

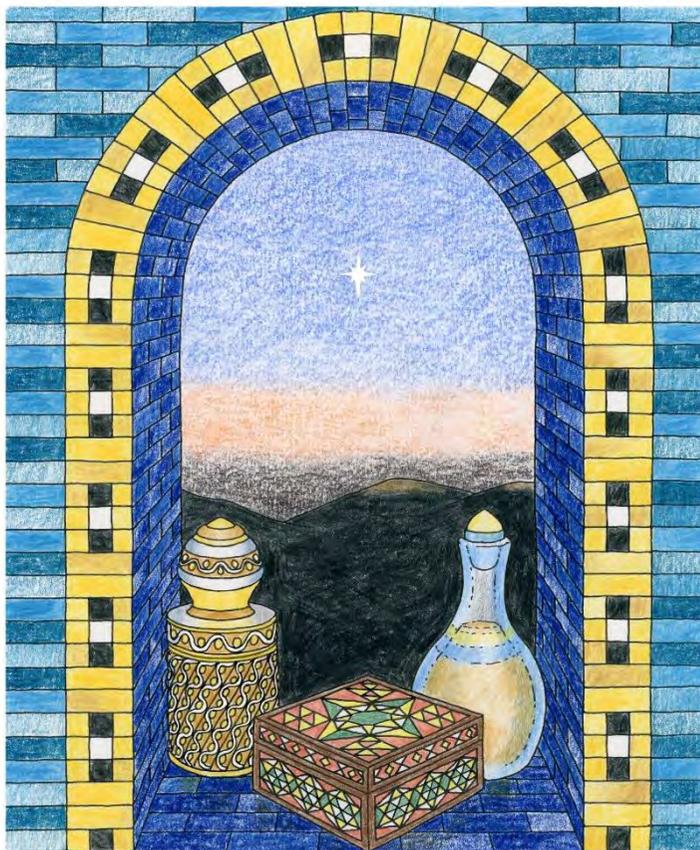


Ryburn  
BENEFICE

Dec / Jan  
2021/22

The Churches of:  
St Luke's Norland  
St Peter's  
Sowerby  
St Mary's  
Cottonstones

# Connected



## Gifts for the King

# Church Contacts

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>Email</u>
<u>Vicar</u>	Revd Jeanette Roberts	01422 646 371	jeanette.roberts@leeds.anglican.org
Retired Priest & Magazine Editor	Revd Lesley Ennis		lesleyennis@hotmail.co.uk

## St Mary's, Cottonstones

Churchwardens	Jim Skelsey	01422822936	skelseyfamily@aol.com
	Miriam Asquith	01422 822534	miriam.asquith@hotmail.com
Verger	Contact Jim Skelsey		
Organist	Bill Ellis		

## St Mary's Community Centre

Bookings	Jim Skelsey	01422822936	skelseyfamily@aol.com
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## St Luke's, Norland

Churchwardens	Jen Hallos	01422 832700	Jenhallos2@gmail.com
	Lynne Wheale	01422 834993	lynnewheale@hotmail.co.uk
Verger	Contact Churchwardens		
Organist	John Naylor	07977846285	john.r.naylor@live.com

## St Peter 's Sowerby

Churchwardens	Ken Cuttle	01422 836487	kencuttle@aol.com
	Helen Gleave	07735537364	helengleave@talktalk.net
Verger	Contact Ken Cuttle		
Organist	Richard Barnes	01422 346215	

Parish Safeguarding Officer	Julie Hawksworth	01422 646371	
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## St Peter's Community Centre, Sowerby HX6 1HB

Bookings	Ken Cuttle	01422 836487	kencuttle@aol.com
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## Church Services

**Sunday worship services in our Churches have resumed, subject to the latest Covid-19 recommendations. We are now following a policy of leaving it to the individual with regard to mask wearing and social distancing. Sanitisers are available and use encouraged at the entry to the buildings. Congregational singing and refreshments after the service have resumed. Respect for each other's choices is our guiding principle as we welcome, greet and share worship with one another again.**

### **Normal Sunday Worship times:**

10am St Peter's Sowerby

11.30am 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month, St Mary's Cottonstones

3,30pm St Luke's, Norland.

### **Social Events:**

**Community Café, Sowerby** 9am-1pm Mondays, St Peter's Centre

**Hub Café St Luke's, Norland** 10am-3pm Wednesdays

**Lunch Club, St Luke's, Norland** 12 noon, 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in the month

St Nicholas Day Festival and Christmas Fair St Peter's 6.30pm Friday 3 December

### **Christmas Services**

Don't forget to look us up on the web & Facebook

**[www.ryburnbenefice.org](http://www.ryburnbenefice.org)**



SaintPeter's Church Sowerby

*Vicar: Revd Jeanette Roberts tel 01422 646 37112*

*[jeanette.roberts@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:jeanette.roberts@leeds.anglican.org)*

Coming dates to note if you are involved:

Ryburn Benefice Core Group meeting to be held on 10.01.22 in St. Peter's Community Centre at 7.30 p.m.

Sowerby Parish PCC meeting to be held on 17.01.22 in St. Peter's Church at 7.30 p.m.

## What are we waiting for....?

Things we have ordered? A family member we haven't seen in a while? Someone in the NHS seeing to our medical needs sooner rather than later?

Waiting is not popular in our culture, when so much can be obtained simply at the press of a button! Advent, when we wait for the coming of Christmas, is about thinking what it means to be waiting for the promised return of Jesus. He says: *'It's like a man going away: he leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore, keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back'* (Mark 13:34-35).

We live between Jesus' first and second comings and this parable reminds us of the need to watch and wait, as disciples living faithfully for Him. It reminds us of two kinds of waiting: *passive* and *active*. Imagine you're at the railway station, awaiting the arrival of a train. On the platform a man is asleep, as he thinks there is plenty of time before the train arrives. He is *passively waiting*. There is also a small boy on the platform who is excited about the train coming. He can't sit still and constantly looks down the track to see if the train is coming. He is *actively waiting*, for he expects the train to arrive at any moment.

Advent gives us a choice: *how will we wait for Jesus' coming?* Passive waiting doesn't require much attention on our part. We can live our Christian life pre-occupied with our own concerns, rather than looking to God. However, active waiting involves an eager expectation, as we await Jesus' return or simply look to Him coming to us today. All we want is to be found faithful as His disciples. There is nothing more important than being ready to meet our Master! What should we be doing?

Getting together with others to pray and worship during the lead up to Christmas is one way to prepare ourselves so we warmly invite you to join us at any or all of our December celebrations in our Church and School services.

# Hello God ...

*After serving as a vicar in Knottingley, Ripponden, Keswick, Barrow-in-Furness, and Reddish this retired priest says he is “re-learning the meaning of the baptismal promise and commission on which the priesthood of all believers has to be established”.*



## Your Gift of Life – at Christmas

Creaking on the staircase –  
Noise outside my door –  
A rustle in the chimney –  
It's 'Santa-time' once more.  
St Nicholas is on his way  
With all his Christ-life gifts  
To fire every child-light with  
The loving Christ-mass kiss.

In some he'll place the gift of gold  
In others frankincense –  
While others will be given myrrh –  
All signs of God's presence.

For in each earthly crib or bed  
In squalor, comfort, splendour –  
The Christ child has been placed  
again

To call the world to wonder.

So come you kings, come one,  
come all,  
Come shepherds to the cradle stall  
And hear the angels sing a-new  
The heavenly song they sing for  
you.

Your God is in your gift of life –  
The life He gives with love –  
So take the gift and use it,  
Use it wisely, don't abuse it,  
Let the Christ-life fire your spirit  
That God in you  
may LIVE.



*By Sam Doubtfire*

## Christmas Presence

*Unto us a child is born*

*To us a son is given... (Isa 9:6, 7:14)*

And you will call Him Immanuel,  
God with us.

Jesus, God actually with us.  
God's greatest gift,  
Born into weakness and vulnerability,  
Sharing life's raw reality,  
Family rows, family rejoicing,  
Broken relationships, broken hearts,  
Grief and great suffering,  
Rejection and injustice,  
Despair and death.

Yet through it all  
Still the gift goes on  
Revealing God's grace and power  
And peace to overcome.  
This is a gift that cannot be wrapped,  
That will never break  
Or pass its sell-by date.  
This is Jesus,  
The greatest gift.

Receive God's Christmas presence  
And walk on with Him.

***By Daphne Kitching***



## 6 December How Father Christmas got where he is today

One person you are bound to run into this Christmas season is Father Christmas. These days he seems to frequent shopping malls and garden centres. If he looks tired, just remember that he has been around a long time and gone through a lot of transformations.

Father Christmas wasn't always the red-suited, white-bearded star of the retail trade that he is today. He began life as Nicholas, born way back about AD260 in Patara, an important port on the southern coast of what is now Turkey. When his parents died and left him a fortune, Nicholas gave it away to the poor. He became a bishop of the nearby city of Myra, where he almost certainly suffered persecution and imprisonment at the hand of the Roman Emperor Diocletian.

Nicholas was a serious theologian: he was a participant at the First Council of Nicaea, which formulated the Creed which we still say today. He even, reportedly, slapped another bishop in a squabble over the exact nature of the Trinity.

Nicholas died in Myra about AD343, but the stories of his generosity and kindness were just beginning. One enduring tale tells of the three girls whom he rescued from certain prostitution by giving them gold for their dowries. When the father confronted him to thank him, Nicholas said he should thank God alone.

In the UK, Nicholas became the basis for Father Christmas, who emerged in Victorian times as a jolly-faced bearded character. Meanwhile, Dutch and German settlers had taken him to America with them as Sinter Klaas and Sankt Nicklas.

It was in America that Nicholas received his final two great breaks into real stardom. The first was when the Rev Clement C Moore, a New York Episcopal minister, turned from his life-work of writing a

Hebrew/English lexicon, to write a fun poem for his children one Christmas. His 'The Visit of St Nicholas' is now universally known by its first line: 'T'was the Night Before Christmas'.

From Clement Moore we discovered that St Nicholas is round and pink-cheeked and white-bearded, and that he travels at night with sleigh, reindeer and a sack of toys on his back. It was Clement Moore who also revealed that St Nicholas enters houses down chimneys and fills children's stockings with toys and sweets.

So how did we find out that Father Christmas wears red? That was the US Coca-Cola advertising campaign of 1931, who finally released the latest, up-to-date pictures of Father Christmas: wearing a bright red, fur-trimmed coat and a large belt.

These days, it is good that Father Christmas uses reindeer and doesn't have to pay for petrol. In order to get round all the children in the world on Christmas Eve, he will have to travel 221 million miles at an average speed of 1279 miles a second, 6,395 times the speed of sound. For all those of us who are already exhausted just rushing around getting ready for Christmas, that is a sobering thought.



**St Nicholas' Day Festival**  
**Friday 3 December 2021**  
**Community Carols**  
**& Nativity Service**  
6.30pm St Peter's Church, Sowerby  
with collection in aid of The Children's Society  
Followed by  
**Christmas Fair**  
7.30pm St Peter's Community Centre & Church  
Tombola, Handmade & Gift Stalls, Refreshments, Raffle  
Free Admission  
Santa's Grotto £1.50 per child

Find us on  facebook. Or visit <http://st-peters-y2burnbenefice.org>

## What's going on at St Peter's ...

We love a good news story to share with you and are particularly pleased to share this one.

Ann Haslem, a long-serving member of our congregation, has led our Brownies & Guides groups for many years, creating a fun safe space for girls to meet and join together in a wide variety of activities and trips.

During the lockdowns in 2020 the groups could not meet physically of course due to the socialising restrictions but that didn't deter Ann. She and the girls embraced modern technology to keep in touch via Zoom video calls etc, meaning they were all ready to come together again in person as restrictions lifted.

Her dedication, commitment and service has recently been recognised as she was nominated for and awarded a **Girl-guiding Hero Certificate**, along with a **Good Service Certificate**. The photos show Ann with her awards, along with her service badges, which include her **Commissioner Brooch** and one for **40 years' service to Guiding** – an amazing commitment!



**Our Brownies & Guides group meets at St Peter's Community Centre (opposite church) from 6.30pm on term-time Tuesdays. If your child would like to find out more about joining the group, or if you would be interested in helping Ann run the group, call in and have a chat.**

## Special Services leading up to Christmas and New Year ...

### At St Peter's Church :

**Fri. Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Nicholas Day Carol Concert at 6.30p.m.**

**Sun. Dec.12<sup>th</sup> Baptism at 10.00 a.m.**

**Thurs Dec.16<sup>th</sup> Trinity St. Peter's School Christmas Service at 9.30 a.m**

**Christmas Eve Crib Service 3.30 pm**

**Christmas Eve Midnight Mass at 11.30 p.m.**

**No Service at St Peter's on Christmas Day morning.**

**Boxing Day, Sun.Dec.26<sup>th</sup> Joint Benefice Service at 10.00 a.m.**

**Sun 2 Jan. 2022 Eucharist at 10 am**

### At St Mary's Church :

**Thurs. Dec.16<sup>th</sup> or Fri. Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> St. Mary's School Christmas Service in St. Mary's Church at 1.00 p.m. (date to be confirmed).**

**Christmas Eve Crib Service 6.30pm**

**Sun 2 Jan. 2022 Eucharist at 11.30 am**

### At St Luke's Church :

**Sun Dec 5<sup>th</sup> at 3.30 pm Toy Service**

*please bring new or pre-loved toys  
which will be given to needy children*



**Fri Dec 17<sup>th</sup> Norland School Christmas Service at 9.15 a.m.**

**Sunday Dec 19th Carol Service at 3.30pm with guest singers 'The Melody Belles '**

*Mulled wine and mince pies after the service*

**Christmas Eve at 5 pm Crib & Christingle Service**

**Christmas Day Joint Benefice Eucharist at 10.00 am.**

**Sun. 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2022 Eucharist at 3.30pm**

*Everyone is welcome to all these services*





Welcome to the latest news from CICS. Now that we are well into the Autumn term, we can confirm that schools are opening up and welcoming in, it is exciting.

### **Welcome to Joan**

Most of the trustees and workers met last week for lunch and to welcome our newest school's worker for the Upper Calder Valley, Joan Wright (pictured here). Nancy has a heavy work load apart from CICS and asked to draw back so she is busy inducting Joan into the work.



Originally from South Africa, Joan and her husband, Steve, came from Leeds where he was pastoring a church and she taught in the High School. They have vast experience of Church planting (in Mauritius amongst other places), working with youngsters (particularly those needing extra support) and Scripture Union events. They came to Todmorden (they wanted hills and countryside – where did God want them?) during the pandemic and found a spiritual home at Vale Baptist Church (a supporter of CICS since the beginning) and Jake (a member of the

management team at Todmorden High School). The door is wide open for Joan to go in there – we shall keep you updated on the news.

### **An update from Chris:**

School is once again a place full of life with young people being young people. They now get to travel all around the building to get to their next lesson which I think is a real positive and some of the other Covid protocols the school had in place have now gone. They still have split lunches and breaks but now do these in two sittings rather than separating every year group. This does mean it is very easy to get well into the afternoon and realise that you have just seen one young person after another.

This first half term has been and usually is a little slow whilst school settles into place with 7 weeks being a significant proportion of time out of touch and all sorts going on in that time. My list of young people has got back up to somewhat usual numbers in the last week or so which is positive.

My reflection on the last few weeks has been that our role in school might be more important than ever, and that comes with additional responsibilities. What I mean by that is, that it is as an integrated agency into school life that we have a responsibility to communicate with school staff more than ever. Once upon a time I would come into school, see my young people, say hello and goodbye staff and then leave. Now my day is a lot more fluid than that which is so positive. It includes speaking to heads of years, being spoken to by young people on corridors, sharing information about students (appropriately) with staff, spending a lot more time bouncing ideas with pastoral members of staff, being given more young people to see on short notice or for one offs, saying hello on the corridor to the Headteacher, co-ordinating between our CICS team, being a listening ear to staff for 5 mins about how their day is going, firefighting situations and still obviously saying hello and goodbye the lady on reception.

We get to do that and everyone knows we work for a Christian charity. That is

why we are there, and why we are constantly showing care to as many people as we can in that school in a much more integrated way.

As an organisation CICS are far more effective than we have ever been at being Christians in that real school community. It is not words (although they are important), It's Christianity in action, we are living it. It's something that CICS should be really proud of, when I think how this all started with assemblies and question point. That's a long time ago, back when Tony was around, but the work keeps developing and changing, we keep moving forward and that seems to lead to us becoming more integrated. I believe that means we are more effective and we carry on doing our bit that God gives us to the best of our ability until it changes, or he tells us to stop.

So there you go a little update, I hope that gives you a picture of what life is like in school for us currently. We continue to do this all as team, with each of us having multiple jobs and various things going on in each of our lives, I hope that I can say it works.

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## Sowerby Bridge Together Community Project



# SECRET SANTA

We're supporting local children in need this Christmas. Could you be a Secret Santa for a local child or do you know a child who would benefit from this support?

We are supporting healthy and affordable living for all members of the community

Sowerby Bridge Together 

**Do you know a local child who would benefit from a Secret Santa this Christmas?**

#### How to receive this support:

- Register the child's details with Leah Webster (complete with name, address, age, gender and any specific interests).
- We'll match the child to a local Secret Santa.
- A member of the Sowerby Bridge Together team will deliver the gift to the child just before Christmas.

**Could you be a Secret Santa and support a local child in need this Christmas?**

#### How to become a Secret Santa:

- Contact Leah Webster to register your interest no later than 10th December.
- We'll match you with a local child and send you information about their age, gender and any specific interests.
- You purchase a gift for approximately £20.
- We'll collect your gift from you, wrap it and deliver it.
- Congratulations! You're a Secret Santa and have brought some Christmas joy to a local child in need!



**If you would like to register as a Secret Santa or a recipient or to just find out more please contact:  
Leah Webster – 07780791991  
leahh030484@yahoo.co.uk**

This scheme is anonymous -  
The details of the Secret Santas and recipients will not be shared

# A Very Special Baby

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



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE A VERY SPECIAL BABY.



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

BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL



THE ONLY SHELTER THEY COULD FIND WAS A STABLE...

...WHICH IS WHERE JESUS WAS BORN.



SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAD BEEN BORN.

WISE MEN CAME FROM THE EAST. THEY TOO WANTED TO SEE JESUS. THEY HAD BEEN GUIDED BY A STAR.



THEY BROUGHT GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.

BUT MARY, JOSEPH AND BABY JESUS SOON HAD TO ESCAPE TO EGYPT...



...AS KING HEROD WANTED JESUS DEAD!!



## Mouse Makes

Colour the tree then colour in one star each day until Christmas. Leave the large star at the top of the tree to colour in on Christmas day!

What's on the Christmas Tree?

Presents at Christmas under the tree,  
A red Christmas stocking waiting for me,  
But what really is Christmas,  
What is it about?  
Just look and the Bible and you will find out!  
It's about **JESUS** - the best present of all,  
**JESUS** our Saviour,  
God's gift to us all!

**A STAR**  
shows the way to Jesus  
Read  
Matthew 2:1-12

**ANGELS**  
bring messages from God  
Read about Gabriel's message in  
Luke 1:26-38

Read the shepherd's story in  
Luke 1:26-38

**LIGHTS AND CANDLES**  
remind us that Jesus lights our way to God  
Read Luke 2:29-32

**PRESENTS**  
remind us of God's special gift to us ... **JESUS!**

"For God loved the world so much that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life." John 3:16

Colour in ....



The angel said:

Fear not, I bring you

**GOOD NEWS**

of great joy  
for all the people.

**A SAVIOUR**

has been born to you,  
He is the

**MESSIAH**

He is the

**LORD**

From Luke 2:8-12

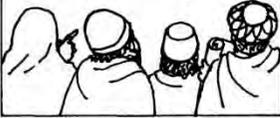
# Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in  
Matthew 2: 1-10

Around the time of Jesus' birth, in a land far to the east of Israel, there were men who studied the stars...

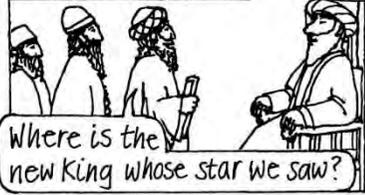
When they saw a new star they believed it showed a special King had been born. ✨



They set off to see that King.



They reached Jerusalem, the home of King Herod.



The Romans had made Herod king of the Jews about 30 years earlier. He was ruthless.



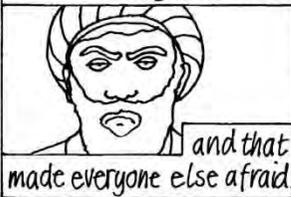
The Jews hated him and he was always worried that people were plotting against him.



He had them killed even if they were his wife or children...



So what the wise men said about a new King upset Herod



Herod got the teachers and priests together and asked about the king's birthplace.



That would be Little Bethlehem\* ✨



Herod secretly met the wise men and asked when they had first seen the star.



Go to Bethlehem and look for the child. When you find him let me know so I can come and worship him.



## Word Search : The Two Kings

s	e	c	r	e	t	l	y	n	e	w	j
u	h	e	r	o	d	i	o	c	a	e	e
p	t	j	e	r	u	s	a	l	e	m	s
s	s	b	e	t	h	l	e	h	e	m	u
e	j	e	w	s	p	r	i	e	s	t	s
t	e	a	c	h	e	r	s	g	e	c	t
p	l	o	t	t	i	n	g	u	l	h	a
w	o	r	s	h	i	p	y	i	a	i	r
k	i	l	l	e	d	h	b	d	t	l	w
b	a	f	r	a	i	d	o	i	e	d	i
l	i	t	t	l	e	n	r	n	d	z	s
h	a	t	e	d	k	i	n	g	c	b	e

upset

hated

King

star

priests

new

plotting

killed

Jerusalem

Jews

teachers

guiding

little

born

Bethlehem

elated

birthplace

worship

Herod

secretly

Jesus

child

wise

afraid

## **Christmas can be a difficult time ...**

*Tony Horsfall lost his wife last year to cancer. He is a former missionary in East Malaysia and former retreat leader based in West Yorkshire. This is part two of a two-part series. If you would like part one, please contact the Editor.*

## **When someone you loved is dead**

*Following on from last month, the other lessons that I learned following my wife's death were:*

11. That it helps to talk about your loss and the person you have lost. Sharing helps you to put things together in your mind, and can be healing in itself.
12. Don't be afraid of pain, and don't anaesthetise it or avoid it – acknowledge it, face it, and you will heal more quickly.
13. That crying is normal, even for men, and it is a healing part of the grief process. Don't be afraid of this, even in public.
14. It may surprise you, to discover which people draw near to you in your grief, and who steps away. Appreciate those who come closer, without judging those who hold back.
15. Not everything people say to you about grief and your response will be helpful. Decide for yourself what is important for you, and let the rest go.
16. That grief may expose some of your inner fault-lines, but don't be afraid of this – learning more about yourself is a gift that comes with grieving.
17. No-one grieves perfectly. Following the death of your loved one, you will make mistakes, bad choices, and errors of judgment. This is normal, so forgive yourself.
18. That hope will rise again within you. The human spirit, in combination with God's grace, has its own remarkable resilience.

19. Don't be afraid to live again. God has a good purpose for you, and a plan for your life.

20. That your faith is an asset, not a liability. When you are tempted to be angry with God, remember that He is an ever-present help in time of need. Lean on Him.

21. That you have a part to play in your grief journey, so don't be passive and allow it to overwhelm you – begin to do what you can to rebuild your life.

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### **Daily Hope phone line receives more than 550,000 calls**

Daily Hope, a free phone line which offers prayers and support for callers, receives nearly 20,000 calls every month. The service, which was launched during the Covid-19 lockdown, has spent more than 7.15 million minutes on more than 550,000 calls.

The phone line originally launched in April 2020, only to continue in response to ongoing demand once restrictions were eased.

Daily Hope set up by the Church of England nationally, has also been supported by Connections, a Missional Programme to older people based at Holy Trinity Claygate in Surrey and the Christian charity Faith in Later Life.

Over the year and a half of service, Daily Hope has continued to encourage people across the country and beyond including Australia, Japan, and the United States.

Since the phone line launched, users have been able to listen to a range of audio, including the Church of England's national weekly service, hymns and daily prayer.

Many have messaged Lambeth Palace to express their thanks for the introduction of the phone line, particularly for elderly people.



# Daily HOPE

A free phone line of hymns,  
reflections and prayers

Are you in need of some daily  
hope during this lockdown?

We have a new FREE telephone  
line for you to ring to hear  
comforting hymns, daily prayers  
and reflections.

---

**0800 804 8044**



Faith in Later Life

**CONNECTIONS**

## Saints you may not have heard about ...

### 11 December Daniel the Stylite 409-93

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!



#####

**Peace**

Blessed are the peacemakers; they will never be unemployed.

## Crossword Dec/Jan 2021/22

### Across

1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)

7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during

a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14-15) (7)

8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th

and early 16th centuries (5)

10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)

11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)

13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)

15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith \_\_\_\_ (6)

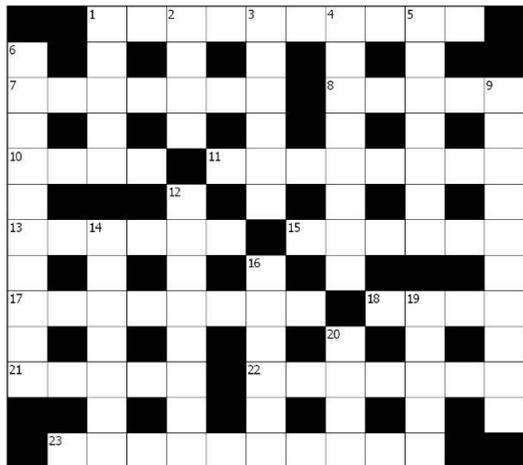
17 Stormy (8)

18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone 'unclean' (Numbers 9:11) (4)

21 Arson (anag.) (5)

22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)

23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)



### Down

1 '\_\_\_\_ and see that the Lord is good' (Psalm 34:8) (5)

2 'The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as \_\_\_\_ as a lion' (Proverbs 28:1) (4)

3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)

4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19-20) (8)

5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)

- 6 'Offer your bodies as living \_\_\_\_\_, holy and pleasing to God'  
(Romans 12:1) (10)
- 9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)
- 12 One who accepts government by God (8)
- 14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1)  
(7)
- 16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)
- 19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)
- 20 'You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will \_\_\_\_ his people  
from their sins' (Matthew 1:21) (4)

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## God in the Arts ...

*The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with 'The Annunciation to the Shepherds' by Sano di Pietro. It now hangs in the Vatican. It can be found at:*

[https://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting\\_232130/Sano-Di-Pietro/The-Annunciation-to-the-Shepherds](https://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_232130/Sano-Di-Pietro/The-Annunciation-to-the-Shepherds)



'In that region there were shepherds keeping watch over their flock'

In the Old Testament shepherds were greatly valued and treated with respect. Patriarchs, prophets and kings had all tended sheep. Job, a

rich man, owned 14,000 sheep. David was tending sheep when he was called by God and anointed by Samuel.

But as the Israelites settled in towns and cities and turned to farming, attitudes towards the shepherds changed. As the New Testament opens, shepherding had become a dirty, lonely life, away

from civilisation. Shepherds could not observe the daily rituals of their faith, and so they had a low status in society.

But out in the countryside with just the hills and the plains and the open air, St Luke tells us that it was there that God's message was proclaimed and heard. Cities and towns had walls and barriers, as Bethlehem has today. But in the fields at night, there were shepherds, watching and alert, ready for any eventuality. And so, they were the first to hear of the birth of a Saviour.

'The Annunciation to the Shepherds' is this month's painting by Sano di Pietro. We know little about this Italian artist apart from some dates. He was born in Siena in 1406 and died there in 1481. But he has left us a legacy of beautiful and sensitive paintings. As we look at this scene, we see the human details: two shepherds huddled by the fireside with their dog, all three looking up to see the angel, and a spear by the side to ward off thieves and predators. The sheep are safely in their pen, black and white fleeces huddled together for warmth. In the sky the angel appears, bearing an olive branch in one hand and with the other pointing to Bethlehem in the distance.

Luke has already told us of another annunciation, with Gabriel visiting Mary. Artists loved to portray this scene and often showed a lily, the symbol of purity, in their paintings. Here there is the olive sprig, a symbol of peace to reinforce the angelic message of peace in the birth of the Saviour. Luke goes on to tell us how Jesus brought new meaning and peace to all those like the shepherds who were nobody in the eyes of people, but everything to the eyes and heart of God.

Jesus in His teaching often turned to the theme of sheep and shepherds, with parables about lost sheep, gates to the fold, and hiring shepherds. Just as the faithful shepherds were prepared to give their lives to protect the flock, so Jesus the Good Shepherd gave His life for the world – a death that would bring the peace and reconciliation shown in that olive branch held by the angel.

## God in the Sciences ...

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

### **Meditation on the Incarnation**

*After the bright beam of annunciation  
fused heaven with dark earth  
His searing sharply-focused light  
went out for a while  
eclipsed in amniotic gloom:  
His cool immensity of splendour  
His universal grace  
small-folded in a warm dim  
female space*



This extract from Luci Shaw's poem *Made Flesh* captures something of the wonder of the moment when the second person of the Trinity became an embryo.

How does a single cell turn into an infant, and what does that process say about us – and God? These are the questions that Professor Jeff Hardin, a developmental biologist, asks himself. Having studied theology as well as science, he has a unique perspective on embryonic development.

A new-born baby is made of around five trillion cells. These cells come in hundreds of different types, each of which must be in the correct place for the child's body to function properly. Every new life is the result of intricate and highly ordered processes. Three things must happen as an embryo develops.

The first important process is for cells to take on their identity as types of muscle, bone, nerves, and so on. The second is when each cell learns which part of the body it belongs to. Third, those cells are moved around to form the different tissues and organs. These three are not discrete stages, but they all happen at around the same time, building up gradually like the different aspects of a picture coming into focus.

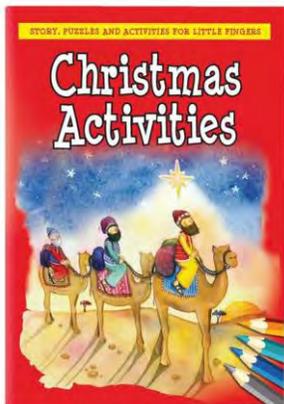
All three of these processes are driven forward by the movement of cells, the connections between them, and the signals they pass to each other. Jeff studies a sort of cellular glue which is involved in joining cells together. Making and breaking these adhesions can affect how cells move and signal to each other, their identity in the body, how they are organised as groups, and ultimately their survival. This glue is found on the surface of cells throughout the animal kingdom, including the small worms Jeff's lab studies.

For Jeff, peering down a microscope at tiny worm embryos can be an act of worship. It is also an exercise in art appreciation, as he learns to appreciate the created order. Understanding the complexities of development, while also being aware that God knows that process intimately both as Creator and created, fills Jeff with a profound sense of awe, wonder and worship.

Does the minute scale of our early development, compared to the incomprehensibly vast and ancient universe, give us a sense of insignificance? Psalm 8 says, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

For Jeff and the Psalmist, such feelings can be a positive experience if they serve as a reminder to be humble in the face of a universe that is vastly complicated but also deeply meaningful, made by a God who loves each one of us.

## Book Reviews ...



### Christmas Activities

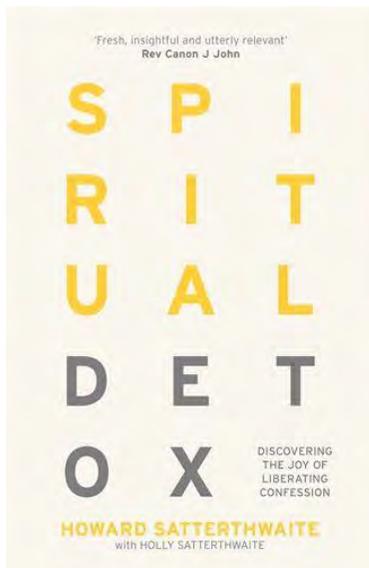
By Bethan James, Authentic, £2.50

All the events of the first Christmas are retold and illustrated in this small format paperback book with on-the-page puzzles and activities to complete. Kids will enjoy reading the story and immersing themselves in the related activities.

With attractive colour illustrations, age-appropriate text and a variety of puzzles, the book could be useful in church outreach activities with children aged four to seven. A little book for little fingers!

### Spiritual Detox – discovering the joy of liberating confession

by Howard Satterthwaite & Holly Satterthwaite, SPCK £11.99



The gospels tell us that God wants to offer us forgiveness. So, confessing our sins should be liberating and joyful. Why do we so often feel only shame and guilt?

*Spiritual Detox* invites you to rethink this much-neglected spiritual discipline. Blending biblical teaching with practical advice and application, it will show you how making regular, heart-felt confession will revitalise your spiritual life – whether you are unhappy and discouraged, wrestling with guilt and shame or just longing to drink more deeply of God's forgiveness and abundant grace.

## Why not?

This Christmas, why not think about putting a Nativity scene in your front window, to remind passers-by of the real reason for Christmas? And next Easter, you could put up a Christian poster or a Christian cross in your front window.



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## Camels

In Jane's Christmas drawing, two of the camels were approaching the inn, over which was pictured a large star. The third camel and its rider were going directly away from it. "Why is the third man going in a different direction?" her mother asked. Jane replied: "Oh, he's looking for a place to park."



## And Finally....

### Replace

Did you know? By replacing potato chips with grapefruit as a snack, you can lose up to 90% of what little joy you still have left in your life.

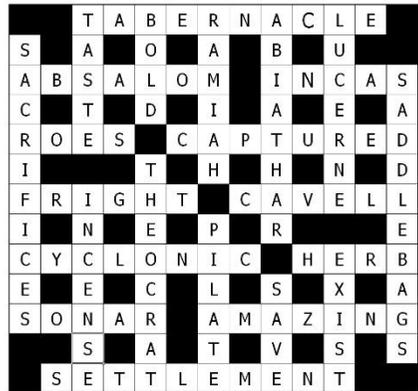
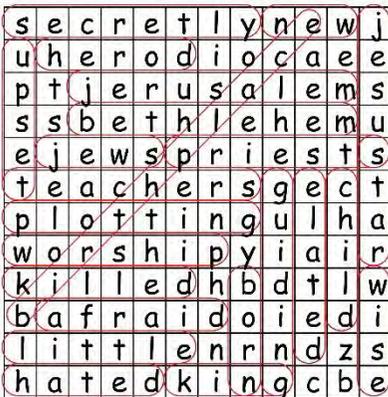
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### Santa

Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.

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