

Dear Friends

Epiphany is one of the oldest feasts of the Christian Church, celebrated even before Christmas became established as a season in its own right. Yet within Methodism it can sometimes pass almost unnoticed, not least because of its proximity to Covenant Sunday. In recent years I have taken to moving the Covenant Service so that we can celebrate Epiphany properly—and, so far, no one appears to have suffered any lasting harm!

At Epiphany we remember the wise men who followed the star and came to kneel before the Christ-child. We do not know precisely who they were, how many travelled, or exactly when they arrived. Matthew tells us only that they saw something in the heavens which compelled them to leave the familiar and begin a long and uncertain journey.

They understood that this was no ordinary royal birth. Somehow, in the appearance of the star, they discerned that something of cosmic significance was unfolding.

I wonder when their moment of true recognition came. Was it when they first saw the star, somewhere along the road, or only when they entered the house, saw the child with Mary his mother, and knelt before him?
This is the heart of Epiphany: not that God suddenly becomes present, but that human beings awaken to the divine presence which is already there. John's Gospel tells us that Christ was in the world, and that the world had come into being through him, yet the world did not recognise him. The eternal Word, through whom all things were made, was present among us—and much of humanity simply carried on without noticing.

Perhaps that remains our condition. We imagine that God must be sought somewhere far away, or persuaded to come among us. Yet the great proclamation of Christmas and Epiphany is that God is already here: within

creation, within human life, within the stranger, and closer to us than our own breathing.

The bush still burns.

When Moses encountered the burning bush, God did not suddenly make an ordinary place holy. Moses awakened to the holiness already there. He saw the fire, turned aside and discovered that the ground beneath his feet had always been sacred. The bush still burns because the world remains alive with the presence of God; Epiphany is the moment when we stop, turn aside and begin to see it.
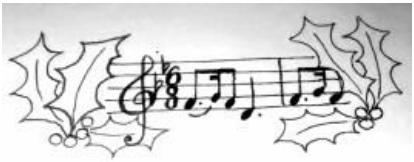
Christ continues to come among us in unexpected forms and through people we may easily overlook. For some, that recognition comes as a great moment of revelation. For others, it unfolds through smaller epiphanies: grace glimpsed within an ordinary day; the discovery that a guiding presence accompanied us when we thought ourselves alone; or the gradual realisation that God dwells within us, among us and throughout creation.

There is so much in the church and the world that may make us anxious, but our hope rests upon the presence of Christ: the light which shines in the darkness and which the darkness cannot overcome.

The wise men did not receive a map of the entire journey. They were given a star – enough light for the next stage – and trusted it. We too, need not see the whole road. We need only remain attentive to the light we have been given and be willing, when it moves, to move with it.

May Christmas draw us again to the mystery of the Word made flesh. My Epiphany open our eyes to the glory shining around us and within us. And may we remember, with wonder and hope, that the bush still burns.

With every blessing for Christmas and the New Year,
Jayne





Dear Friends

Welcome to our winter edition of Crosspoint – and indeed, our Christmas edition. (Where did September and October go?)

Thank you to everyone who has contributed – it is great to hear from our section churches and I do hope that all our churches feel that it is **their** magazine. Please emphasise to your congregations that **all** contributions are valued – it could be a poem, a reflection, a memory (like Pat Taylor's in this edition) – anything you would like to share. If I sound desperate it is because I struggle sometimes to fill the pages. I can pad it out with material from an external source (which I subscribe to and incidentally, I hope you find interesting), but it is good to have contributions from those we know. Thank you to Martyn and Andrew for their regular features.

I particularly enjoyed reading about the Knitted Bible which will be on display at Bishop's Cleeve from the end of November (see dates in Ruth's piece) as we also hosted this some years ago, and brought back some memories - it is well worth seeing.

My very best wishes for a peaceful Christmastide – "Prepare our hearts, O Lord, not only for the celebration to come, but also for sharing the good news with friends and family. Give us courage and a willingness to share the love that came to earth and walked among us".

Stay safe and well – God bless.

Jean Davies (Editor)

Thankfully our Saviour is not Father Christmas. He gave His best to us because we were not good. – *Moe Bergeron*

PASTORAL CARE - Tewkesbury

Please remember to let me or Jan Hoskins know if you are aware of anyone who may be in need of some support – whether it be practical help or just a meet-up for a chat. Jan will always be pleased to hear from you. Her email is outreach.Tewkesbury@gloscircuit.co.uk and work telephone no is 07713 880853.

Jean Davies – Pastoral secretary

Church Family News from Tewkesbury



We remember and send our love to all the members of our church families and particularly those who live in Residential Homes. We especially remember our friends Pat, Geoff and Kath.

We continue to remember all those who suffer with ill health and mobility issues and hold them in our prayers. We particularly think of our friends who are embarking on further treatment and wish them the best possible outcome. Sadly several of our church family have had hospital stays during the last few months and we particularly wish them speedy recoveries.

And we also remember those who struggle silently with their own personal problems. Many of us have been there, and hope that it is some comfort and support to know you are cared for and held in our prayers.

A Prayer for Advent

God of hope who brought love into this world, thank you for the love that dwells between us.
God of hope who brought peace into this world, thank you for the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope who brought joy into this world, thank you for the joy that dwells between us.
God of hope, the rock upon which we stand, thank you for the vision that unites us this day and throughout this Advent time.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS AT QUEX ROAD, LONDON
From Pat Taylor (Tewkesbury)

Before Christmas we had a speaker from the East End Mission who told us stories of the poor children in the East End. We brought our toys we no longer played with to be given to these children. Later we looked forward to the Sunday School tea. We were still rationed so the tea was very basic – fish paste from McFisheries and jam sandwiches. Still margarine on the bread, some sort of cake and lemonade made from lemonade powder bought from Woolworths – no squash or Coca Cola!
After tea the tables were put away and the hall arranged with forms for the children and chairs for the parents in preparation for the prize giving. Everyone got a prize – a book – even for the little ones. The more times you went to Sunday School the better the prize. I really wanted a bible so went to Sunday School morning and afternoon! I still have that special bible. The parents clapped when the children went up to receive their prize.
After that the Sunday School teachers all dressed up to do a play – very funny! – we didn't realise they could be so jolly!

What lovely times we had – we didn't feel deprived!

REFLECTIONS FROM WINCHCOMBE – Revd Martyn Smith



MAKING SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL FOR GOD!

While some younger family members were staying with us on holiday last week, we visited Tewkesbury Abbey where a full-scale 70 metre reproduction of the Bayeux Tapestry is currently being exhibited. The famous Tapestry depicts some 58 scenes, leading up to and including the actual invasion of England led by William, Duke of Normandy. Featuring 626 people, 41 ships, 37 buildings and over 250 animals … the colourful Tapestry gives a truly remarkable insight into the events of nearly a thousand years ago which helped to shape the history of England. The privilege of seeing the Bayeux Tapestry - albeit a reproduction - reminded me of another remarkable series of embroidered pictures seen a few months ago.

On a late summer holiday in Cornwall, we decided to spend a few hours in Truro. Visiting the city's cathedral is always lovely but our visit was made particularly interesting by the presence of a special exhibition called 'Threads through Revelation'. In a series of 14 huge panels, some of which were 4 x 3 metres in size, Christian textile artist Jacqui Parkinson has used colourful embroidery to visually express her understanding of the mysterious visions which John had on the island of Patmos as recorded in Revelation, the final book in the New Testament.

This remarkable exhibition is the third in a series entitled 'Threads through the Bible', which together have taken ten years to create and have apparently incorporated over 25 million stitches! Yet how might these two exhibitions have anything to teach us, you may be thinking. For me, they are certainly a reminder that we ALL have some God-given creative skills which can at best be used to make a positive difference to other people.

In the Abbey Fields Community Centre where the Winchcombe Methodists now meet for worship, I believe there are many ways in which congregational members can positively contribute to acts of Worship in small but significant ways.

Here are some examples: how the ‘Sunday’ flowers are chosen and then arranged for display; setting out the ‘bread and wine’ in an attractive yet functional way on the ‘Communion Table’; reading prayers and Bible passages in a manner which will make them more meaningful to the listening congregation; greeting people at the entrance door in a genuinely warm, welcoming and interested manner; compiling a set of attractive ‘on-Screen’ slides to welcome the Preacher/ congregation and to ensure that those attending can share in the Service in an informative and purposeful way; choosing music styles and tempos from the ‘hymnal machine’ which can then both lead and accompany the hymn-singing in an attractive and supporting way; heart-felt hymn singing and meaningful participation in the prayers led by others.

In such ways as those outlined above, can we not ALL do something beautiful for God - both in our times of Worship - and beyond? I’m sure that the team of skilled needleworkers who together created the now World-famous Bayeux Tapestry never dreamt that their work would be studied and admired nearly one thousand years later! I’m equally certain that when, some 4 years before his sudden death, Methodist Minister Rev. Rob Frost first encouraged his wife Jacqui to enrol on a local textiles course in 2003, Rob could never have imagined that her work would one day tour most cathedrals in the land and be seen by over two million visitors!

We may never know in our lifetimes how the little things we have said or done for other people … have helped to positively shape their lives. God hears all that we say in our words and prayers and sees all that we do to help people along their own journeys through life. In just such ways, I believe that we ALL have the chance to help make something beautiful for God!



God Bless – Rev. Martyn Smith

Gifts you can give all year long – not just for Christmas!

The gift of praise: Give people appropriate appreciation for their qualities or jobs or deeds well done. Praise God for who He is and all He gives you.

The gift of consideration: Care for other people's feelings. This means seeing the other's viewpoint, having the humility to say, 'You're right and I'm wrong'. Ask God for wisdom to see things from His standpoint.

The gift of gratitude: Never forget to say 'thank you' and never fail to mean it. Count your blessings from God.

The gift of attention: When the other person speaks, listen attentively. Seek to know God's will and listen for His messages.

The gift of inspiration: Plant seeds of courage and action in the heart of another. Help other people to reach a little higher. Ask God for a vision that will inspire and motivate your life.

The gift of presence: Be there for people in good times and bad, just as the Lord is for you. YOU can be the best gift of all to someone! Jesus is the best gift God could have given us.

Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents for a minute and look around. – *attributed to Bobby, a 7-year-old*

Drive carefully this Christmas. It's not only cars that can be recalled by their maker. – *Anon*

Greetings from Apperley



As always we offer a warm invitation to you all to join us for our **Carols by Candlelight** followed as usual by mince pies, coffee and fellowship. This will be held on Wednesday evening, **December 16th**, starting at 7.00pm. Do bring a torch in case you need to park in the cricket club carpark, just 150 meters up the lane, and have to walk down to the Chapel.

We were very pleased to host a new initiative recently when the new **Circuit Prayer Gathering** met on Thursday morning November 5th at 10 am.
It offered an opportunity for quiet prayer and fellowship in a lovely corner of Gloucestershire and is open to the whole Circuit. It is expected to be a regular event with the next gathering being planned here for February 4th.

Finally we wish you all a joyful Christmas and invite you to join us at any of our services.

Peter Stych

CROSSPOINT MAGAZINE

The next issue of Crosspoint will be produced early March – please send copy for the next edition to Jean Davies (Tel: 01684 772178) no later than Sunday 28th February.

Articles including family news are welcomed. **(Please ensure you have the permission of those you write about before submitting)**. It helps if you are able to send via email. Send to Jean Davies: jed0606@yahoo.com

Please note that articles reflect the views of the writer and not necessarily those of Tewkesbury Methodist Church.

TEWKESBURY NEWS We have had a busy autumn following completion of our Welcome Space project in late summer. Since then we have begun to explore our new space, particularly the new servery in the church which we are delighted has been well received by both our church family and visitors. It is not obtrusive and makes our time of fellowship following worship so special.



Our Harvest Festival service was in September followed by a harvest lunch for 40 people, prepared and served by the catering group (basically Lin!) and a team of willing helpers. In October the Tewkesbury Players, held a concert which was enjoyed by a large audience. Proceeds from the concert went to charity.

Remembrance Sunday is always a particularly special day for us, due to our position on the Cross in Tewkesbury where the 2 minute silence is observed. We open the church at 9.00 for coffee and croissants to those people who are waiting and watching the two parades to and from the Abbey during the morning, and then participate in the short service at 11am followed by our service at 11.15.

We are looking forward to our Christmas festivities and because we had to put our Christmas Tree Festival on hold for this year, instead we are exhibiting loaned nativity scenes, and decorating the church with a plethora of stars – carefully crafted at two workshops held during our Saturday coffee mornings. These have been so successful Jayne is hoping to start up monthly craft workshops (anyone want to learn how to crochet?!!) Our Christmas fete is on 5th December – do come and join us for a browse, coffee and/or a light lunch. On Sunday 13th December Harmony Praise will be holding a Christmas service of music, prayers, poems and readings at 3pm and on Sunday 20th December at 4pm we have our traditional Carols by Candelight service which is preceded by hot fruit punch and mince pies – an open invitation is extended to all!

BISHOPS CLEEVE METHODIST CHURCH



Greetings from all of us at Bishops Cleeve.

We are looking forward to hosting our Christmas Coffee morning on the 14th November to reach out to the Community.

Our main focus of outreach at the moment however is preparing for and hosting the Knitted Bible display which will be open to the community and any of you who would like to come along to see it on the following dates.

Friday 27th November
Tuesday Ist December
Friday 4th December
Tuesday 8th December
Friday 11th December

From 2-4pm on all of the above dates! You will receive a warm welcome and refreshments will be available too.

The new Circuit Prayer meeting got up and going at Apperley Methodist Church on Thursday 5th November. The next one will be on the first Thursday of February again at Apperley.

It was a privilege to be there and we hope it will go from strength to strength and that the power of the prayers will bless all your churches over the Advent and Christmas Season in all you do.

God bless you.

Ruth Whiting

the PARABLE of the SOWER

JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS





ONE WAS ABOUT A FARMER WHO SOWED SOME SEEDS

MOST FARMERS DIDN'T BURY THEIR SEEDS IN THE GOUND. INSTEAD THEY THREW THEM IN THE AIR!



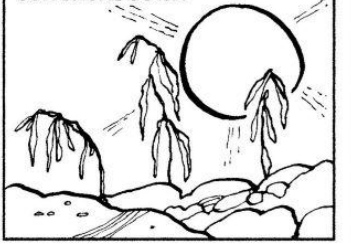


THE FARMER HOPED THEY WOULD TAKE ROOT JUST WHERE THEY LANDED



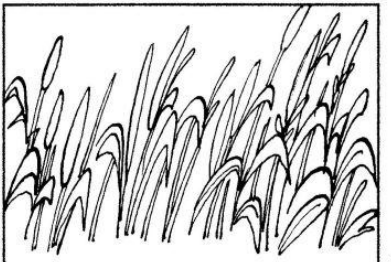
BUT SOME SEED WAS EATEN BY BIRDS!

SOME SEED FELL ON ROCKS, BUT THE PLANTS DIED WHEN THE HOT SUN SHONE DOWN





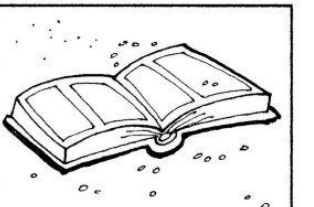
OTHER SEEDS TOOK ROOT, BUT WERE QUICKLY STRANGLED BY WEEDS



SOME SEED FELL ON GOOD SOIL. IT TOOK ROOT AND GREW AND GREW!

SOON THERE WAS A FINE FIELD OF WHEAT!





JESUS EXPLAINED THAT THE SEED ARE 'WORD OF GOD' AND WE SHOULD LET THAT WORD 'GROW' IN OUR HEARTS, JUST LIKE SEEDS IN GOOD SOIL.

The diary of a Geriatric Lay Pastor

"The Knitted Bible"

On a weekend, when the call of Everton Football Club is not heard, (when I am not going to the football), I will usually take my wife out either for a day, or part of a day on a Saturday. This is due to the fact that 50 years of married life has taught me many important lessons, including the importance of spoiling your wife, especially when she tells me to!

On one such occasion, I was in true romantic tradition, taking her to Newent, the place she had decided we were going to that day. Whilst there, I saw a banner advertising a "Knitted Bible Exhibition ", outside a church.

We did the important things first - had breakfast, visited the charity shops, visited all the other shops etc - and then on our way back to the car we popped into the church to see this Exhibition. I was well impressed, as was my wife.

Since coming to work in Bishop's Cleeve, one of the things I have been most enthusiastic about, has been organising an annual exhibition, as a way of connecting with the local community. In my first year we had 2 exhibitions including, including a banner exhibition about 'Climate change'.

We have since then aimed at having something around Christmas. We had a Christmas Tree Exhibition, an Angel exhibition, a Nativity Exhibition and an exhibition about the meaning of Christmas etc. Each time the intention has been to connect with the local schools, preschools and the surrounding community.

Over a year ago, my mind went back to those Knitted Bible characters I had seen over 10 years earlier, in a church which is now in our Circuit. I wondered whether it still existed and was delighted to discover that it did. Even more

encouraging was the fact that I was able to book it for the end of November and the whole of December this year.

The deal was that all I had to do, was collect it from the church hosting the exhibition immediately before we were hosting it. This was due to be in York.

I mistakenly thought, at the age of 72 I wouldn't be able to hire a van to transport it, so would need someone else to drive the van for me. I informed my daughter's new boyfriend, who is a lorry driver who doesn't like driving, that he had the job of picking it up for me.

The added bonus was that he would have the pleasure of my company on the long journey, there and back. I even told him that he need not worry about whether he was in a relationship with my daughter at the time, as the job was his in any event. His joy knew no bounds, although he did a brilliant job at hiding it!

I have subsequently discovered that I may still be able to drive a van under my 'old codgers' licence and have decided to do so. My potential son in law is so devastated, he has 'the Samaritans' on speed dial on his phone, so that he can seek their consoling advice as to how to get over this.

A couple of months ago, I was shocked to see that the church in York had withdrawn, and another church was taking their place. Instead of going to York, I was now having to travel to Scotland to pick it up!

I immediately sent an email to the organisers to get confirmation of my findings, in the following terms:-

"When I had been planning the pick up, I had thought I would be picking it up from York. Having recently looked, it appears that we will be picking up the exhibition from the Church of Scotland in some far-flung place called Lochmaben!

Is this the case please?

If so, it may interest you to know this was my grandmother's church and the last time I was there was in 2000 when I took part in her funeral"

Confirmation has been given and I could not feel much more excited. This was my paternal grandmother, who is not the same grandmother that I had previously written of.

I am really excited about the Knitted Bible exhibition, but also taking a trip down memory lane. I have been in touch with the church in Lochmaben several times, sharing my memories of my times there, and some of the people I had met. I have been invited to their church lunch on the Sunday before the pick-up as well as being brought up to date with the progress of the exhibition.

I hope to see as many people as possible at the Exhibition when we hold it shortly and am very grateful for the opportunity to host it. I am also so pleased that having the Exhibition will enable me to visit family still living in Scotland and my late grandmother's spiritual home.

How many times have I said this...."this is the job, which just keeps on giving....and giving...and giving".

With every blessing,

Andrew Maxwell



BIBLE BREAKFAST CLUB!

Our new look breakfast club will become a Bible breakfast club starting on Sunday 7th February at 9.15am. The usual delicious bacon rolls will be there but our activity will be looking at bible passages to read and chat about – maybe even act out! This will be an all-age venture as our youngsters have expressed an interest in reading their bibles with us so everyone is encouraged to bring their bibles and take part.

It is no use saying that we are born 2,000 years too late to give room to Christ. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts. And giving shelter or food to anyone who needs it, is giving it to Christ.- *Dorothy Day*

Tewkesbury Methodist Church
Book Club

Our book club started way back in 2002 at our first Church Away weekend at Lindors in the Forest of Dean. Among the various activities at that weekend we decided to invite anyone coming to Lindors to read 2 books which we would discuss during the weekend. Those two books were 'Year of Wonders' by Geraldine Brooks and ''The Kashmir Shawl 'by Rosie Thomas.



The meeting was so successful that we decided to keep the book club going at future Away weekends and read a total of 8 books.

Because these meetings proved so popular in 2015 we started monthly meetings at the Church. and during the years we have read 133 books.

Among the authors we have read are Rachel Joyce, P.J. Wodehouse, Robert Harris, Jasper Fforde, Kate Mosse, Agatha Christie and Tommy Steele!

We read novels, biographies, children's books, travel books and even a book about the building of the Stephenson's Lighthouses picked by Frank Manning which proved very popular with the ladies but not so much with the men – who knew!!

Each monthly book is chosen in turn by a member of the book club but through the years we have lost members through moving away or passing away. So I would like to invite anyone – male or female – who likes reading to join us and enjoy a good discussion and chat with a cup of coffee or tea of course!

We usually meet on a Saturday morning towards the end of the month at 10am in the Church. So please if you feel you would like to join us just come along. The date is always put in the Church notices or contact me either by phone on 07734044813 or by email jackiedobbs1@gmail.com.

We will give you a warm welcome.

Jackie Dobbs

'The best moments in reading are when you come across something – a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things – which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours'.

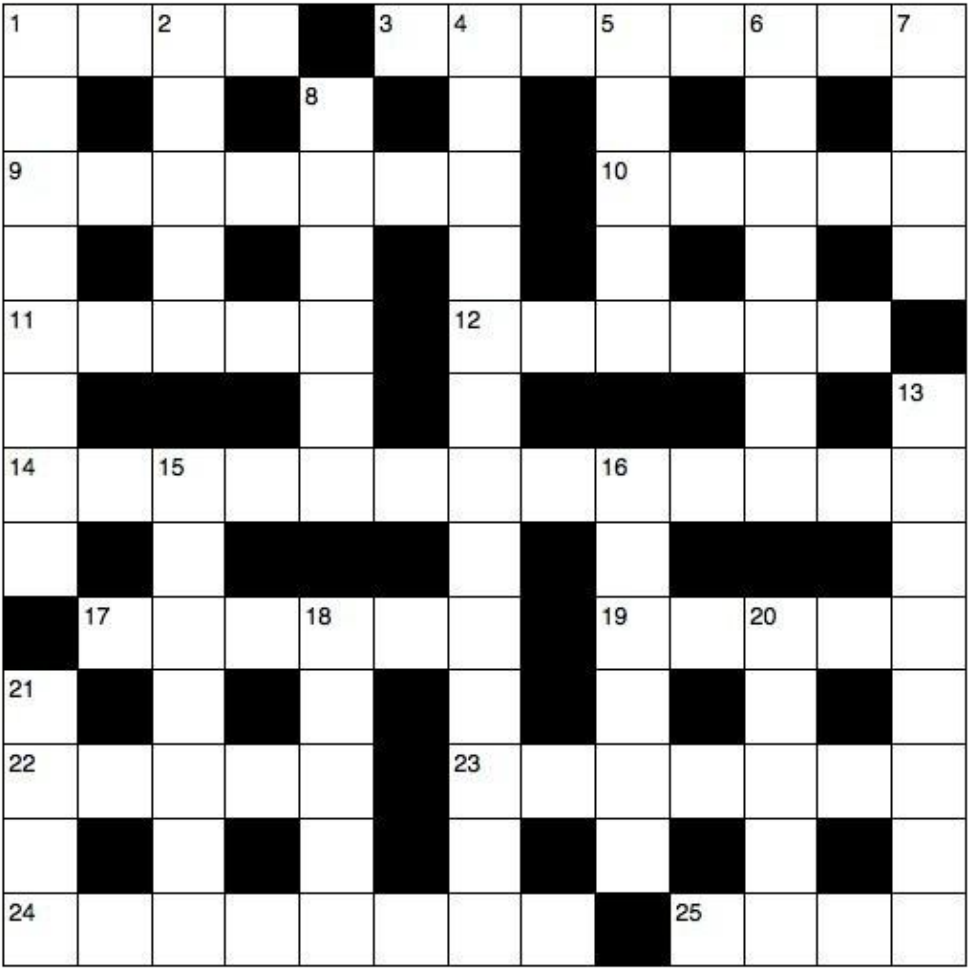
The History Boys by Alan Bennett

BOOK REVIEW -

A Christmas Carol Devotional
– ***25 Advent Reflections from Charles Dickens's Beloved Classic***
By Rachel Dodge, Zondervan (from Eden Books), £9.72

This 25-day Advent devotional journeys through one of the world's most beloved Christmas stories, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. In this devotional companion to the cherished classic, you'll walk alongside Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, and Tiny Tim as you explore the many spiritual lessons tucked into the story: redemption, generosity, and community.

Each daily entry includes a key scripture, a retelling of part of the story, a personal reflection, and a short prayer. Filled with line-art illustrations, A Christmas Carol Devotional might help you slow down and draw near to Christ during the busy Christmas season. Let this season be one of lasting transformation for you – just like it was for Ebenezer Scrooge.



Across

1 ‘How long will you — your face from me?’ (Psalm 13:1) (4)
3 ‘Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the — he bore’(Hebrews 13:13) (8)
9 Posh sin (anag.) (Romans 8:15) (7)
10 Solemn pledges (Matthew 5:33) (5)
11 Italian term for full orchestra (5)

12 ‘For he who avenges blood remembers; he does not — the cry of the afflicted’ (Psalm 9:12) (6)
14 Prescience (1 Peter 1:2) (13)
17 Where a Hindu holy man lives (6)
19 ‘If he found any... who belonged to the Way, whether — — women, he might take them as prisoners’ (Acts 9:3) (3,2)
22 Fragrance (2 Corinthians 2:15) (5)
23 Vine hen (anag.) (Jonah 1:2) (7)
24 Precious stone decorating the twelfth foundation of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20) (8)
25 ‘Will you keep to the old path that evil men have — ?’ (Job 22:15) (4)

Down

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

(SOLUTION IN SPRING EDITION OR EMAIL ME!)

God in the Sciences



This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Follow the Star

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

HOLLAND HOUSE SECTION AWAY-DAY 2027 - Wednesday 21st July

Just a reminder about our Away Day next July. I will be contacting our section churches after Christmas to gain an idea of how many will be attending. I do hope many of you will be able to attend again, and do please encourage others in your church family to join us.
A reminder of the House's website as they have interesting events and talks throughout the year – it is worth a look. https://hollandhouse.org/

Jean Davies jed0606@yahoo.com or 01684 772178

NEWS FROM ST JOHN, NORTHGATE



We have been delighted to welcome two babies into our church this year, with the baptism of Zacchaeus, son of David and Sarah Thompson, in July and Shanice, daughter of Eugene and Bernice Osae, in October. It's lovely to have both families regularly with us on a Sunday morning.

The not so good news is that the gas boiler has been condemned and we therefore have no heating in the church. With colder weather approaching we are moving into the hall for services from 15th November onwards. This will be a temporary move while we decide the best way forward but there are some difficult decisions ahead.

Meanwhile we look forward to Christmas. Our carol service led by David Thompson will be on 20th December and on Christmas morning there will be a joint service with Vineyard Church, both services starting at 10.00am in the Hall. At Tibberton Together @ 3 will take the form of informal carols with mince pies at 3.00pm on 20th December.
We send our best wishes to everyone for the Advent season, Christmas and the New Year.

Christine and Peter Gardner

CHURCH FLOWERS

Unfortunately whilst Wendy is unwell she is unable to do flower arrangements in memory or celebration of loved ones. We all wish Wendy a speedy recovery from her treatment and we will let everyone know when the arrangements can recommence. In the meantime we thank Jenny LeMarechal for continuing to look after the flowers in church each week.

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS



The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Jesus. In the third century it was suggested that Jesus was conceived at the Spring equinox, 25th March, popularising the belief that He was born nine months later on 25th December. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, encouraged Christians worldwide to make Christmas a holy day in about 400.

In the early Middle Ages, Christians celebrated a series of midwinter holy days. Epiphany (which recalls the visit to the infant Jesus of the wise men bearing gifts) was the climax of 12 days of Christmas, beginning on 25th December. The Emperor Charlemagne chose 25th December for his coronation in 800, and the prominence of Christmas Day rose. In England, William the Conqueror also chose 25th December for his coronation in 1066, and the date became a fixture both for religious observance and feasting.

Cooking a boar was a common feature of mediaeval Christmas feasts, and singing carols accompanied it. Writers of the time lament the fact that the true significance of Christmas was being lost because of partying. They condemn the rise of 'misrule' – drunken dancing and promiscuity. The day was a public holiday, and traditions of bringing evergreen foliage into the house and the exchange of gifts (usually on Epiphany) date from this time.

In the 17th century the rise of new Protestant denominations led to a rejection of many celebrations that were associated with

Catholic Christianity. Christmas was one of them. After the execution of Charles I, England's Puritan rulers made the celebration of Christmas illegal for 14 years. The restoration of Charles II ended the ban, but religious leaders continued to discourage excess, especially in Scotland. In Western Europe (but not worldwide) the day for exchanging gifts changed from Epiphany (6th January) to Christmas Day.

By the 1820s, there was a sense that the significance of Christmas was declining. Charles Dickens was one of several writers who sought to restore it. His novel *A Christmas Carol* was significant in reviving merriment during the festival. He emphasised charity and family reunions, alongside religious observance. Christmas trees, paper chains, cards and many well-known carols date from this time. So did the tradition of Boxing Day, on 26*th* December, when tradesmen who had given reliable service during the year would collect 'boxes' of money or gifts from their customers.

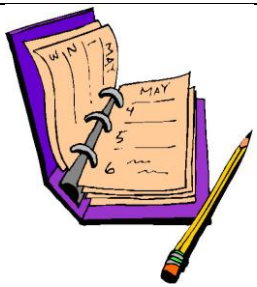
In Europe Santa Claus is the figure associated with the bringing of gifts. Santa Claus is a shortening of the name of Saint Nicholas, who was a Christian bishop in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. He was particularly noted for his care for children and for his generosity to the poor. By the Middle Ages his appearance, in red bishop's robes and a mitre, was adored in the Netherlands and familiar across Europe.

Father Christmas dates from 17th century England, where he was a secular figure of good cheer (more associated with drunkenness than gifts). The transformation of Santa Claus into today's Father Christmas started in New York in the 1880s, where his red robes and white beard became potent advertising symbols. In some countries (such as Latin America and Eastern Europe) the tradition attempts to combine the secular and religious elements by

holding that Santa Claus makes children's presents and then gives them to the baby Jesus to distribute.

From: https://christianity.org.uk/the-history-of-christmas/#.W9LmchNKhsM

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
Please check the weekly notices or our website for any alterations to dates/times and more detailed information about events



Coffee mornings every Saturday between 10.30am and 12.30pm

NOVEMBER

Saturday 28th – Book club 10am
Saturday 28th – Community choir concert 4pm (tbc)

DECEMBER

Saturday 5th – Church Christmas Fair
Thursday 10th – Dinner ladies lunch at Browns 12.00
Sunday 13th – Harmony Christmas Praise Service 3pm
Monday 14th – Jubilate choir concert 7.30pm
Wednesday 16th – Carols at Apperley 7pm
Saturday 19th – Book Club 10am
Sunday 20th – Carols by Candlelight 4pm preceded by punch and mince pies
Friday 25th – Christmas Day service

JANUARY

Sunday 17th – Festive lunch 12.30pm
Wednesday 20th – Short service with Holy communion for Week of Prayer for

Christian Unity
Saturday 23rd – Book Club 10am
Saturday 30th – Quiz with refreshments 3pm
Sunday 31st – 10.30am Service for World Leprosy Day

CHURCH SERVICES – Tewkesbury

Any alteration to dates and or times will be shown in the weekly notices (also available on our website). The church is generally also open to visitors on Saturday mornings (coffee morning).
A service is held every Sunday at Tewkesbury at 10.30am service (with occasional changes to times as per the notices).
*10.30am service **with** Holy Communion is the first Sunday of each month. We also hold a short service of Holy Communion on a Wednesday twice a month at 10.30am followed by coffee. (See notices for dates)..*
Bible Breakfast Club takes place on the first Sunday of the month at 9.15am.

CHURCH GROUPS AND MEETINGS (TEWKESBURY)
Please see weekly notices for dates of meetings as they are arranged

Church Council	**Pastoral**
Worship Forum	**Publicity**
Eco group	**Men Allowed**
Finance/Property	**Wives and Friends**
Stewards	**Book Club**
Tewkesbury Churches Together	

SUDOKI PUZZLE – easy!

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

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Pilate washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person."

Pilate's random thoughts about how it's everyone else's fault

The eastern sky was liquid-red this morning.
Though the sun's well up, the air is cold,
There's something dark – a shepherd's warning?
That's the phrase, I think. And I've been told
They had a shepherd-king, once, long ago.
A king! Imagine that. Who'd want to rule
A people who, in fear, would stoop so low?
They'd throw their own man to the wolves. The fool!
He had his chance to plead his cause and sway
My judgement. I am not the one to blame.
Is *this* the truth? I don't care either way.
Die now or later? End result's the same.

I take the bowl and watch the ripples still.
"You have no power over me" he said.
He's right. I soak my dirty hands until
Some quirk of sunlight turns the water red.

By Revd Ally (copied with permission)

THE METHODIST CHURCH

Priorities for the Methodist Church

To proclaim and affirm our conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world; and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the church.

Main contacts for Apperley and Tewkesbury Methodist Churches
Minister: The Revd Jayne Webb
Tel: 01684 298650
Who also has pastoral responsibility for Winchcombe Methodist Church, Bishop's Cleeve Methodist Church and St Johns, Northgate

Apperley Senior Steward – Peter Stych Tel: 01452 780508
Tewkesbury Senior Steward - Linda Sallis Tel: 01684 294169
Registered Charity No: 1179000

We are in the Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire, part of the Bristol Methodist District

Web site for Apperley and Tewkesbury Methodist Churches with links to our sister churches, Winchcombe, Bishop's Cleeve and St John's, Northgate
www.tewkesburymethodistchurch.org.uk

Tewkesbury Church phone: We no longer have a landline in the building but are arranging to have a mobile phone accessible for emergencies.



IMPORTANT Booking rooms and events

If you are arranging any event on the church premises of Tewkesbury Methodist Church, the room and time must be arranged with the bookings

secretary, Andrew May email tmcroombookings@btinternet.com or contact Jean Davies 01684 772178 jed0606@yahoo.com)



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