



Ryburn  
BENEFICE

# Connected

December 2020 –  
January 2021



**The Ryburn Benefice Churches:**  
St Luke's Norland, St Mary's Cottonstones, St Peter's Sowerby

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## Encouraging message of hope ...

### “God is with us in our pain and fear” – Bishop of London’s message of hope

The Bishop of London, Rt Revd Sarah Mullally, has said that despite this being a time of “great uncertainty and challenge” as the world struggles to “overcome a devastating pandemic that has cut short earthly lives, destroyed livelihoods, and separated us from the people and activities we enjoy,” yet still “we are not without hope.”

Speaking recently in St Paul’s Cathedral, she said: “Through word, prayer, song and symbol, we are reminded that God’s love for us can never be destroyed. God is with us in our pain and fear and will lead us to a yet more glorious day.”

Bishop Sarah also praised the ongoing work of the “real heroes and heroines at work in intensive care units, the Emergency Department, oncology and elderly care wards.”

These people have been “giving their all, and are continuing to give their all, because we are still very much in the midst of the Covid pandemic.”

“Yet,” she went on, ‘The hope we have in our hearts as Christians is eternal. Hope that is in Christ will not be disappointed.’”

#####

Believe in God and you’ll believe in miracles. Believe in the baby of Bethlehem, and you’ll experience one. – *Anon*



"Nice idea, Amelia, but I don't think that the Angel of the Lord Zooming with the shepherds would have the same dramatic effect."

## Going to church in the coronavirus pandemic

More than 17,000 online services and events have been provided by Church of England churches since the introduction of the lockdown and restrictions on public worship earlier this year.

Figures from the Church of England's [A Church Near You](#) website, which allows people to search for church services and events, show that more than 17,000 online services or events are now listed, including Sunday Communion services, Bible studies and morning or night prayer. Many of these services take place regularly and this figure represents a snapshot of the likely total number.

The statistics do not include the Church of England's national online weekly services broadcast on Sundays and shared on Facebook and YouTube. There have been nearly three million views of the national online services and posts about the weekly broadcasts have been seen 23.6 million times. Contributors have included the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Duke of Cambridge and Pope Francis.

The national online services are being watched by a wide range of ages and around one in five people viewing go to church infrequently or not at all.

Other figures in the report show that official Church of England apps from Church House Publishing – the most popular being Daily Prayer, or the Daily Office of morning, evening and night prayer – have been used more than seven million times so far this year, up from five million in 2019. Church of England social media posts have been seen 86 million times so far, nearly double the total for last year.

The growth in online services has been helped by the Church of England stepping up its digital training programme for congregations.

More than 4,200 vicars and local church leaders have taken part in remote digital training courses so far this year, four times the number as in 2019.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: “At a time when many have felt isolated and fearful, Church of England parishes and clergy have broadcast thousands of online church services and events, seeking to bring comfort and hope to their communities. We know that tens of thousands of those tuning in will never have had contact with their local Church of England parish before and may never have heard the Christian message. Their welcome presence is a sign of the great hunger we all have for spiritual meaning in our lives.”

\*\*



*Martin received the latest Christmas coronavirus regulations from the diocesan office.*

## The Regular Church Calendar

**Sunday worship services in our Churches are now resuming from Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December:**

**Eucharist St Peter's 10am, followed in Church by Sowerby Parish Annual Church Meeting at 11am.**

**Eucharist St Luke's Church, 3.30pm followed in Church by Norland Parish Annual Church Meeting at 4.30pm.**

**Our Worship and meeting together continues to be subject to national social distancing measures, the limitation of people / family groups who come together to 6 and the wearing of face masks. We trust you will continue to observe the current social distancing guidelines for Tier 3 in Churches and maintain all health precautions for your own safety and those of others who use the building.**

**Those wishing to book a wedding or funeral please contact the Vicar for further details.**

Don't forget to look us up on the web:  
[www.ryburnbenefice.org](http://www.ryburnbenefice.org)



SaintPeter's Church Sowerby

*For Funerals, and other matters  
please contact the Vicar:*

*Vicar: Revd Jeanette Roberts tel 01422 646 371  
[jeanette.roberts@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:jeanette.roberts@leeds.anglican.org)*

# The First Christmas



JESUS WAS BORN ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NEAR JERUSALEM.



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE VERY SPECIAL BABY



MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE LONG JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED THERE BY THE CENSUS.



BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL... THE ONLY SHELTER THEY COULD FIND WAS A STABLE...



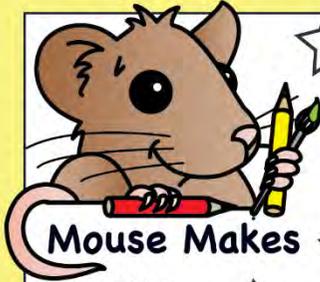
...WHICH IS WHERE THE BABY JESUS WAS BORN.



SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY. AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAS BEEN BORN.



THEY WERE THRILLED TO SEE THE MOST WONDERFUL GIFT IN THE WORLD!



## Mouse Makes

HAPPY  
CHRISTMAS!

Read the Christmas  
story in Luke  
1:1 - 2:21

"I bring you **good news** that will bring  
great **joy** to all people. The **Saviour** has  
been born today! ...

*Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to those with whom  
God is pleased".*

from Luke 2 vs. 10,11,14



A picture to colour  
for Christmas. Colour in  
one star each day as you  
count down to Christmas!

## Journeys or lockdown this Christmas?

Christmas is a busy time for travel, as many of us venture a great distance to see family or friends again. But this year coronavirus has put an end to all that. Seeing all our loved ones this Christmas will be difficult, if not impossible. Soon we may not be travelling anywhere very much at all.

Have you noticed that the Christmas story is about journeys? It begins with Mary and Joseph travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Then, some shepherds receive news from an angel about a special birth. They travel through the night, across dark fields and down unlit streets to search for the baby Jesus.

After this, in an eastern country some wise men see a new star, one that heralds a new king. They leave home and set out with only the star to guide them, and their faith to reassure them that Someone special is waiting at the end of their journey.

All these travellers must have wondered what really lay ahead. Nothing was fully understood, carefully planned for, or safe. They all travelled with questions and uncertainties. But God had come unexpectedly into their lives, and suddenly they were given new roles to serve Him.

Despite worldly circumstances that could have crushed them, they stood firm and trusted God all the way.

These travellers' tales tell us that God may suddenly enter into our familiar, or this year, unfamiliar circumstances. He may come in surprising ways, to prompt us into new avenues of service. At first His call on us may be uncomfortable and challenging.

If our response is anything like Joseph, Mary, the shepherds and wise men – to be obedient to His call in serving, witnessing and worshipping, we shall be greatly blessed and rewarded.

We are all on life's journey. If we travel with God, He will be faithful and lead us to His heavenly Home.



# Hello God ...

## Everyday Christmas

*(Mal 4:2, Mt 1:23)*

Light a candle,  
Look into the light,  
Pray.

*Light and life to all He brings,  
Risen with healing in His  
wings*

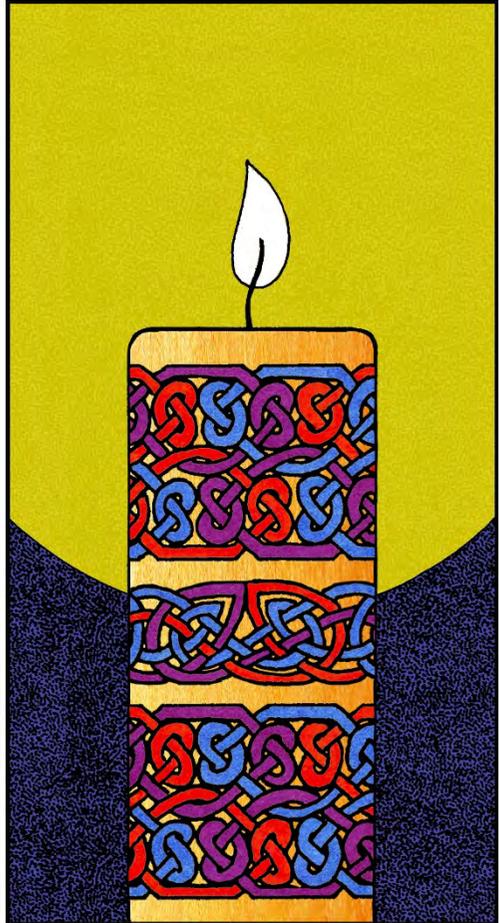
As the flame rises,  
Smooth, bright,  
Know the comfort of Christ  
In the carol speaking  
Afresh.  
Bringing Jesus  
Into heart and prayer.

Emmanuel, God with us.  
Light of the world,  
Out of the stable  
Into our situations.

Because of Jesus  
Christmas is everyday.

The Lord is here.  
Hallelujah.

*By Daphne Kitching*



*This 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!

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## **Living in Love and Faith**

The Church of England's Living in Love and Faith teaching resources have been recently published. They explore questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

The resources, commissioned by the House of Bishops, include a book, a series of films and podcasts and a course. They will initiate a process of whole Church learning, that will contribute to the Bishops' discernment of a way forward in relation to questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

## Holy Days ....

December 3rd

Francis Xavier – the seasick missionary

Ignatius Loyala sent his friend and follower Francis Xavier (born 1506) to the Orient as a missionary. What a missionary! Imagine David Livingstone, Billy Graham and the Alpha Courses rolled into one. His mass conversions became legendary – he baptised 10,000 people in one month and in just ten years of work was credited with 700,000 conversions.

Xavier became the most famous Jesuit missionary of all time, working so hard that he had only a few hours' sleep each night. He was known as 'the Apostle of the Indies' and 'the apostle of Japan'. He began by reforming Goa, which contained numerous Portuguese Catholics, notorious for cruelty to their slaves, open concubinage, and neglect of the poor. For three years, by example, preaching and writing verses on Christian truths set to popular tunes, Francis did much to offset this betrayal of Christ by bad Christians.

For the next seven years he worked among the Paravas in southern India, in Ceylon, Malacca, the Molucca islands, and the Malay peninsula. He met with immense success among the low-caste but with almost none among the Brahmins.

In 1549 he ventured on to Japan, translated an abridged statement of Christian belief, and made a hundred converts in one year at Kagoshima alone. When he left Japan, the total number of Japanese Christians was about 2,000; within 60 years they were resisting fierce persecution, even to death.

Wherever Xavier sailed, he left after him numerous organised Christian communities. Not bad for a man who suffered seasickness and had trouble in learning foreign languages!

Xavier died in 1551, on his way to China. His body was preserved and enshrined for many years. His right arm was detached in 1615 and is still preserved in the church of the Gesu at Rome. He was canonised by Gregory XV in 1622, and declared Patron of the Foreign Missions by Pius XI in 1927.

## 11 December Daniel the Stylite

Do you know any odd Christians? People with hearts of gold, who would never harm anyone... but who are nonetheless just plain ODD.... Well, Daniel the Stylite should be their patron saint. Perhaps he is the proof that God can bless and use any one of us – no matter how batty some of our ideas may be.

Daniel was born in Mesopotamia in 409 into a devout Christian family. He seems to have been an intense sort of child – when he was only 12, he became a monk. Some years later Daniel visited Antioch, and saw the famed Simeon Stylites, the wild, hairy monk who lived his life perched high on top of a pillar, dropping his fleas and lice on the people below.

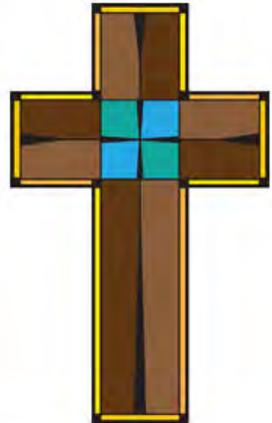
Most of us would have walked on by, but in that moment Daniel's vocation was born. He climbed a ladder in order to talk to Simeon, and soon after that set out on pilgrimage. At Constantinople he came across a disused temple, reputedly inhabited by devils.

Most of us would have walked on by, but Daniel moved straight in. He bolted the door, and stayed inside for the next nine years. Local people fed him through a small window. Braving hideous noises and fighting violent apparitions occupied a lot of Daniel's time – perhaps it was like having a fifth century play-station?

Simeon Stylites died in 459, and left Daniel his lice-infested cloak – which inspired him further. With the help of some local admirers, Daniel came out of his temple and set himself up on a pillar just outside the city. The TV programme Location, Location, Location would have approved of the view over the Bosphorus, but not the amenities. When Daniel nearly froze to death one night, the Emperor was so worried that he built Daniel a new, more spacious home: TWO pillars close together, with a little shelter on top.

Daniel spent the next 33 years on top of his double pillars. People came to him with their problems, and he comforted and advised them. He preached every afternoon, on the love of God. He urged people to show hospitality to each other. He prayed for people. People loved him for it, and God blessed him, even though he did live on top of a pillar. When he eventually died up there, his hair was four cubits long, and he had sat so long with his knees up to his chest that his bones cracked when they straightened the body.

So next time you meet a good-hearted but eccentric Christian, take comfort – they could be far worse!



# Rhythm of Life

“As Christians, we believe Jesus should be at the heart of our rhythms of life, whatever our circumstances. This will have a far-reaching impact on our own wellbeing and the good of others – on our loving, living and learning.

I would like to invite you to join the diocesan ‘Rhythm of Life’ venture. This will involve individual commitments, accessing resources and mutual support. Some key areas will be given special attention: praying, encouraging, sharing, reflecting, celebrating, resting and creating.”

*Bishop Nick Baines*

## Rhythm of Life

### Quick Start Guide

'Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it.  
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.'

*Matthew 11.29 (The Message)*

#### What's it all about?

We each adopt rhythms of life, as our circumstances change.

To put this another way, we each have rhythms of loving, living and learning.

As Christians, we believe Christ should be at the heart of our loving, living and learning.

The 'Rhythm of Life' initiative is offered as a way of helping with this, across the diocese.

It's designed to work with and add to the rhythm of any good things we're already doing.

#### What's involved?

There are four simple steps:

- 1 Taking stock
- 2 Making one or more practical commitments
- 3 Participating with others
- 4 Reviewing your commitments periodically



#### What support is available?

Anyone joining in will be provided with:

1. Help to get started
2. Areas to consider
3. Resources
4. Opportunities for mutual support

#### So how do I get started?

1. Download the Rhythm of Life [invitation leaflet](#) and the [Practical Commitment Card](#).
2. Join a Rhythm of Life '[Get started](#)' [session](#) (optional).
3. Set aside some time for 'taking stock' and reflecting on your current rhythm of life.
4. Begin your 'taking stock' time by praying for wisdom to identify practical commitments that will make a positive difference.
5. Use the Rhythm of Life invitation leaflet to consider which of seven suggested areas could benefit from attention in your current circumstances.
6. For ideas for practical commitments, consult the Practical Commitment Card and the resources section on the [Rhythm of Life page](#) on the Digital Learning Platform.
7. Make one or more practical commitments, recording details on your card.
8. Set a date when you will be pause to review and take stock again, recording it on your Practical Commitment Card.
9. Be open to sharing your experience of your chosen commitment(s) with others.
10. Join in with this ongoing venture by [subscribing to updates](#), including opportunities for mutual support.

## LEARNING

"Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

*Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)*

Jesus offers to be our companion and guide, as we deepen our learning and each make our unique contribution.

### Reflecting

How will I grow in Christian maturity, becoming the person God wants me to be, aided by study, learning new skills and reflection on my daily life?

### Creating

How will I make the most of my God-given creativity, animated by the artistry and playfulness of God's Holy Spirit?

**For your own Practical Commitment Card,** with suggested commitments and resources, **and the option to subscribe to this venture to receive updates,** including opportunities for supporting one another in our commitments, visit: [learning.leeds.anglican.org/foa](http://learning.leeds.anglican.org/foa)

**If you have any queries,** please email:

[foa@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:foa@leeds.anglican.org)

RHYTHM OF LIFE

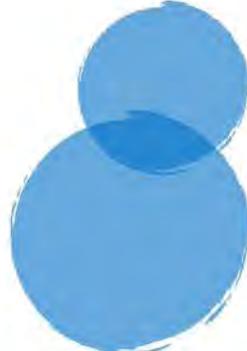
*...learn from me the unforced rhythms of grace...*



an invitation



Loving.  
Living.  
Learning.



# Copy of Invitation Leaflet Back



## To join in, there are four simple steps:

- 1 Taking stock
- 2 Making one or more practical commitments
- 3 Participating with others
- 4 Reviewing your commitments periodically

You can get started with this leaflet, using it to help you take stock - Step 1.

A **Practical Commitment Card** will help you with

Step 2 - available here, along with further details:

[learning.leeds.angel@leeds.angels.org](mailto:learning.leeds.angel@leeds.angels.org) or email

[ROL@leeds.angel@leeds.angels.org](mailto:ROL@leeds.angel@leeds.angels.org)

My prayer is that by taking these steps, we will experience more fully the 'rhythms of grace' promised by Jesus to all those who follow him.

+Nick Bailey

## LIVING

Jesus said: 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

'And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating he had done.' (Genesis 2:3)

## Celebrating

How will I cultivate thankfulness and celebrate God's goodness, as I experience the joys and difficulties of everyday life?

## Resting

How will I restore myself through refreshment and recreation, inspired by the life-giving pattern of 'Sabbath rest'?

## An Invitation from Bishop Nick

During the Covid 19 crisis, we've had to adjust to very different rhythms of life. As Christians, we believe Jesus should be at the heart of our rhythms of life, whatever our circumstances. This will have a far-reaching impact on our own wellbeing and the good of others - on our loving, living and learning.

That's why I'm inviting you to join the diocesan 'Rhythm of Life' venture. This will involve individual commitments, accessing resources and mutual support. Some key areas will be given special attention: **praying, encouraging, sharing, reflecting, celebrating, resting and creating.**

## LOVING

Jesus said: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. ... You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' (Mark 12:30-34)

## Praying

How will I nurture my relationship with God through regular prayer, the Bible and other people's insights?

## Encouraging

How will I build up those around me, so we 'spur one another on to love and good deeds'? (Hebrews 10:24)?

## Sharing

How will God's abundant generosity be evident in my words and actions in my workplace, church, neighbourhood and the wider world?



## December Crossword

### Across

1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)

4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)

7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)

8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)

9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)

13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)

16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)

17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)

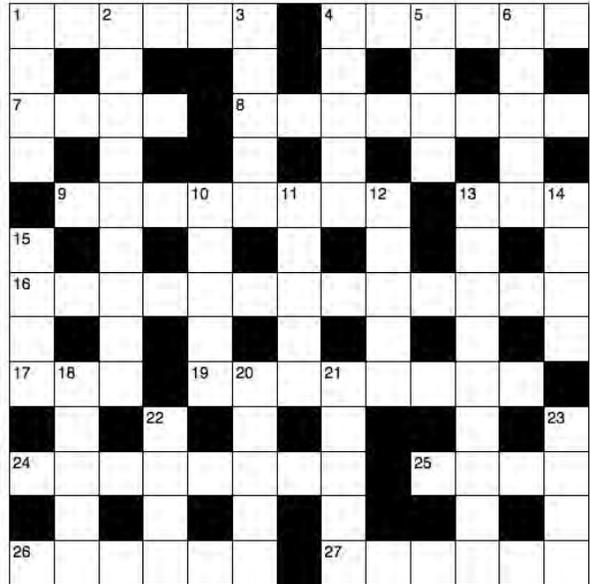
19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)

24 Able dock (anag.) (8)

25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)

26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)

27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)



### Down

1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)

2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)

3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)

4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)

- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
- 10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
- 21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)
- 22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)
- 23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)

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### ***Miscellaneous observations***

- ✚ Wrinkles mean you laughed; grey hair means you care; scars mean you lived; a large rear end means you love take-aways.
- ✚ If money talks, my wallet is whispering.
- ✚ I don't think the therapist is supposed to say 'you did *what?!'* that many times in your first session, but here we are.
- ✚ I'm on two diets. I wasn't getting enough food on one.
- ✚ Stealing someone's coffee is called mugging.
- ✚ Nowadays the only time a person gets on his knees is to look for his contact lenses.
- ✚ Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.
- ✚ Warning: Dates in your calendar are closer than they appear.

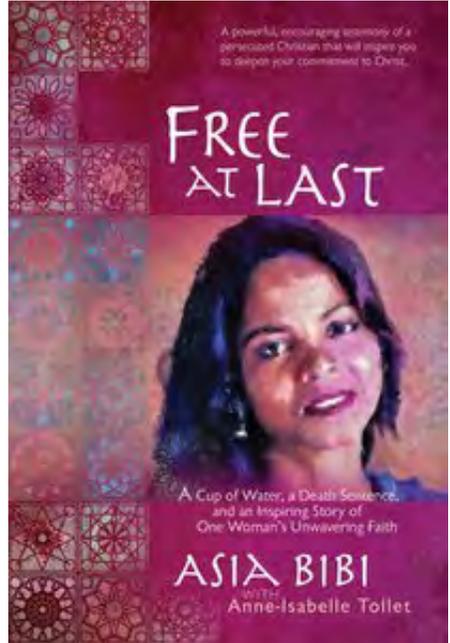
## Book Review ....

**Free at Last ~ By Asia Bibi, Authentic, £9.99**

Here is the remarkable story of the woman who refused to renounce her faith and unwittingly became the global symbol of the fight against religious extremism.

After drinking water from the same glass as a Muslim woman, Asia Bibi, a Christian, was sentenced to hang by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 2010 on charges of blasphemy.

Bibi's case polarised all of Pakistan and mobilised international support from across the globe, including politicians, journalists, and countless organisations. For nine long years, Bibi awaited death in prison until she was formally acquitted in January 2019. Now a political exile, Bibi is reunited with her family in the West, but she will never be allowed to return to her homeland.



#####

### December 2020 Crossword Solution

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

## And Finally.....

**If you see any of the family this Christmas, remember this:**

**Auntie:** one who has stopped growing at both ends, and who is now growing in the middle.

**Egoist:** the relative who is usually me-deep in conversation.

**Handkerchief:** cold storage by your cousin.

**Secret:** something that you tell to only one member of the family at a time.

**Toothache:** the pain that drives you to extraction, even on Christmas Day.

**Yawn:** an honest opinion from an uncle, openly expressed.

**Wrinkles:** something your relatives have gained since you last saw them. You have character lines.

*If you have enjoyed reading our magazine, and would like to advertise the activities of your group or business in our next edition, please contact the editor, Revd Lesley Ennis tel 01422 832747, or email your request to [lesleyennis@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lesleyennis@hotmail.co.uk)*

*For voluntary organizations there will be no charge. For commercial organizations, £2 per issue or £10 per year, for a quarter page insert.*

*All articles are accepted subject to Sowerby PCC editorial policy.*

***Cut off date for items for the next issue is 15th of the next month.***

*If you would like to receive future editions (in PDF format) direct to your email box, please email the editor with your details, which will be used solely for this purpose only.*

*Grateful acknowledgement is given to all our magazine contributors, and also to the contributors of the website Parishpump.co.uk, for kindly allowing us to use some of their material.*