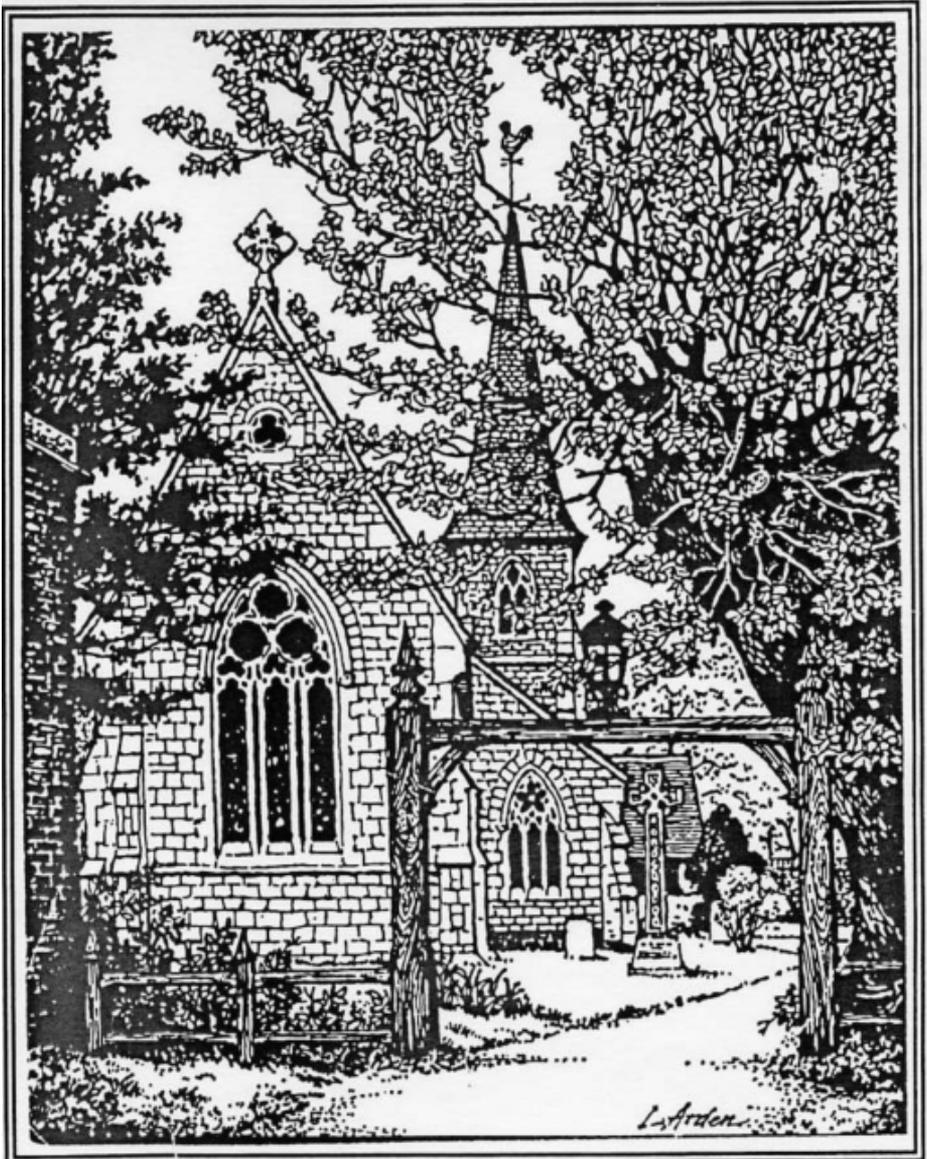


**The Parish Church of
*St. James, North Cray***

**50p
*March, 2019***

(Part of the Bexley Team Ministry)



St JAMES, NORTH CRAY PARISH STAFF

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Parish Safeguarding: Rhonda Collins 020 8300 3797

Magazine Editor: Steve Blake
sblakestjames@virginmedia.com

St James Sunday Service

9.30am Holy Communion

(All age service with Uniformed Organisations on second Sunday)

TEAM RECTOR'S LETTER MARCH 2019



'Dry January'?
'Go Sober for October'?
'Movember'?
'Veganuary'?

It seems like there are an increasing number of initiatives that encourage us to give things up to support one cause or another. We could choose to give up drinking alcohol, give up eating meat, or even, for the chaps, give up shaving and grow a beard!

But I have to say, that the Christian Church is way ahead of the game on this one. For centuries, Christians have been observing a time of simplicity during the six weeks before Easter. It is called Lent, and in the words of an old Prayer Book, Christians are called to 'keep a Holy Lent'.

This is not to be regarded as a forty day endurance test, or a bleak, boring and restricted time. Rather, Lent can be an opportunity to slow down and reflect, to have a quiet look at our lives, and consider what there is there to be valued and cherished, and in contrast, consider what things have accumulated in our lives that are weighing us down.

One writer told the story of watching a sailor working on his upturned boat during the winter, scrapping off the barnacles that had accumulated there. Not sure how accurate a picture that is in terms of good seamanship, but you will see my point!

We need to take time off from the busy-ness to reassess our lives and our commitments. We need to metaphorically 'scrap off the barnacles' of all those things we have got ourselves involved in without really thinking through just how we are going to fit it all in. We have become a tired generation, over-committed, over-stimulated and over-stretched. We are in danger of becoming too busy to notice the important things.

Someone has just sent me a picture of the daffodils which have just come into bloom in the church grounds. To my shame, I hadn't noticed. I suppose I've been too busy!

So, I've decided!

I'm not giving up chocolate for Lent... I'm giving up busy-ness! Will you join me?

Reverend Ren Harding (Team Rector)

contact me at The Vicarage, 6 Tile Kiln Lane

01322-528923

renharding@hotmail.co.uk

The Church at Laodicea

May we be faithful and guard against the same fate that befell the Laodicean Church.

The Faithful True Witness sees into His church,
He stands alone not wanted inside,
Contented and useless, neither hot or cold,
A complacent church more dead than alive.

'O Laodicea, can you not see?
You say you are rich, but I know you are poor,
Come buy from Me, I have all that you need'
The Ruler of All still stands at the door.

Behold I stand at the door and knock,
And long for My church to be vibrant and true,
If you hear My voice and invite Me in
Together again we can fellowship anew.

'He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' (Rev.3:22)

By Megan Carter

THE BOTHY

Are you looking for a small hall for a function?

The Bothy (in St James Church Grounds) has all the facilities you need and can seat 35 people.

**If you need further information please contact
Wilma Ingelson-Cook on 020 8302 5524**

Psalm 63 – or how to cope with the pressures of daily life

By the Rev Paul Hardingham

If you had to describe our society in a single word, the most appropriate one would be *pressure*. We live with pressure in every aspect of life, from our school, work or family life, to the big issues facing our world.

King David knew what it meant to live under pressure. His son, Absalom, led a rebellion against him, resulting in David fleeing for his life into the wilderness of Judah. It was there that he wrote Psalm 63. The psalm demonstrates the priorities a person of God under pressure.

God my desire: *'You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.'* (v1). David's physical thirst was an expression of his deeper thirst to know God. Even though separated from the worship of the sanctuary, he chose to seek God. When God seems distant or silence in our lives, we too can choose to seek him; this can be a vital path of growth in our relationship with him.

God my delight: *'Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.'* (3). David's delight in God is expressed in praise, as he recognises God's love for him. What gives us delight in our lives? Does it come from the things of this world or from God himself?

God my defence: *'I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.'* (8). David is surrounded by enemies, but confident in God's defence and purpose for him. God uses our troubles and disappointments to fulfil his will, as he develops our character and trust in his purposes.

'Don't worry about locating your purpose. If you are seeking after God, your purpose will locate you.' (Tony Evans).

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NEWS FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS



It's all down to teamwork

St James Church may be small in stature, but it still requires a lot of support, and money, to maintain. We are incredibly lucky to have such wonderful people who help in so many different ways, not just in church for all to see but behind the scenes. Those who sit on various committees and oversee the smooth running of the church and Bothy; arrange the flowers; clean the church and Bothy; tend the Bothy garden; ensure the churchyard always looks its best; run the website; produce, print and deliver the Parish Magazine. Plus, all the many other jobs that need to be dealt with from day to day. We appreciate and thank you all for your time and dedication to St James.

We would like to say a very special thank you to Mrs Greeta Robbins, who for the past 25 years has delivered the Parish Magazine each month in her local area. Sadly, she has decided the time has come to retire. I'm sure many of you have got to know Mrs Robbins over the years and would like to join us in thanking her for her dedication.

The Parish Magazine provides the church with a very useful income and we are very grateful to our volunteers such as Mrs Robbins, as well as our loyal readers, for supporting us.

If you would like to submit an article you have written for possible inclusion in the magazine, please send it to the Editor, Steve Blake – sblakestjames@virginmedia.com. If you are interested in placing an advertisement for a reasonable fee, please contact the Editor in the first instance.

Have you seen our new website? – www.stjamesnorthcray.org.uk. It went live recently and looks wonderful, all thanks to Peter Collins. Please do take a look.

Maxine & Suzy, Churchwardens

**A BEXLEY TEAM ADULT LUNCH
on the 20th January 2019**

It was with a 'slight feeling of nerves' that both my son Stephen and I arrived at The King's Head pub in Bexley High Street for the Bexley Team Lunch. Stephen is the Sacristan at St James Church, North Cray and I am a member.

Being the only members from St James, North Cray on this occasion, we were made very welcome by everybody. We found ourselves sitting next to a couple called John and Ann who are members of St John's Bexley. They quickly put us at our ease, and told us that The King's Head is the usual venue for this lunch, and they hope it will continue to be held there on the third Sunday of each month.

Lunches at The King's Head consist of a Sunday roast and numerous other choices on the menu, none of which are very expensive. Should anyone wish to pay by card this is accepted if the bill is over £10.

A pleasant time was had by all, and Stephen and I hope to be able to attend future lunches as circumstances allow. Maybe with other members of St James, one never knows!

Thank you all for your kind welcome

***Janet and Stephen Hills
St James, North Cray***

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CHURCHES TOGETHER IN OLD BEXLEY
LENT COURSE 2019
“THE MYSTERY OF GOD”



“The Mystery of God” is the title of a course prepared for Lent 2019 by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. The course aims to enable us to delve more deeply into the mystery of God, seeking to rediscover what it is that draws us so deeply in our search for God. We will follow Jesus through the Lenten readings, allowing him to draw us, in love and wonder, into the mystery of God’s plan of salvation.

You can download the material for the course from the internet by going to the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website <https://ctbi.org.uk/lent/>
If you are unable to access this, please let Ren know and we will print off a copy for you, charging £2.00 to cover our costs

Dates and Venues

WEEK 1	THE MYSTERY OF GOOD & EVIL
10 for 10.30am	Tuesday 12 March Baldwyns Park Baptist
7 for 7.30pm	Thursday 14 March URC, Bexley
WEEK 2	THE MYSTERY OF GOD’S GLORY
10 for 10.30am	Tuesday 19 March Baldwyns Park Baptist
7 for 7.30pm	Thursday 21 March URC, Bexley
WEEK 3	THE MYSTERY OF SIN, SUFFERING & HOPE
10 for 10.30am	Tuesday 26 March Baldwyns Park Baptist
7 for 7.30pm	Thursday 28 March URC, Bexley
WEEK 4	THE MYSTERY OF RELATIONSHIP & RECONCILIATION
10 for 10.30am	Tuesday 2 April Baldwyns Park Baptist
7 for 7.30pm	Thursday 4 April URC, Bexley
WEEK 5	THE MYSTERY OF LOVE & SACRIFICE
10 for 10.30am	Tuesday 9 April Baldwyns Park Baptist
7 for 7.30pm	Thursday 11 April URC, Bexley

We encourage you to attend all five sessions, but each session’s teaching can also ‘stand alone’ so don’t worry if you miss one!

Further information from Reverend Ren Harding
Team Rector, Bexley Team Ministry

01322 528923

Making Sense of Lent

By the Rev Paul Hardingham

This month sees the start of Lent, the six-week period leading up to Easter. In the early Church, it was a time when new converts were instructed in the faith, ready for their baptism at Easter. Over the years, Lent has become a season of penitence, self-examination and fasting. Jesus began His earthly ministry by fasting in the wilderness for 40 days and taught his disciples to fast, *'when you fast..'* (Matthew 6:17).

Fasting might involve missing one or two meals in a day, refraining from TV or alcohol, or whatever gets in the way of us fully focusing on God. What are the reasons for fasting?

- The act of giving up something is a tangible sacrifice to God, reminding us of our desire to put him first in our lives.
- Giving up things I value shows me how dependent I can be on other things rather than God.
- Fasting helps me to surrender my 'idols' to God.
- When fasting I am reminded of a deeper hunger and need for God in my life: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.' (Matthew 5:6). I learn to be more dependent on God, while releasing the stuff I depend on in my life.

Lent can also be a time to embrace new spiritual disciplines e.g. joining a study group, *'random acts of kindness'*, giving more time to prayer and Bible study Whatever you do, have a great Lent!

'Jesus takes it for granted that his disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian's life. Such customs have only one purpose - to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done.' (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

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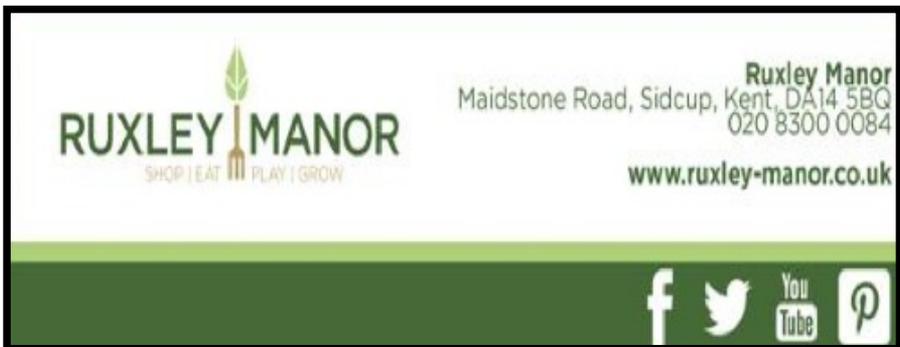
The World Wide Web – 30 years on

By Tim Lenton

The World Wide Web was invented 30 years ago this month, on 12th March 1989, by Tim Berners-Lee while he was working at CERN, the European particle physics laboratory.

His innovation – a global hypertext document system originally described by his superior as “vague but exciting” – was intended to help scientists share data across a then obscure platform called the Internet, but his decision to make the source code freely available meant it took on a life of its own and is now used by almost everyone with a computer. He has never profited directly from his invention, but now spends much of his time trying to protect it from malign influences and is working on Solid, a project designed to provide *“true data ownership as well as improved privacy”*.

As a result of his original invention, Berners-Lee was named one of the 20th century’s most important figures by *Time* magazine, received the prestigious Turing Award for achievements in the computer sciences, and was honoured at the Olympics. He was also knighted by the Queen. Raised as an Anglican, he turned away from religion but then became an active member of the Unitarian Universalist Church, which he describes as tolerant and liberal.





News and Issues



Bishop welcomes Universal Credit announcement

Following comments by the Work and Pensions Secretary, Amber Rudd, on changes to Universal Credit, the Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who speaks for the Church of England on issues relating to children and young people, said:

"As a just and compassionate society, we believe that every child is a blessing and deserves to be treated equally.

"So I very much welcome today's announcement that the two-child limit policy will not be extended to children born before the policy came into effect in April 2017. I also welcome the Government's more considered approach to moving people on to Universal Credit from the old benefits system.

"I look forward to working with Ministers to continue reviewing these policies as part of a broader, coherent strategy to reduce child poverty, helping parents to give their children the best possible start in life."

Church of England invests £35 million in new Christian communities

The Church of England is to fund a bold series of projects to spread the Christian faith – from a new congregation in a nightclub area to a weekday church - as part of a £35 million investment in mission, it was announced today.

The biggest investment so far by the Church of England's Renewal and Reform programme is intended to help it reach tens of thousands of people including in city centres, outer estates and rural areas.

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The Ven John Barton, former Archdeacon of Aston, looks back on 25 years of women priests in the C of E.

Women's ordination – 25 years on

Twenty-five years ago this month, women were ordained as priests in the Church of England. As the BBC commentator on the first service in Bristol Cathedral I was prepared for disruptions from demonstrators, but it proceeded reverently and without a hitch. The only protest was outside, where a group of approving Roman Catholic women held a banner saying, 'We're Next'.

Of course, there are still people who object to women's ordination on principle. Some believe the practice frustrates the prospect of church unity, others hold that God has created women and men to hold complementary but different roles - and leadership in the Church is reserved for men.

At the last count, 30% of the 20,000 active clergy were women and 23% of the senior posts were held by women, and that includes 18 bishops.

It would be difficult now to imagine the Church of England without women priests and bishops. They serve as chaplains in prison, hospital and the Armed Services, and of course as Vicars and Curates in parish churches. Hannah Madin was ordained 18 months ago when she was 28, and is a Curate in York. She recalls visiting a parishioner whose husband had just died; the widow said, "I wasn't expecting a female Vicar, but I'm so glad you are". Hannah's husband is also ordained; she says it helps that he understands the random and unique nature of the job, they support each other in prayer, and they never talk shop on their day off!

Sue Restall was one of those ordained in Bristol 25 years ago and is now in active retirement in the Midlands, having been a parish priest and a hospital chaplain. In her experience, although women and men may have different talents, that is more to do with personality than gender. However, she does recall making a bereavement visit when a widower cried his eyes out, saying he could only have done that in front of a woman. Sue says her role is no longer controversial – "I am simply a priest who happens to be a woman".



MEETINGS and Events 2019

*Watch this space for
future events*



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The North Cray Neighbourhood Centre



Youth Action Diversity Trust proudly manage the North Cray Neighbourhood Centre in Sidcup where we focus on encouraging youth and family engagement and participation in activities and learning, whilst ensuring that everything we do is inclusive and a whole lot of fun! Our activities cost £3 for young people and between £3 and £5 for adults! We look forward to welcoming you and your family soon!

Play Rangers for 5 to 7 years

Mondays
4pm to 5pm
'High 5 Activity Club'
Wednesdays
4pm to 5pm
'ADHD Social Club'

Youth Inclusion for 8 to 11 years

Mondays
5pm to 6pm
'Girls Social Club'
Wednesdays
5:30pm to 6:30pm
'ADHD Social Club'

For Adults

Tuesdays
11am to 12:30pm
Adult Coffee Club
Wednesdays
10:30am to 12noon
Adult Drama Players
Fridays
11am to 1pm
Kingfisher Social Club

YADT Behavioural Support Service

Living in today's world is challenging, and we understand that some young people need extra support to help them get a positive start in life or overcome obstacles along the way. We aim to help young people with the issues that affect them. These can be issues such as anger management, social anxiety, improving confidence and dealing with stress. The one-to-one support service gives young people the freedom and safety to explore issues that affect them. This service is for 8 to 17 year olds. Contact us for more information and fees.

YADT are delighted to be able to offer the Care for the Family Courses under our Behavioural Support Service. These courses are run by our behavioural team who have extensive experience working with families and young people with diverse needs. Courses run throughout the year and include 'Handling Anger in the Family' 'Children with Special Needs - ADHD' and 'Children with Special Needs - Autism'. Courses cost £50 per person or £80 for a couple. Contact us for more information.

Visit our website: www.YouthActionDiversityTrust.co.uk
call us on 0208 308 3862 or email yadt@sky.com

SERVICES AND EVENTS FOR MARCH 2019

Friday 1st March

10.30am

World Day of Prayer Service at St. Mary's, Bexley

Saturday 2nd March

9.30am

Lent Quiet Day at St Barnabas. Ring Rev Ren for details

SUNDAY 3rd March

9.30am

Holy Communion

Wednesday 6th March

10.30am

ASH WEDNESDAY

7.30pm

Joint Ash Wednesday Communion at St John's Bexley

Joint Ash Wednesday Communion at St James, N Cray

Thursday 7th March

10.00am

Daytime Housegroup fellowship meeting – venue tba

Saturday 9th March

8.30am

St Barnabas Men's Breakfast

SUNDAY 10th March

9.30am

All Age Worship

Tuesday 12th March

10.00am

Lent Course 1 at Baldwyn's Park Baptist Church

Thursday 14th March

7.30pm

Lent Course 1 at URC, Bexley

Saturday 16th March

7.00pm

St Barnabas fund raising event "THE SEASONS" show

SUNDAY 17th March

9.30am

Holy Communion

From 12noon

Sunday Lunch at the Kings Head, Bexley
for all church members in the Bexley Team

Tuesday 19th March

10.00am

Lent Course 2 at Baldwyn's Park Baptist Church

Thursday 21st March

7.30pm

Lent Course 2 at URC, Bexley

SUNDAY 24th March

9.30am

Holy Communion

Tuesday 26th March

10.00am

Lent Course 3 at Baldwyn's Park Baptist Church

Thursday 28th March

7.30pm

Lent Course 3 at URC, Bexley

Saturday 30th March

10.30am

Clocks Forward
Mothers' Union Centenary Celebration Service
at St Barnabas Church

SUNDAY 31st March

9.30am

Mothering Sunday Holy Communion

Tuesday 2nd April

10.00am

Lent Course 4 at Baldwyn's Park Baptist Church

Thursday 4th April

10.00am

Daytime Housegroup fellowship meeting – Venue tba

7.30pm

Lent Course 4 at URC, Bexley

Bexley Team Adult Lunch on 17th March from 12 noon at The King's Head, Bexley Village

Bexley Team Gentleman's Lunch on the first Wednesday of the month at 12.30pm at The Anchor, Bridgen Road, Bexley

Further details, Julia Wickham, St John's Bexley, 01322 556686

ALL IN THE MONTH OF MARCH

400 years ago, on 12th March 1619 Richard Burbage, English actor, died. A major shareholder in the Globe Theatre, and a friend and business partner of William Shakespeare.

200 years ago, on 28th March 1819 Sir Joseph Bazalgette, British civil engineer, was born. He created London's sewer network as well as several notable bridges, embankments and streets.

150 years ago, on 6th March 1869 the first recognisable periodic table of the elements was published by Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev.

80 years ago, on 2nd March 1939 Howard Carter, the British archaeologist and Egyptologist died. He discovered the tomb of the pharaoh Tutankhamen in 1922.

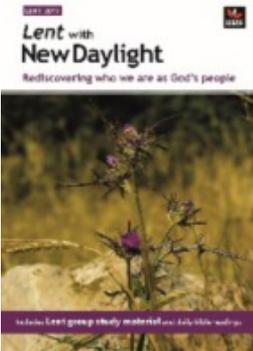
40 years ago, on 26th March 1979 The Camp David Peace Accord was signed by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, ending 30 years of war.

30 years ago, on 12th March 1989 Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web while working at CERN.

25 years ago, on 12th March 1994 the first women priests in the Church of England were ordained.



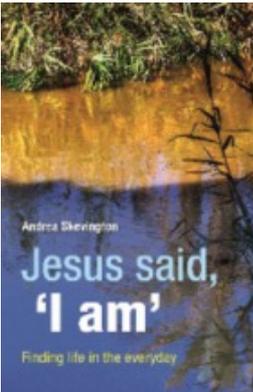
Book Mark



Lent with New Daylight

New Daylight is The Bible Reading Fellowship's most popular series of Bible reading notes, with many thousands of devoted subscribers. Now, for the first time, BRF is breaking new ground with a special edition of *New Daylight* for Lent 2019.

As well as daily reflections from some of the series' best-loved writers, *Lent with New Daylight* offers a range of thought-provoking discussion material for weekly Lent groups.



Jesus Said, 'I Am' – *finding life in the everyday.* By Andrea Skevington, BRF, £8.99

Here are reflections on Jesus' most familiar sayings, with a striking blend of knowledge, insight and humility, and a fresh, contemporary perspective.

"'I am' is such a common construction," writes Andrea, 'something we say many times each day. It is also a very deep mystery. Who are we? How do we define ourselves?...'*I Am*' is a resource for individuals, retreat leaders, church leaders and soul friends,

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The Rev Dr Jo White continues her series on 'Why do they do that?'

Signs & Symbols: the bells, the bells!

Last month we thought about 'crossing ourselves' and in a way I wanted to continue that by asking 'when would you cross yourself?' I can recall people doing it almost superstitiously at times of danger, seeing an ambulance rushing on the road or even as a sign of gratitude at good news.



Many sign themselves to psychologically draw a line before and after their time of prayer. Marking out that time as 'special'. I continue to do so before I eat a meal as a sign

of gratitude for the food I shall consume and a request that God will use it to strengthen me to serve him in my day.

Many times in church I notice people do so when the prayer of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost is mentioned.

Did you know that church bells also were and still are sometimes used to reinforce 'holy points'? In the Church of England, Canon Law still requires every church and chapel to provide at least one bell to ring the people to divine service (Canon F8).

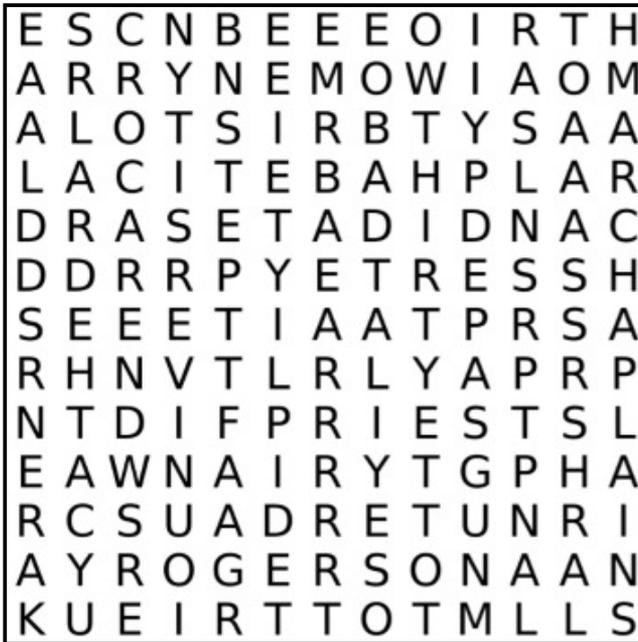
When church services were held in Latin (*not so long ago!*) a bell was usually rung prior to the saying of any and all Trinitarian prayers to forewarn the people so that they could join in with that prayer and specific action. In some churches this continues today even though it is the language of the country being used.

Bells may also be rung at other significant points such as the lifting of the consecrated bread and wine.

Whilst the bells were normally handbells, within rural communities where locals were unable to attend the service due to farming obligations the tower bell may also be rung so they could effectively 'join in as they are able'.

When do you hear church bells this month?

WORDSEARCH



Years
March
First
Thirty
Two

Women
Priests
Ordained
Bristol
Cathedral

Rogerson
Alphabetical
Angela
Chaplain
University

Karen
Spiritual
Care
Hospital
Candidates

(Solutions on page 27)

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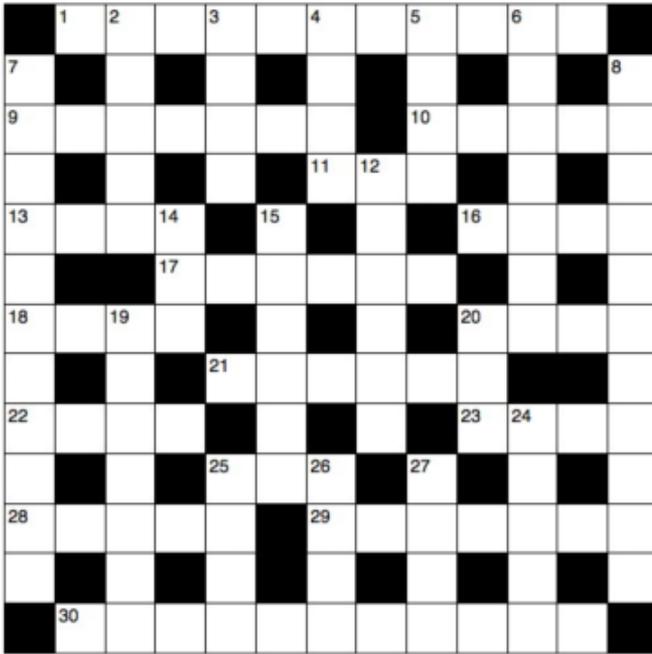
MARCH CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- 1 These letters come between Romans and Galatians (11)
- 9 'You will not — me to the grave' (Psalm 16:10) (7)
- 10 King of Moab to whom the Israelites were subject for 18 years (Judges 3:14) (5)
- 11 Town possessing mineral spring (3)
- 13 Mede (anag.) (4)
- 16 High-fidelity (abbrev.) (4)
- 17 He succeeded his father Rehoboam as king of Judah (1 Kings 14:31) (6)
- 18 A son of Simeon (Genesis 46:10) (4)
- 20 Controversial religious book of the 1970s, The — of God Incarnate (4)
- 21 'He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you — — and hear' (Acts 2:33) (3,3)
- 22 'You — me together in my mother's womb' (Psalm 139:13) (4)
- 23 Edit (anag.) (4)
- 25 'Who has believed our message and to whom has the — of the Lord been revealed?' (Isaiah 53:1) (3)
- 28 Abraham's brother (Genesis 22:23) (5)
- 29 'When Mordecai learned of — that had been — , he tore his clothes' (Esther 4:1) (3,4)
- 30 Sympathetic (Proverbs 11:16) (4-7)

Down

- 2 'That was why his parents said, "He is — —; ask him"' (John 9:23) (2,3)
- 3 Integrated Services Digital Network (1,1,1,1) 4
- 4 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his — of thousands' (1 Samuel 18:7) (4)
- 5 Concept (John 8:14) (4)
- 6 'Do we, then, — the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law' (Romans 3:31) (7)



- 7 Industrious (2 Timothy 2:6) (11)
- 8 'I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be — in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you (Ephesians 1:18) (11)
- 12 'Out of the same mouth come — and cursing' (James 3:10) (6)
- 14 This was how many of the Jewish leaders described Jesus (John 10:20) (3)
- 15 Vitality (Job 20:11) (6)
- 19 He urged David to kill Saul at Hakilah (1 Samuel 26:8) (7)
- 20 'So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul — with the church and taught great numbers of people' (Acts 11:26) (3)
- 24 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord — — ' (Deuteronomy 6:4) (2,3)
- 25 Parched (Matthew 12:43) (4)
- 26 'In the image of God he created him; — and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27) (4)
- 27 Disparagement (Psalm 15:3) (4)

(Solutions on page 28)

ST JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL

The Rectory
St. James the Least of All

On Weddings in Spring



My dear Nephew Darren

Just as undertakers rub their hands in glee at the coming of Winter frosts, so hoteliers with banqueting suites become animated at the first signs of Spring. We have arrived at the first phase of the marriage season. As the days begin to lengthen and trees start to bud, young men find it irresistible not to propose to potential brides. Some people wait to hear the first cuckoo to let them know Spring is on its way; I wait to hear the first knock on the Rectory door from couples wanting to book their wedding.

Naturally, my first job is to try to put them off; it would save them a great deal of money and give me many more free Saturdays, but I always fail, and so the big day is booked. Nowadays, there is such a time lag between booking a marriage service and it taking place, I sometimes think it would be easier to book the service first and then look for someone to marry at a later, more convenient, time.

Last year, it was somewhat different with one couple. They were both in their late eighties (a good time to contemplate a first marriage, in my opinion) and asked if they could arrange to get married as soon as possible. The usual reason for a hurried marriage seemed unlikely at their age and so I asked why. Their answer was charming: "At our age, we might not still be here if the great day is much delayed."

Of course, booking a marriage is the simplest part of the whole procedure. There are florists to negotiate with - made even more complex should there be more than one marriage that day. One bride wants all white, the other red, and so one set of priceless flowers is trundled out of

church by one set of florists while a competitor barrows in the next confection. Photographers are inclined to think aisles are racetracks, pews for standing on and all church furniture moveable - generally once the service has started. I place all photographers in the west gallery before the service and lock them in - naturally, apologising for my fit of

absentmindedness afterwards.

Courses should be offered at theological colleges on placating irate bell-ringers when the bride is half-an-hour late, cooling down organists when the happy couple ask to come in to an organ arrangement of a Led Zeppelin number and re-assuring the choir that the guests meant no disrespect as they made mobile phone calls in church while the choir sang Ave Maria, once we had disappeared to sign the registers.

However, nothing will ever calm down a verger who has been left to sweep up several hundredweights of confetti once everyone else has gone home. I find a restorative sherry back at the rectory works wonders.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace



"The vicar's looked at the weather forecast and is preparing us for another roof-appeal."

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GOD AND THE ARTS

By the Rev Michael Burgess.

Christ blessing John the Baptist - by Moretto da Brescia

George Herbert wrote a poem entitled 'Lent' which contains these lines:

Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
Is much more sure to meet with Him than one
That travelleth by-ways.

And so each Lent we seek to journey with our Lord through the 40 days of this season. Lent is an Old English word for 'Spring.' It is not a



negative, depressing time, but a season full of hope and promise. We begin it on Ash Wednesday when we are encouraged to look at our lives honestly, seeing what we need to turn from and where we need to grow. Jesus always had a soft spot for sinners, and so aware of our own sins, we begin

Lent in a positive frame of mind. We rejoice in the welcome and invitation He gives to follow Him.

This month's painting in the National Gallery has a very unusual theme. It shows Christ blessing John the Baptist by Moretto da Brescia, an Italian artist who died in 1554. It is not a scene we find in the Gospels, but it is likely that the artist was thinking of that moment in Matthew's Gospel when John admits that he needs to be baptised by Jesus.

"Let it be so now," Jesus replies, and He is baptized by John. It is the prelude to our Lord's wilderness experience – that time of testing when Jesus emerged with heart and will purified and refined for His ministry. Around Jesus and John in this painting we see the hills and countryside which lead to that wilderness.

As we are drawn into this intimate scene, we can give thanks for our own baptism and pray that Jesus will bless us as we see Him blessing John the Baptist. George Herbert allowed the Christ he loved to transform his life. We pray for the blessing of Jesus to transform us with His grace and mercy as we say with the poet, 'Welcome dear season of Lent.'

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Families are divided in two kinds of people: givers and takers. Blessed is the family with at least one 'giver', that someone of a cheerful, generous nature who does not panic when you ask them for help. These kindly



saints are on hand when you need them, not fleeing with the cry "But I have to think of myself in all this!"

Catherine of Sweden (1331-81) should be the patron saint of all good-natured, compassionate family members. Givers usually start early in life, as did Catherine. She was the fourth of eight children of Ulf of Godmarrson and Bridget of Sweden, and grew up caring for the needs of younger siblings.

One thing about giving – once you start, you are generally looked to for more help, and Catherine was no exception. Her parents married her to one Eggard Lydersson, an invalid, whom she proceeded to nurse devotedly.

Catherine felt compassion for his helplessness, and found her life in giving it for him.

In return, Eggard encouraged her to have a 14th century version of 'respite' fun at 'Spring Harvest' – for Catherine joined her mother to journey to Rome and Jerusalem for a time.

Refreshed and spiritually fortified, Catherine returned and nursed Eggard until his death. She then joined her mother's religious order, and ended as abbess of the convent of Vadstena. Her cell still survives to this day, with a window on to the church's sanctuary. Catherine was important in the history of the Brigittine Order, as she won papal approval for it in 1376.

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS: 1, Corinthians. 9, Abaddon. 10, Eglon. 11, Spa. 13, Deem. 16, Hi-fi. 17, Abijah. 18, Ohad. 20, Myth. 21, Now see. 22, Knit. 23, Tide. 25, Arm. 28, Nahor. 29, All done. 30, Kind-hearted.

DOWN: 2, Of age. 3, ISDN. 4, Tens. 5, Idea. 6, Nullify. 7, Hardworking. 8, Enlightened. 12, Praise. 14, Mad. 15, Vigour. 19, Abishai. 20, Met. 24, Is one. 25, Arid. 26, Male. 27, Slur.



MICHELANGELO

Michelangelo Buonarroti was born on 6th March 1475 and was one of the world's greatest painters and sculptors. His greatest work is the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome. It took 4 years to paint, lying on his back on scaffolding 20 metres above the floor. The project was huge as the curved ceiling is 1000 square metres. Michelangelo painted over 3,000 figures to fill the space.

When it was finished in 1512 the ceiling showed nine stories from the Book of Genesis. The most famous of these is the Creation of Adam where the touch of God's hand wakes the newly created Adam.



You can read the story of how God made Adam and Eve in Genesis, chapter 2. The Bible story talks of the 'breath of life' but Michelangelo shows it as a touch, as God reaching out to us all.

ANGEL PUZZLE

All the answers to this Bible quiz are to do with angels.

1. This angel came to tell Mary that she would give birth to a baby and name him Jesus (Luke, chapter 1).
2. Angels came to warn him to leave Sodom (Genesis, chapter 19).
3. This type of angel has 6 wings (Isaiah, chapter 6).
4. He saw an angel in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel, chapter 2).
5. Who beat his donkey because it would not go past an angel in the road (Numbers, chapter 22)?



Who is the fastest runner in the Bible?

Adam, because he was the first in the human race.

What colours would Michelangelo paint the sun and the wind?

The sun rose, and the wind blue.



Answers: 1. Gabriel 2. Lot
3. seraphim or seraphs
4. King Nebuchadnezzar 5. Balaam

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms

-

Weddings

-

Funerals

-

Burial of Ashes

-

Year's mind for March 2018

Prayer for help and healing

Father,

You are always loving, always generous and kind to your children.

Please have mercy on us as a nation at this time of turmoil and division.

Help us to be tolerant and understanding of those who have different, sincerely-held opinions.

And guide our leaders so that your will be done in our country and in our relationships with each other and with Europe and the rest of the world.

Lord, have mercy on us, forgive us and heal us.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

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