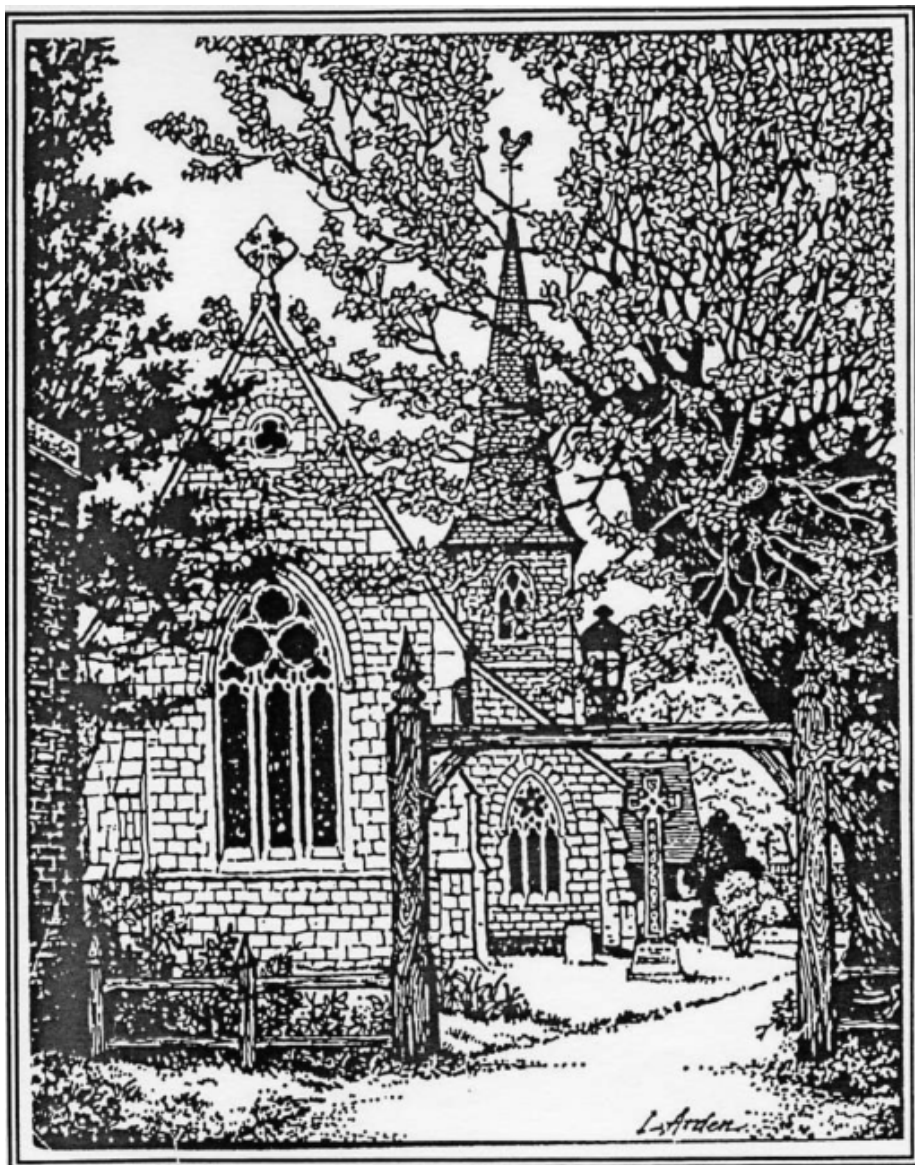


**The Parish Church of
*St. James, North Cray***

**50p
*May, 2022***

(Part of the Bexley Team Ministry)



St JAMES, NORTH CRAY PARISH STAFF

Team Vicar: Reverend Ren Harding 01322 528923
The Vicarage, 6 Tile Kiln Lane,
Joydens Wood, DA5 2BB
renharding@hotmail.co.uk

Lay Reader: David Stevens 020 8300 0867

Church Wardens: Suzy Higgs 020 8302 5719
suzyjhiggs@gmail.com
Maxine Heath 020 8468 7895
maxinejheath@gmail.com

Treasurer: Position vacant

PCC Secretary: Rhonda Collins 020 8300 3797

Sacristan: Stephen Hills 020 8302 7236

Bothy Bookings: Lynne Meads 07966 315518

Parish Safeguarding: Rhonda Collins 020 8300 3797

Magazine Editor: Steve Blake
sblake stjames@virginmedia.com

St James Sunday Service

9.30am

Holy Communion

(All age service with Uniformed Organisations on second Sunday)

TEAM RECTOR'S LETTER MAY 2022



1 May is 'MAYDAY'

What do we understand by that word?

Traditionally, 1 May is celebrated as an ancient spring festival, reaching back to pre-Christian times. In the past, to have survived winter at all was a cause for thanksgiving, and after the hardships of winter to see the rebirth of the created world as the warmth of longer days brought growth. Dances round the may-pole, singing, and cake are usually part of the Mayday festivities.

In 1889, May Day was chosen by socialists as the date for International Workers Day, celebrating the dignity of human work. In some countries it is known as Labour Day. Clearly this is a very different celebration from the traditional May Day.

Finally, the international distress signal is "Mayday" calling for help, for rescue.

So this mayday:

We celebrate the God of creation, in the beauty of nature.

We recognise the God of justice in the dignity of every human being.

We call out to the God of rescue, when we are feeling vulnerable, and lost, helpless and afraid.

Happy Mayday!

Reverend Ren Harding (Team Rector)

The Vicarage, 6 Tile Kiln Lane, Joydens Wood, Bexley, DA5 2BB
01322-528923 renharding@hotmail.co.uk



A Prayer for Ukraine

*God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion
to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at
risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.*

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.
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SERVICES AND EVENTS FOR MAY 2022

SUNDAY 1 May

9.30am

Wednesday 4 May

8pm

SUNDAY 8 May

9.30am

Wednesday 11 May

8pm

SUNDAY 15 May

9.30am

3pm

Wednesday 18 May

8pm

SUNDAY 22 May

9.30am

APCM

Wednesday 25 May

8pm

Thursday 26 May

SUNDAY 29 May

9.30am

Third Sunday of Easter

Holy Communion

Team Zoom

Fourth Sunday of Easter

All Age Worship

Team Zoom

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Holy Communion

Forest Church

Team Zoom

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Act of Worship

following the service

Team Zoom

Ascension Day

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Holy Communion

Please contact the Team Rector or a member of the clergy team to be included on the emailing list or see our website for further information.

Also, do contact any of our clergy team if you are concerned, or if you would simply like a chat, or prayer.

War in Ukraine: John Rutter pens new work after Ukraine invasion



John Rutter, the composer, has written a new choral work in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

Funds raised from 'A Prayer for Ukraine', are going to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Ukraine appeal.

Rutter explained: "How can a composer respond to a global tragedy? I suppose by writing music: like everybody I have been shocked and dismayed by the events of recent days.

"The first thing I wanted to do was write music that would respond in my own way. I went to a late-night service in my old college chapel where they sang a setting of a lovely Ukrainian prayer, so having encountered the Ukrainian text, on Thursday I wrote my own music. I hope the meaning of the text will resonate in people's hearts."

The words of the piece, which are originally in Ukrainian, translate into English as: "Good Lord protect the Ukraine. Give her strength, courage, faith, and hope. Amen."

He added: "I hope it speaks in terms which reach out to the Ukrainian people in their hour of need."

The score is available for free by [submitting this form](#). You are welcome to duplicate the score for the sole use of your own choir. You may like to make a donation to a Ukrainian relief charity, perhaps equivalent to the approximate cost of the copies had you purchased them. If you wish, you are free to make an audio or video recording of the piece without a special licence to do so.

Listen to the new work at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bx4QFxfW2s>

ST JAMES NORTH CRAY SAVE OUR SPIRE

The ancient parish church of St James, North Cray has been there as a focal point for the community through many lifetimes. The building stands through the seasons, and the years, as a reminder of the Church's commitment to God and His love for all people, whether they attend church services or not!

We want to ensure that this precious church building remains open for many years to come. To achieve this, we now need the help of our community!

We are facing a number of significant challenges with the church building, the most pressing of these is our lovely church spire. This is covered with traditional wooden shingles, and we need to replace these urgently.



If you value your parish church, and the part it plays in your community, please do consider making a donation to this work.

Help this beautiful church...Link to our new online giving page:

<https://givealittle.co/campaigns/569e4fec-3e77-4d90-8a0a-94d0726a8974>

Use the QR code above.

Contact me for more information or look on our website





News and Issues



War in Ukraine: Diocese in Europe and USPG launch Ukraine emergency appeal

The Church of England Diocese in Europe and USPG, the mission agency, have launched an emergency appeal to get aid to people in desperate need because of the invasion of Ukraine.

Funds raised by the appeal will support Christian charities and churches carrying out humanitarian work both in Ukraine and responding to the arrival of refugees in neighbouring countries.

Partners on the ground are providing food, medicine, shelter, care for children and people internally displaced in Ukraine. With refugees they are supplying care at the border and beyond, including attention to those from Africa and Asia as well as Ukrainians who are fleeing the war.

The appeal is for urgent help NOW, but the work will go on for many months.

The Church of England's Bishop in Europe, the Rt Revd Robert Innes says: "War is horrible. It injures, destroys, and kills in an often indiscriminate and uncontrollable way. And now, we face war in Europe.

"The people of our little church, Christ Church Kyiv, find themselves in the midst of this crisis. They are typical of so many others.

"Some have fled the city whilst others are still there; praying for their safety and for peace as they shelter as best they can. These people are our brothers and sisters. Those still in Ukraine and those who have fled need our help."

USPG's General Secretary, the Revd Duncan Dormor, adds: "Our hearts and prayers go out to the people of Ukraine. We have launched this appeal in partnership with the Diocese in Europe to

stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and support church responses to the current crisis."

To donate to the Ukraine emergency appeal, visit:

<https://ukraine-emergency-appeal.raisely.com>

War in Ukraine: Advice for parishes on helping refugees

The Church of England has published a 'toolkit' of resources for parishes seeking to help refugees and evacuees from Ukraine in the wake of the Russian invasion of the country.

The material, available at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/community-action/war-ukraine-responding> brings together advice on how churches can welcome people arriving from Ukraine through giving, longer-term practical support such as community sponsorship, prayer and advocacy, as well as links to other sources of information including safeguarding.

In a foreword to the toolkit, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell, say that The Church calls on "all people of goodwill to join in prayer for the people of Ukraine and to work practically to support them in their hour of need."

They continue: "We have been inspired by the warm response from churches and community groups. We hope that in this toolkit there will be some useful answers.

"In these days of uncertainty and fear, we pray that each of us might again turn to the Lord and receive God's gift of peace, work for God's justice, and know God's reconciliation and love."

The toolkit includes a brief guide to what is happening in Ukraine and the humanitarian response, together with details of organisations and appeals.

It also contains information on how parishes and individuals can take action to support those arriving both through the family visa scheme and the humanitarian sponsor scheme, advocacy and prayer and theological resources for churches.

Coventry Cathedral – 60 years on

By Tim Lenton

Sixty years ago, on 25th May 1962, the new Coventry Cathedral was consecrated. The previous one had been destroyed by German bombing during World War Two. The Queen had laid the foundation stone in 1956, and she was present for the consecration.

On the night of 14th November 1940, the old Cathedral – together with much of the centre of Coventry – was devastated by incendiary bombs, but the decision to rebuild it was taken the next morning. The Provost, Richard Howard, wanted to do so as a sign of faith, trust and hope, rather than as an act of defiance. This rejection of bitterness and hatred led to the Cathedral's Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation, which continues to give spiritual and practical support in areas of conflict. It is symbolised now by the Cross of Nails, made from three nails found in the roof truss of the old cathedral and set in the centre of the altar cross.



The place now called Coventry Cathedral, on the site of a Benedictine monastery, is in fact two buildings – a joining of the old and the new. The older building, still hallowed ground, was originally a parish church, and then given cathedral status in 1918. Its 295ft (90m) spire, containing 181 stone steps, is the third highest in England, behind Salisbury and Norwich.

The 'new' Cathedral was an inspiration to many celebrated artists, most of them yet to become famous. Among those commissioned by the architect, Sir Basil Spence, were Graham Sutherland (iconic Christ in Glory tapestry), John Piper (baptistry window), Ralph Beyer, John Hutton, Elisabeth Frink and Jacob Epstein, who created the striking sculpture of St Michael defeating Lucifer. The famous Charred Cross was created when the cathedral stonemason, Jock Forbes, saw two wooden beams lying in the shape of a cross after the bombing and tied them together.

David Hemsley

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Religious persecution on the rise

By The Ven John Barton

Muslims are having a hard time in India at the hands of the militantly Hindu Prime Minister Modi, described by India's Supreme Court as a modern-day Nero. In China, Muslims may be subjected to indoctrination classes by the government. And we remember with horror the genocide of Rohingya Muslims by the militantly Buddhist army of Myanmar (Burma). Most fled to Bangladesh, which now houses the world's largest refugee camp.

It is less well known that among the Rohingya people is another persecuted minority. Christian Rohingyas are not only ill-treated by the Burmese, but also by Muslims of their own ethnicity. Looking at religious persecution worldwide, far more Christians suffer than any others - mainly as a result of Muslim antagonism.

Although Coptic Christians lived in Egypt centuries before Islam arrived, they are subject to "growing religious intolerance" according to Human Rights Watch. Hundreds have been killed, churches sacked, businesses destroyed. A steady stream of Christian women and girls are abducted. The same happens in Nigeria, where girls are taken from school by Boko Haram, which means 'Western education is forbidden'. There, and in neighbouring countries, the nomadic Fulani militia are targeting non-Muslim communities, particularly Christians. Al Shabbab is another terrorist group waging jihad against the supposed enemies of Islam in North and East Africa.

In Morocco, Christian men are arrested and fined for having a Bible or discussing Christianity with a Muslim. Women who become Christians may be expelled from their homes or forced to marry non-Christians. Even in a moderate country like Jordan, Muslims are not allowed to convert, and Christian men are prohibited from marrying Muslim women (but not the other way round). Tunisia also bans conversion, as does Libya. It is impossible to live openly as a Christian in Afghanistan: even before the Taliban took over, converts had to flee the country or be killed.

Christians are at risk in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq . . . the list goes on. If you want to help persecuted Christians, get in touch with one of the charities which supports them:

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, PO Box 99, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 3YF

<https://www.csw.org.uk/home.htm>

Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney, Oxon, OX29 6WG

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org>

BEXLEY TEAM MINISTRY

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. .”

2 Corinthians 1:10-11 (NIV)

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Wash hands frequently with soap & water or alcohol-based hand rub. It has been suggested that instead of singing Happy Birthday to ensure we wash our hands for long enough - that we say the Lord's Prayer!

Avoid touching eyes, nose & mouth as this can transfer the virus.

Stay informed (but not obsessively so!) on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your own healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer. National & local authorities have the most up to date information for your area.

A CALL TO PRAYER

Wherever you are, and whatever your personal circumstances, we invite you to pause at midday each day, to join with your brothers and sisters across the Bexley Team Ministry to pray for our churches, our community, our nation and the world. We pray the prayer that unites all Christians, the Lord's Prayer. This is the Traditional version:-

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory; for ever and ever. Amen.”

You may wish to use this prayer written by Malcolm Duncan of Spring Harvest: -

“May you be given the gift of simple faith. When the world around you is full of uncertainty, may God remind you that you are not alone and you do not need to be dominated by fear. May you find peace amidst chaos from God's promises. Hold onto the God who holds you.”



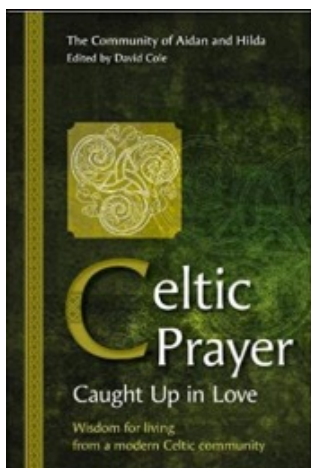
Book Mark



Celtic Prayer – Caught Up in Love

Edited by David Cole (Brother Cassian), BRF, £12.99

This rich collection of essays, conversations and reflections from 30 members of the Community of Aidan and Hilda distils the ancient wisdom of the Celtic Christians and applies it to the lived reality of contemporary readers.

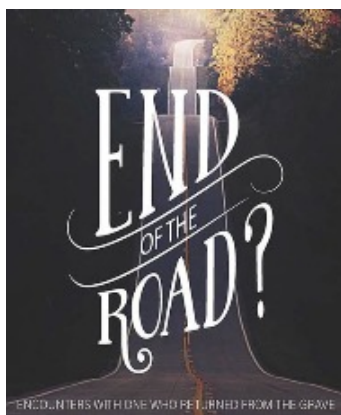


It can be helpful for anyone drawn to explore teachings about prayer from a Celtic perspective. It offers deep spiritual truths woven beautifully with usable prayers, 'like a piece of Celtic knotwork flowing around the page of an illuminated scripture.'

As David Cole writes in his introduction: "Celtic Christian spirituality is about embodying the Divine in every aspect of your life, and prayer is a significant part of that."

End of the Road?

By Michael Pfundner, Bible Society, £1.20



This handy booklet will reach people with the Christian message in just a few pages. It goes behind the scenes of Jesus' death and resurrection to look at the world-changing events leading up to Easter Day – and beyond. It points its readers towards the archaeological and documentary evidence of the real political and religious figures behind the Easter story in the Bible.

This short book is perfect for those who would like to know more about the history behind the Easter story.

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future events*

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ALL IN THE MONTH OF MAY

150 years ago, on 18th May 1872 Bertrand Russell, Welsh philosopher, mathematician, historian, and writer was born. He won the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature.

125 years ago, on 26th May 1897 Bram Stoker's horror novel *Dracula* was published.

90 years ago, on 9th May 1932 London's Piccadilly Circus was lit with electrical lighting for the first time. The road junction later became famous for its neon lighting and video advertising displays.

60 years ago, on 25th May 1962 the new Coventry Cathedral was consecrated. The previous one had been destroyed by German bombing during WWII.

50 years ago, on 28th May 1972 Prince Edward, Duke of Windsor, died. He was formerly Edward VIII, until his abdication in December 1936.

40 years ago, 27th-28th May 1982 tht the Battle of Goose Green took place during the Falklands War. British victory.

25 years ago, 1st May 1997 the Labour Party won a landslide victory, ending 18 years of Conservative Rule.

10 years ago, on 18th May 2012 social media network Facebook went public. Its initial public offering raised \$16 billion – the third-largest amount in US history.

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CHRISTIANS IN ACTION

By Dr Herbert McGonigle

George Whitefield



George Whitefield (1714-1770): For thirty years George Whitefield was the most famous evangelical preacher in Britain and America. He was one of seven children born to an innkeeper and his wife in Gloucester in the west of England. As a boy he loved to read plays and this was reflected in later years when he developed his dramatic gifts for public speaking.

He worked diligently at his lessons and entered Pembroke College, Oxford, when he was seventeen. In Oxford he was befriended by Charles Wesley who had founded the 'Holy Club,' whose members were soon called 'Methodists.' Whitefield joined the Methodists, now led by John Wesley, and shared with them in their regular devotions, study, conversations and ministry to the poor. But he was still seeking for spiritual assurance and it was Charles Wesley who came to his help. Charles and John's mother, Susanna Wesley, had recommended her sons to read a book entitled *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. It was written by Henry Scougal, a professor in Aberdeen University. Charles Wesley loaned the book to Whitefield who read it with great interest. It showed him the inward nature of the kingdom of God and how a man or woman needs to be born again to enter that kingdom. He wrote later of how 'a ray of light divine instantaneously darted in

upon me, and from that moment I knew I must be a new creature.' Whitefield sought the Lord with tears and prayers and found acceptance and peace at Easter 1735. He was the first of the Oxford 'Methodists' to experience spiritual conversion, followed three years later by the conversions of the Wesley brothers.

In June 1736 Whitefield was ordained a minister in the Church of England and from the beginning, his preaching took congregations by storm. When he went to preach in Bristol he was concerned about the many people in nearby Kingswood, a mining area, who seldom attended church. In response Whitefield did something that was to be profoundly significant for the 18th century Evangelical Revival of which he was the herald. He began to preach out of doors. At Moorfields and Kennington Common in London his congregations sometimes reached 20,000 in number. He also introduced both Charles and John Wesley to open-air preaching.

Whitefield was blessed with a clear, resonant voice and it has been estimated that he could make himself heard at a distance of one quarter of a mile. He preached in Scotland to very large crowds, especially near Glasgow in what became known as the Cambuslang Revival. He made seven preaching visits to America and was much involved with evangelical ministers in New England, especially Jonathan Edwards. He was a tireless evangelist and partly as a result of his long, non-stop itinerant ministry, he died in Massachusetts in September 1770 at the age of fifty-six.

A humble, holy and dedicated preacher of the gospel, George Whitefield was wonderfully used of God in revival preaching. His great ministry stemmed from his Damascus Road experience at Oxford in 1735.

Dr Herbert McGonigle was Senior Lecturer in Historical Theology and Church History in Nazarene Theological College, Manchester.

Reflected Faith Series

The Rev Dr Jo White

The Meaning of Colours - part 1



In March, April and May this year the coloured frontal of the altar will have been changed many times – as will the colour of the priest's vestments.

Each colour – and there can be as many as six in a church's store – has a different meaning. They reflect the significance of that day or the season.

In March purple was used as a symbol of penitence, as we were in Lent and trying to prepare ourselves for Christ's final act of love for each of us.

Holy Week – the time of Christ's final journey – was denoted by the colour red. Red, the colour of blood, is used for feasts of martyrs as well as those for the Holy Spirit – when it more likely represents his flames of 'fire' which rested on those in the Upper Room.

Maundy Thursday, we switched to white for any Communion service, as this celebrates the remembrance of the first Communion with His apostles which He commanded us to continue.

Good Friday, and we were back to red.

Then on Easter Sunday, the day of the greatest Christian Celebration, we entered to an altar bedecked in gold or the 'whitest' with the most elaborate decoration the church possesses.

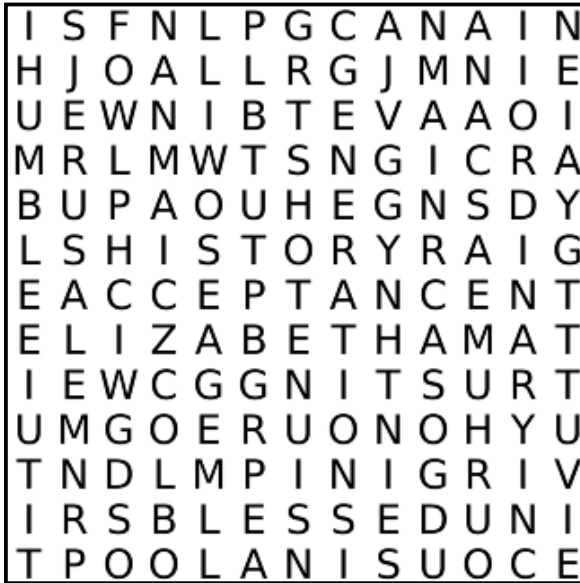
'Plain' White will be used for the Easter Season signifying purity and Christ's triumph over death until Ascension Day on 26th May. This, being a special and more significant day in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, goes to gold again: then immediately back to white for the next ten days.

On the day of Pentecost itself, Whit Sunday, 5th June, the colour will be? Yes, you got it, red for flames of fire.

This month:

Watch out for the changing colours indicating the special meanings that day has in the life of the church. If you could choose a different colour for a different or even one of the same meanings, what would you choose and why? In June it will all change again, so we'll consider those next month.

WORDSEARCH



Visit	Pregnant	Great	Acceptance	Special
Virgin	Glimpse	History	Will	Honour
Mary	Humble	Trusting	Jesus	Generations
Cousin	Ordinary	Faith	Jerusalem	blessed
Elizabeth	Women	God	Cana	

(Solutions on page 30)

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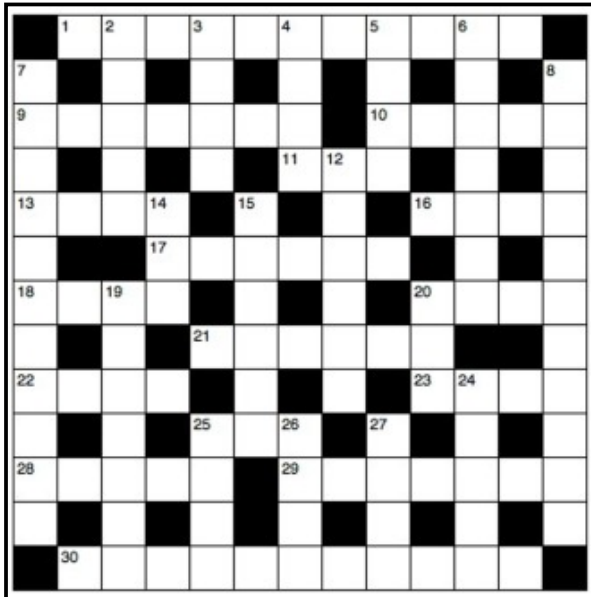
MAY CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- 1 Overpowered (Deuteronomy 11:4) (11)
- 9 'The — are mantled with corn' (Psalm 65:13) (7)
- 10 'Each man—a sword to his side'(Exodus32:27)(5)
- 11 On the death of Jesus the curtain in the temple was torn from—to bottom (Matthew 27:51) (3)
- 13 Stagger(Isaiah 28:7)(4)
- 16 'Anyone,then,who knows the good he ought—and doesn't do it, sins' (James 4:17) (2,2)
- 17 Stir up or provoke(Acts13:50)(6)
- 18 Burden(Luke11:46)(4)
- 20 'As far as the east is from the—,so far has he removed our transgressions from us' (Psalm 103:12) (4)
- 21 Sign(Luke23:38)(6)
- 22 'After that,Jesus poured water into a basin and began to—his disciples' feet' (John 13:5) (4)
- 23 The nature of the seven ears of corn which swallowed up the good ears in Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:23) (4)
- 25 Has(anag.)(3)
- 28 'This is the account of Shem,Ham and Japheth,—sons' (Genesis 10:1) (5)
- 29 'I will...make them drunk,so that they...sleep for—and— awake' (Jeremiah 51:39) (4,3)
- 30 Paul said of him,'he often refreshes me and is not ashamed of my chains' (2 Timothy 1:16) (11)

Down

- 2 Worth (Matthew 13:46) (5)
- 3 'A bruised — he will not break' (Matthew 12:20) (4)
- 4 'Suddenly a great company of the heavenly — appeared with the angel' (Luke 2:13) (4)
- 5 Slip (anag.) (4)



- 6 'Take an awl and push it through his — — into the door, and he will become your servant for life' (Deuteronomy 15:17) (3,4)
- 7 Bountiful (2 Corinthians 8:2) (11)
- 8 'Therefore, as we have — , let us do good to all people' (Galatians 6:10) (11)
- 12 Acquire(2Timothy2:10)(6)
- 14 Container cover(Numbers19:15)(3)
- 15 'He...became obedient to death,even death on——!' (Philippians 2:8) (1,5)
- 19 Refrain(1Peter2:11)(7)
- 20 'She began to—his feet with her tears'(Luke7:38)(3)
- 24 One who worships Brahma,Vishnu or Shiva(5)
- 25 'Give to everyone who—you'(Luke6:30)(4)
- 26 'I lift up my eyes to the hills;where does my—come from?' (Psalm 121:1) (4)
- 27 One of those whom the Lord said would be taken from Jerusalem and Judah as judgment on them (Isaiah 3:2) (4)

(Solutions on page 30)

ST JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL



On the perils of holding a rose queen celebration

The Rectory

St. James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

On reflection, inviting your parishioners to join in our annual rose queen celebrations may not have been entirely wise. It was cheering to see that your people arrived on carnival floats, although less happy that they should be being pursued by the police trying to recover lorries temporarily liberated from your local coal merchant.

Once the procession started, your drivers did not seem to have grasped the fact that the vehicles were expected to tour the village slowly, for the benefit of spectators, instead of treating it as a competitive race, resorting to driving anti-clockwise around roundabouts in order to queue-jump. I noticed that numbers on your floats gradually diminished as they were flung off while careering round corners. Those who had a walk of several miles back home while dressed as pirates and ballerinas had my sympathy. Our tea ladies however, were less sympathetic when hay bales were spun off as your drivers demonstrated handbrake turns in the car park, felling our Women's Guild like a row of skittles.

The local police normally use the afternoon to do a little gentle point duty while drinking gallons of sweet tea; this year, the number of tickets issued for unsafe vehicles, dangerous driving and assorted tax and insurance lapses should boost our constabulary's figures for the next twelve months.

I must concede that the group who decided to make a *papier mache* swan for one of your floats showed great imagination. It was such a pity that they did not know a fifteen foot swan would be driven under a twelve foot bridge. The drama of its emergence, headless, was only exceeded by the following float which appeared to have a group of Brownies being savaged by a demented, bodiless, vulture.

I am sure that some of your people's offers to help this year's Princesses campaign for election for Rose Queen next year were well-meant. However, outlining systems for vote rigging and elector intimidation take a competitive spirit a little too far.

The crowning of the Rose Queen is always a high point to the afternoon, but could I point out that the "gold" crown is metal foil and the "diamond" sceptre is a piece of yellow glass. So could we please have them returned before next year?

Your loving uncle,
Eustace



"We seem to get a much bigger turnout whenever the Bishop visits."

GOD AND THE ARTS

By The Rev Michael Burgess

A meal to remember!

When we gather with other Christians to celebrate the Eucharist and to make our communion, we are remembering that special meal Jesus shared with His disciples on the eve of His arrest and death. But do we always appreciate what we are doing? Sometimes the monotony of repetition and distractions will get in the way. We fail to recognise Christ's gift at communion for what it truly is.

In the 15th century the prosperous burghers of the Flemish town of Louvain commissioned the artist Dirk Bouts to paint a special altarpiece devoted to the Eucharist for the church of St Peter. Dirk Bouts, with his imagination, portrayed the Last Supper in a room looking out to his own town of Louvain. The faces of the servers in the room and the cooks looking through the hatch were modelled on the burghers who commissioned the work.

Other faces are modelled on theologians at the new university who visited the artist. They wanted to ensure he kept his theological feet on the ground while his imagination took flight. And so around the scene of the Last Supper, Bouts has painted Old Testament scenes foreshadowing that holy communion: Melchizedek offering bread and wine in return for Abraham's offering, the eating of the first Passover, the gathering of the manna in the wilderness, and Elijah wakened by the angel to eat and drink before setting out for Horeb. Signs of sacrifice, the Passover of the old covenant, daily food and food for the journey – all key aspects of the communion we celebrate and share in.

Just as the theological faculty reminded Dirk Bouts of all these facets, so the artist is reminding us of the richness of the

distinctive meal we have as Christians. When we see the bread and wine taken up and offered, we remember not only the Last Supper, when Jesus fed His disciples with the sacrifice of His life, but those occasions when God reached out to feed His people of old. We rejoice that the food our Lord gives us in the Eucharist feeds us now and enables us to make our journey through life to the eternal banquet offered in the heavenly kingdom.



19th Dunstan, the abbot who restored monastic life in England



Dunstan (909-988 AD) stands out as an example of what just one person can achieve when they follow the call of God in their life.

Dunstan was born near Glastonbury, of a noble family with royal connections and church connections; his uncle was Archbishop of Canterbury. But in 935, at the age of 26, he was accused of 'studying the vain poems of the pagans' – and expelled from court. He nearly married, but instead made private monastic vows and was ordained a priest by Elphege, bishop of Winchester. Dunstan felt God's call on his life and responded. That decision was to shape English history.

Not at first, however. For Dunstan began his priestly life by simply returning to Glastonbury and living as a hermit. He painted, embroidered and did metalwork. But when in 939 Edmund became king of Wessex, he recalled Dunstan and made him abbot of Glastonbury. The monastic life of the country was all but dead; the Danish invasions and the hostility of local magnates had seen to that. Dunstan set out to change all this, and went on to restore monastic life in England, under the Rule of St Benedict.

Down the years, Dunstan saw kings come and go: Edmund, Edred, Edgar, Edward. Under King Edgar Dunstan was made bishop of Worcester in 957, bishop of London in 959, and Archbishop of Canterbury in 960. Thus was born a fruitful collaboration between King and Archbishop which was to reform the Church in England. Monastic orders began to thrive once more. After the Conquest, the days of Dunstan would be looked back on as the 'golden age'.

Dunstan was zealous for the faith. He taught, prayed, fasted, repaired churches, acted as judge, inspired national laws of the land, made sure taxes were paid, and encouraged his monks in their manuscripts and prayers. He remained active right to the end of his life: he preached three times on Ascension Day 988, and died two days later, on 19 May, aged nearly 80.

They wrote of him: he was without doubt "chief of all the saints who rest at Christ Church" (Canterbury). It has been well said that the 10th century gave shape to English history, and Dunstan gave shape to the 10th century.



A HAND FROM THE PAST

The world's oldest surviving complete manuscript of the whole Bible is a book which was made in Northumberland around the year 700. Three copies were made of the Latin Bible, one of which, the Codex Amiatinus, survives today in Florence, Italy.

Imagine all the work with every single word written out with a pen made from a bird's feather sharpened into a quill, written in ink made from oak or holly gall on sheets of vellum. Vellum is made from animal skins and this one book was made from the skin of 500 animals and took seven scribes several thousands of hours to write and decorate. They could only copy manuscripts when the light was good and in winter with no heating the ink might freeze.

If we want a new Bible, or any book, we can just go and buy one for a few pounds. Handwritten, illuminated books by monks were so precious that each book lived in its own special be-jewelled box. Each

book was a work of art with brightly coloured pictures and decorated letters.

To give you some idea of just how long it took, why not try copying out one page of the Bible in your best handwriting? See how long it takes you and how many mistakes you make.

And to make it extra special, all the capital letters should be specially decorated with paint and real gold. Here are some to practice on....



Boy: Can you write in the dark?
Dad: **Yes, I should think so.**
Why?

Boy: Would you sign my school report, please?

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