and new life enclosed by walls. Mary receives the good news of Gabriel and responds with the words, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord.' Her words will open the garden door and lead her out into the new world of redemption, just as Genesis tells us how turning against God closed the garden door of Eden to Adam and Eve.

The pathway from the portico and garden in Veneziano's painting will take Mary into a world where she will give birth to a son, Emmanuel. But that joy of motherhood will be coloured by a flight to Egypt and eventually the death of her Son. Then another garden will announce new and eternal life in the joy of the Resurrection. Here Mary's words will open that door in the garden. She will walk through, trusting in God and letting love guide her steps.

We begin this New Year with an invitation to open the door of our lives to God's guidance and love. That invitation begins with the good news of Emmanuel, God with us. Trusting in that gospel, we can open our lives, like the door of the garden, and travel in trust and love through all that the year will bring.

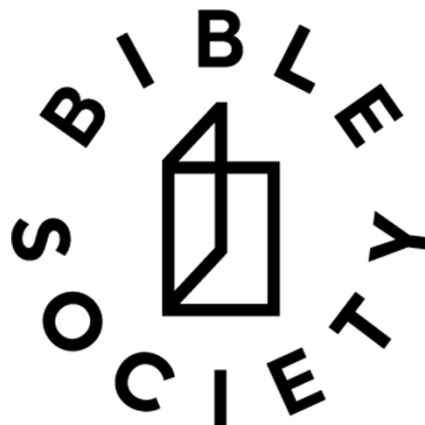
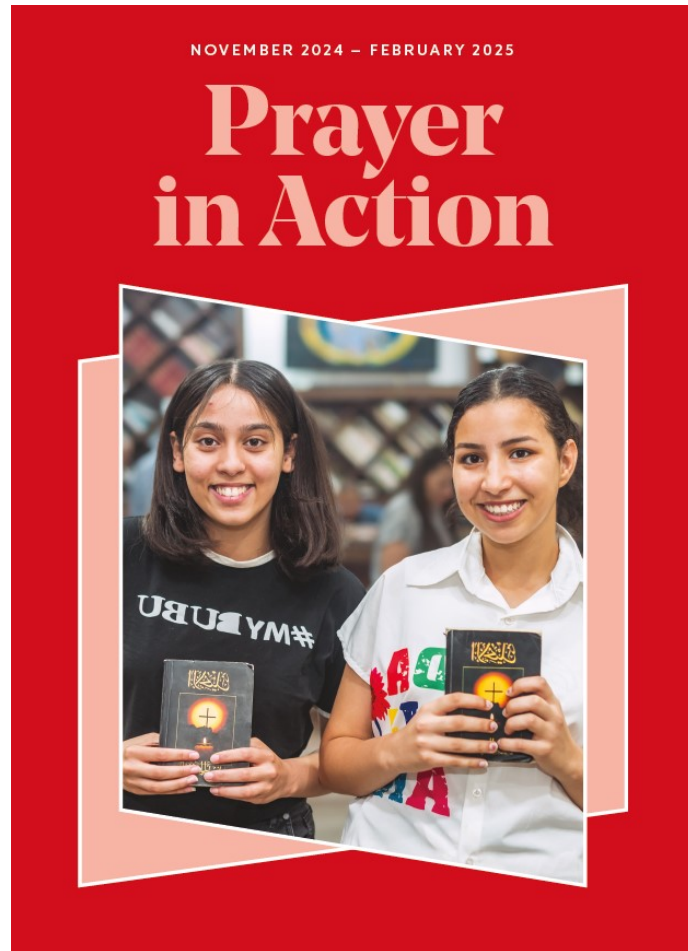


Prayer in Action from The Bible Society

Prayer in Action is the Bible Society magazine dedicated to keeping you up to date with their latest activities and prayer needs around the world.

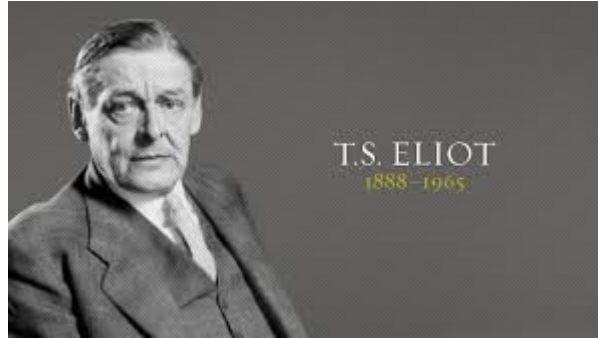
Each week has brief information covering a different theme or country for your prayers. Download the latest *Prayer in Action* below

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/pray-with-us>



Remembering TS Eliot – author of *The Wasteland*

by Tim Lenton



Sixty years ago, on 4th January 1965, T S Eliot, American-born British poet, playwright, literary critic and editor, died. He won the 1948 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in 1888 in St Louis, Missouri, but his family were prominent Unitarians, with roots in Boston. However, he had a Roman Catholic nanny, of whom he was very fond, and who took him to her church. This may have had some bearing on his converting to Anglicanism in 1927, the year he became a British citizen. He was baptised and confirmed secretly in Oxfordshire, saying he hated spectacular conversions.

He identified as Anglo-Catholic, saying he was "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion". Much later he said he combined "a Catholic cast of mind, a Calvinist heritage and a Puritanical temperament".

Eliot married twice but had no children. His first wife was Vivienne Haigh-Wood, who he married in 1915 – the year that his first "professional" poem, *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*, was published. But the marriage was fraught, because his wife had mental problems and eventually went into an asylum. They separated in 1933. His second wife was his much younger secretary Esme, whom he married in 1957.

Eliot lived through two world wars but remained optimistic through his Christianity. He wrote *The Waste Land* in 1923 and *The Four Quartets* were published in 1941 after he became British and an Anglican.

He died of emphysema at his home in Kensington, was cremated and is buried at the parish church in East Coker, Somerset – East Coker being where his family may have originated: it was also the title of the second of the *Four Quartets*. He has a plaque in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

Buckingham Palace opens its front gates to tourists

Next time you are in London, you can pop into Buckingham Palace. And for the first time, starting this month (January) tourists visiting the iconic building will be welcomed to walk in through the front gates and then proceed across the famous forecourt.

It is part of the King's vision to give people greater access to Buckingham Palace. You can also now book a 90-minute guided tour, from January to May, to have a more in-depth look at the history of the rooms in the East Wing.

For more information go to: <https://www.buckinghampalace.co.uk/buckingham-palace-tours.php>

Reading the Bible in church

David Pickup, a solicitor, considers that daunting task of reading in church.

'He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord.' 2 Kings 23:2

A friend was unexpectedly asked to read at a service as someone was unwell. He was caught just as he came in the church! Most of us like to look over a reading first and find the meaning of the passage. Some Bible readings are challenging, with difficult names of places and people. If it makes you feel better, no-one else knows how to pronounce these either, because there is no one around from Bible times!

It is not nice to be given a reading at the last minute, but then not good for the minister to suddenly get let down. To tell you the truth I have never liked reading, as it makes me dreadfully nervous. I prefer to preach or lead than read.

People worry about reading in church. Some of them would happily talk to a class of children or a boardroom, but there is something about church which is different. Perhaps we expect too much of ourselves. The best reading I ever heard in church was by a non-church goer. He did not know the reading, so he put a different emphasis on the passage. If you are reluctant, why not slip into church and give it a trial on a Saturday, when no-one is around?

Reading in church is a genuine ministry and is vital. It is important to give it our best try, as a way of learning about our faith. The Bible is meant to be heard as well as read.

If you would be interested in joining the church rota of Readers, Sidesmen or Intercessors, please do let Dik know webmaster@capelandockleychurch.org.uk We are in need of some extra help, particularly readers and

Easy Sodoku

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

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Medium Sodoku

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

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Solutions on
page 30



Word Search - Gifts of the Wise Men

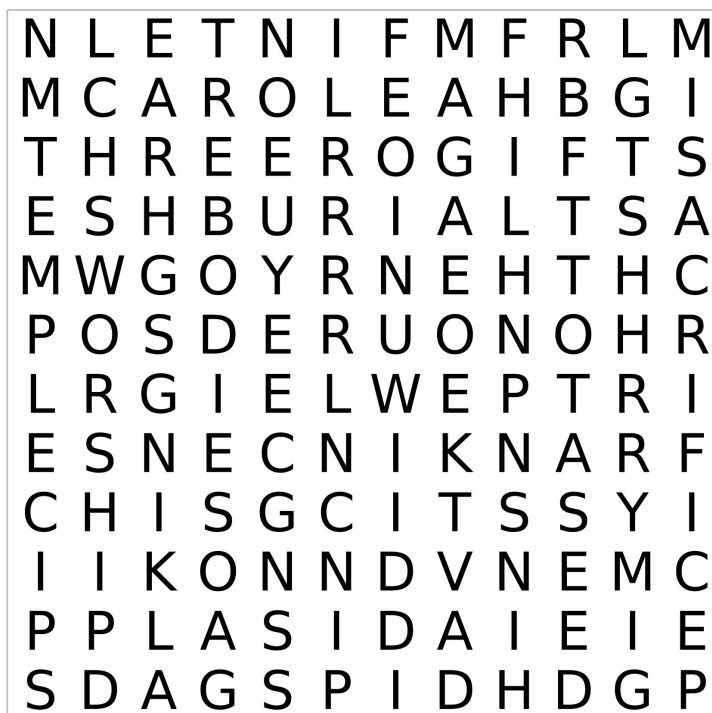
Do see the article opposite on the story of the coming of the Magi and then have a go at the Wordsearch below!
The Solution is on page 30.

Gifts
Gold
Frankincense
Myrrh
Henry

Hopkins
Carol
Three
Kings
Orient

Worship
Temple
Spice
Ancients
Bodies

Burial
Honoured
Divine
Sacrifice
Die
Gentile
Faith



Puzzle solutions on page 30

6th January - What about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

The story of the coming of the Magi grew in the telling. By the 6th century they had acquired names: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. By medieval times they were considered to be kings. Whoever they were, we do know from Matthew that they brought three gifts to Jesus.

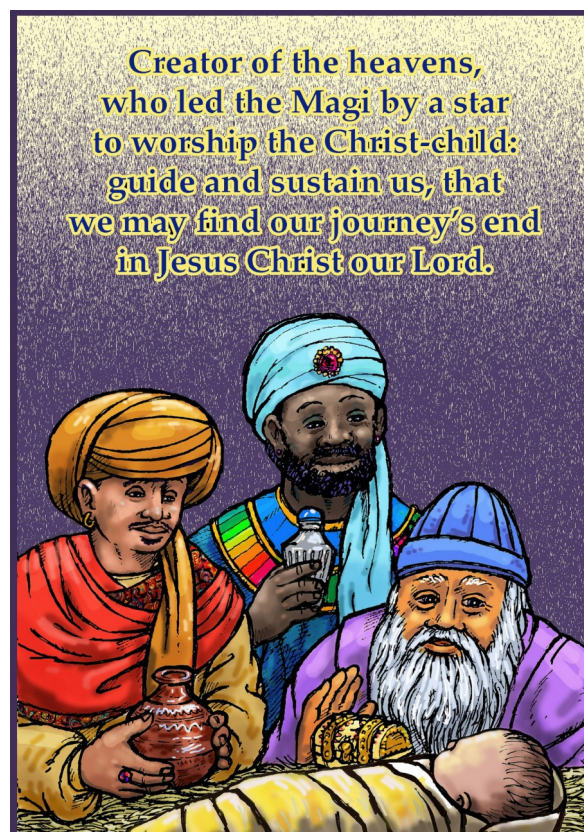
What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? While we cannot know for sure what was in the minds of first century Magi, one Victorian scholar has offered a possible explanation as to the significance of their gifts. He was the Rev John Henry Hopkins, an American Episcopalian minister, who in 1857 wrote his much-loved Christmas carol, 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'.

Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king. Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as they worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

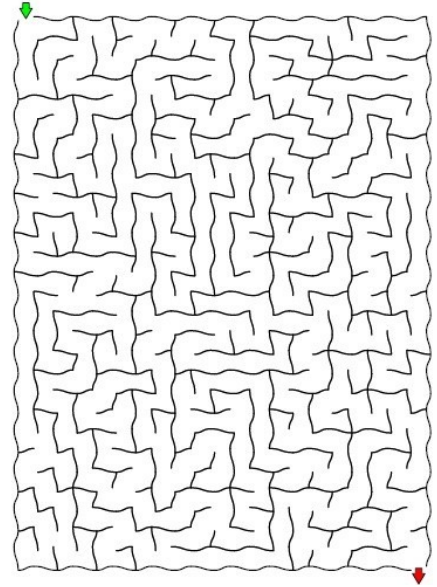
If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold because He was King of the Jews, with frankincense because He was to be worshipped as divine, and with myrrh, because He would also become a sacrifice and die for His people.

The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had! They travelled for months over difficult terrain, they never saw any evidence of Jesus' kingship, His divinity or His sacrificial death. They worshipped Him through faith in God's promises about Him. Isaiah foresaw this response to Jesus: 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.' The Magi's eyes of faith saw clearly and far into the future.

Compare that with the High Priest and religious leaders whom the Wise Men saw in Jerusalem when they first arrived. These head priests knew all about the prophecies of their own coming Messiah, but NOT ONE Jewish religious leader travelled to look for Him in Bethlehem. And it is only six miles down the road!



Puzzle Solutions



Why not try January's maze?

Easy Sudoku solution

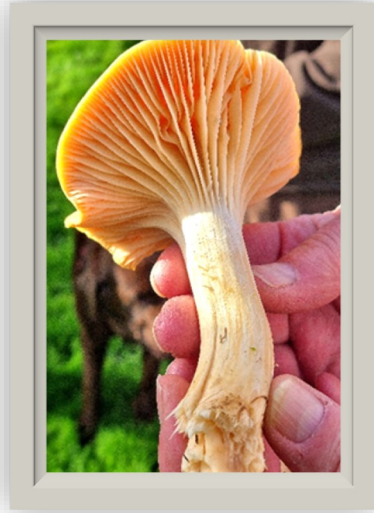
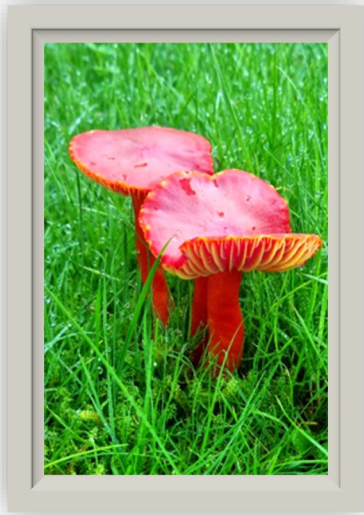
3	9	2	7	6	8	1	5	4
1	5	7	2	4	9	3	8	6
4	6	8	3	5	1	9	2	7
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5	1	3	6	9	7	2	4	8
8	4	6	5	2	3	7	9	1
7	8	4	9	1	2	6	3	5
9	3	5	4	7	6	8	1	2
6	2	1	8	3	5	4	7	9

Medium Sudoku solution

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



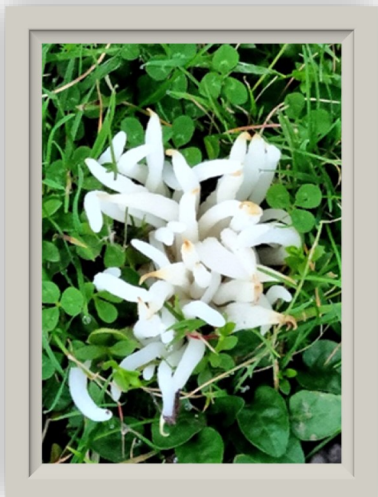
...Joshua says he's very sorry - but it's something to do with the recent weapons procurement review...



We are reproducing some of the photos of fungi found in our churchyard which featured in the December issue.

For those that may not have seen them in colour last month, this is them in all their technicolour glory!

Thanks to Nick Ward for writing for article for InSpire last month. It was about the wonderful fungi that local lady Sarah Crowder has been studying in Capel churchyard. She has been identifying the numerous species that can be found there.





Happy New Year to all our Readers!

Maybe some would like to colour in the picture above?

Your contributions would be most welcome and any copy for this publication should be sent to
Suzanne Cole inspire@capelandockleychurch.org.uk By 20th of each month please.
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