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MINISTRY AREA

District of Gelligaer Magazine:

Churches of
St. Catwg's, Gelligaer
St. Margaret's, Gilfach

*A welcoming Christian
community serving the people
of the District of Gelligaer.*



The Visit of the Magi

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THE PRESENTATION OF
CHRIST (Candlemas)



What's in this edition!

Greetings from the Rectory.

Reader Writes.

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For the Children!

and More.....

Edition No:13 January/February 2025

Cover Price: £1.00

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Greetings from the Rectory

Dear friends,

I hope that you are all well and have enjoyed a holy and peaceful Christmas and New Year. Our celebration of the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, or Candlemas, at the beginning of February marked the end of our Christmas-Epiphany, our celebrations of the miracle of the incarnation, of God coming to live among us in the person of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Already it is February, isn't that hard to believe, and our attention is drawn to the coming of season of Lent as the year stretches out before us.



As we look forward we look to the season of preparation that is Lent. During Lent we will prepare to travel with Jesus on his final journey to Jerusalem. We will witness once again the depth of his love for us as he gives himself to death on the Cross, as he sacrifices himself for our sins and we will celebrate the joy of the resurrection and the Good News that Jesus is alive.

It is a great comfort to know that the living Lord Jesus is with us, walking alongside us, encouraging and strengthening us as we journey through our own lives towards our eternal home in the Father's house in heaven. The Good News that in Jesus Christ the risen Lord, God is with us every day. We are strengthened as we walk together in prayer and fellowship supporting one another in love and faith with Christ at our head. As we approach the beginning of Lent please keep a look out for details of our Lenten activities for this year and think about how we can

prepare ourselves to mark Holy Week and Easter this year.

**Every blessing from your friend and Priest,
Fr Gary.**

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The Epiphany Of Our Lord



The Epiphany of Our Lord is the Christian feast observed on January 6th. The word “epiphany” comes from the Greek *epiphainen*, a verb that means “to shine upon,” “to manifest,” or “to make known.” Thus, the feast of the Epiphany celebrates the many ways that Christ has made Himself known to the world, mainly the three events that manifested the mission and divinity of Christ: the visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12), the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11), and the miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11).

What is the significance of Candlemas Day?

This Christian festival commemorates the presentation of Jesus at the Temple of Jerusalem, referring to him as the light of the people of Israel. On this day, Christians take candles to be blessed in church, while for those with a sweet tooth, this day is also a chance to eat pancakes. Traditionally, Candlemas marked the end of the extended Christmas season in the Church, which began with the Nativity and included Epiphany.



Reader Writes.

As I am writing this article, the season of Christmas as drawn to a close with our Candlemas service. In January, we celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany - where we had the opportunity to think of the three wise men and their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that they presented to the infant Jesus.



When we hear of the three wise men, various images come to mind - the poem *The Journey of the Magi* by T.S. Elliott, (a favourite of mine), gives a wonderful description of the difficult journey that both the magi and their camels endured, maybe an image of Kings in luxurious robes with their camels decked with the gifts or the carol “We Three Kings” which describes who the three kings are, where they come from, what their gifts are and speaks of their praising God.

The reflection for the Feast of the Epiphany was a reminder to each of us that we all have gifts to offer in Christ’s world. It could be easy for us to distance ourselves from the story of the Epiphany, to see it as possibly a movie but it is our tradition and scriptures which remind us that we, too, have a part to play in the great story of salvation. Unlike a film, our roles may not be on a stage but we each have unique gifts to offer.

We are reminded that we are called, first and foremost, to bring our gifts to the Christ Child who was born in a stable in Bethlehem. If we take away the costumes and drama a film may show and the decorations of this feast, we are able to see the story at its finest whereby the gifts we offer to God are transformed into something greater than we could ever imagine – the gift of eternal life.

Carolyn

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

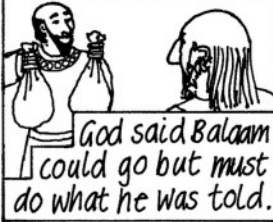
It can be read in the Bible in
Numbers 22: 2 to 24: 25

The Israelites camped across the river
Jordan from the kingdom of Moab. King
Balak was sure they were going to invade.

Balak told Balaam he
would pay him to curse
the Israelites, but ...



Balak asked him again.



On the way, Balaam's donkey
saw an angel and wouldn't
move.



The donkey was stopped by
the angel again, and then a
third time.



God let the donkey
speak.



Then Balaam saw the angel ...



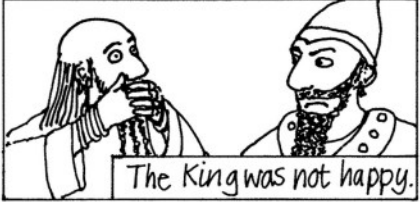
King Balak was
ready to pay
Balaam.



Look, there they are.
Now curse them.



Balaam tried to curse the Israelites
but he could only say a blessing.



Again, Balaam could
only bless, not curse.



A third time, Balaam
could only bless.

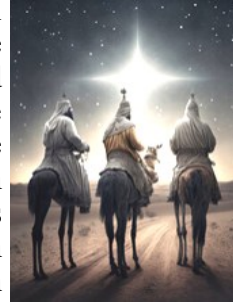


I told you I had to say what
God wanted me to say.



Where did the Wise Men come from?

Magi from the East – it isn't a lot to go on. The Magi had originally been a religious caste among the Persians. Their devotion to astrology, divination and the interpretation of dreams led to an extension in the meaning of the word, and by the first century the Magi in Matthew's gospel could have been astrologers from outside of Persia. Some scholars believe they might have come from what was then Arabia Felix, or as we would say today, southern Arabia.



It is true that in the first century astrology was practised there, and it was the region where the Queen of Sheba had lived. She of course had visited Solomon and would have heard the prophecies about how one day a Messiah would be born to the Israelites and become their king.

Matthew's gospel (chapter 2) is clear that the Magi asked Herod: 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' So it is possible that in southern Arabia the Queen of Sheba's story of how a Messiah would one day be sent to the Israelites had survived. Certainly, there are a number of other early legends that connect southern Arabia with Solomon's Israel.

To many people this makes sense: that the ancient stories of a Messiah, linked to later astrological study, prompted these alert and god-fearing men to the realisation that something very stupendous was happening in Israel. They realised that after all these centuries, the King of the Jews, the Messiah, was about to be born.

One more interesting thing that gives weight to the theory that the Magi came from southern Arabia is this: if you study any map of Palestine as it was during biblical times, you will find that the old Arabian caravan routes all entered Palestine 'from the East'.

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What about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

The story of the coming of the Magi grew in the telling. By the 6th century they had acquired names: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. By medieval times they were considered to be kings. Whoever they were,

we do know from Matthew that they brought three gifts to Jesus.

What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? While we cannot know for sure what was in the minds of first century Magi, one Victorian scholar has offered a possible explanation as to the significance of their gifts. He was the Rev John Henry Hopkins, an American Episcopalian minister, who in 1857 wrote his much-loved Christmas carol, 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'.

Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king. Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as they worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold because He was King of the Jews, with frankincense because He was to be worshipped as divine, and with myrrh, because He would also become a sacrifice and die for His people.

The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had! They travelled for months over difficult terrain, they never saw any evidence of Jesus' kingship, His divinity or His sacrificial death. They worshipped Him through faith in God's promises about Him. Isaiah foresaw this response to Jesus: 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.' The Magi's eyes of faith saw clearly and far into the future.

Compare that with the High Priest and religious leaders whom the Wise Men saw in Jerusalem when they first arrived. These head priests knew all about the prophecies of their own coming Messiah, but NOT ONE Jewish religious leader travelled to look for Him in Bethlehem. And it is only six miles down the road!

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The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

In bygone centuries, Christians said their last farewells to the Christmas season on Candlemas, 2nd February. This is exactly 40 days after Christmas Day itself.

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child – to 'present Him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new

mother, was ‘purified’. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

So, where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year’s supply of candles for the church on this day – hence the name, Candlemas.

The story of how Candlemas began can be found in Luke 2:22-40. Simeon’s great declaration of faith and recognition of who Jesus was is of course found in the Nunc Dimittis, which is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer in the West. But in medieval times, the Nunc Dimittis was mostly used just on this day, during the distribution of candles before the Eucharist. Only gradually did it win a place in the daily prayer life of the Church.

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14th February – Valentine’s Day mystery

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century – one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer’s time the link was assumed to be because on these saints’ day -14th February – the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine’s Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or ‘sweethearts’ during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love – Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

Notices!

100 Club Winners!

November 2024

Date	No:	Winner	Church
3rd	9	Janice Rosser	St. Margaret's
10th	19	Jan Chandler	St. Catwg's
17th	43	Linda Hall	St. Catwg's
24th	76	John Dines	St. Catwg's

100 Club

Once again a very successful year. We had a total income of £2334.50 for the year with a monthly prizes given out to a total of £1,300.00. A total of £1034.50 being raised for the Church.

If anyone wishing to join our 100 club there are spare numbers available, please contact Cheryl/Linda in St Catwg's or Jeanette/Enid in St. Margaret's.

Thanks to all of our members.

Jenn



The next meeting of the

AREA DEANERY CONFERENCE

**takes place at 7.00pm on Tuesday 18th February 2025
at S. Luke's Church, Rhydyfelin.**



District of Gelligaer Website

Scan the QR code on your smart phone, then open in browser to visit our website or visit us on

<https://www.parishofgelligaer.org.uk>

Thank You

A big thank you to David Matthews who has worked tirelessly to improve Saint Catwg's Churchyard. For months now he has worked a few mornings a week: tidying the borders, clearing brambles, exposing gravestones that haven't been visible for years and cleaning off the moss and dirt to make the inscriptions visible.

Thanks also to Kevin Fox who helps David on Saturday mornings and has donated ground clearing equipment for David to use.

All the paths through the Churchyard have been cleared and made safe.

We cannot thank David enough for all his hard work. He is a great asset to our Church and the community.

Cheryl

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Dates for your diary

Social Committee AGM

Social club AGM meeting on February 19th at St. Margaret's at 11.30am.

Cawl Evening

Cawl evening will be held on Thursday 27th February at Neuadd St. Catwg's at 7pm. Tickets will be available soon!

100 Club Winners!

December 2024

Date	No:	Winner	Church
1st	106	Carol Andrews	St. Margaret's
8th	16	Tommy Ray Corbin	St. Catwg's
15th	92	Sharon Porter	St. Catwg's
22nd	42	Christopher Corbin	St. Catwg's
29th	71	Olga John	St. Margaret's

God in the Arts

For 2025, the Revd Michael Burgess considers the sacred in Art.

‘The Annunciation’ - by Domenico Veneziano

During this year, we shall be ‘visiting’ different art galleries and museums in England to explore their treasures. Our first visit is to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Founded in 1816, it is a wonderful building in Trumpington Street that houses a wealth of art and antiquities.



Our painting this month is *The Annunciation* by Domenico Veneziano, who died in Florence in 1461. It is part of the Magnoli altarpiece, and other panels are on display in Washington and Berlin. The scene has been much loved of artists throughout the ages. We can read the account of Gabriel announcing the good news of motherhood to Mary in chapter two of St Luke’s Gospel. In the simplicity and beauty of Veneziano’s work, we see Gabriel kneeling with lilies, the traditional symbol of our Lady, who is standing on the far side of the canvas. It is early morning, but the two squares on the wall show the blackness of night. They stand either side of a garden where the door is closed.

An enclosed garden, like the lilies, is a medieval symbol of Mary. ‘A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed’ we read in the Song of Songs. We might think of the Garden of the Hesperides or the apple orchard of Avalon, or perhaps a monastic herbal garden. They are all images of fruitfulness and new life enclosed by walls. Mary receives the good news of Gabriel and responds with the words, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord.’ Her words will open the garden door and lead her out into the new world of redemption, just as Genesis tells us how turning against God closed the garden door of Eden to Adam and Eve.

The pathway from the portico and garden in Veneziano’s painting will take Mary into a world where she will give birth to a son, Emmanuel. But that joy of motherhood will be coloured by a flight to Egypt and eventually the death of her Son. Then another garden will announce new and eternal life in the joy of the Resurrection. Here Mary’s words will open that door in the garden. She will walk through, trusting in God and letting love guide her steps.

We begin this New Year with an invitation to open the door of our lives to God's guidance and love. That invitation begins with the good news of Emmanuel, God with us. Trusting in that gospel, we can open our lives, like the door of the garden, and travel in trust and love through all that the year will bring.

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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.

God in the Sciences

Just breathe

*You show your majesty
In every star that shines,
And every time we breathe.
Your glory, God revealed
From distant galaxies
To here, beneath our skin.*

These words from the song Magnificent by Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin speak volumes to me as a scientist. Redman is an astronomy geek who has 'an appreciation for the universe that surrounds us, particularly its unique ability to lift our hearts to see how massive and mysterious God truly is'. **

The microscopic level on the other hand – what goes on 'beneath our skin' – is less available to ordinary people. I have had the privilege of exploring this world to my heart's content, and what I've seen has given me such a sense of awe that I want to share with others.

Every time you breathe, a series of air pockets with a combined surface area the size of a tennis court is bathed with oxygen. These minute air pockets are covered with blood vessels. The boundary between air and blood is so thin that oxygen and carbon dioxide can diffuse freely from one to the other.

When your heart beats at a normal rate, a single red blood cell takes about three quarters of a second to travel through the small blood vessels in your lungs. But in just one third of that time, a quarter of a second, that cell has already received all the oxygen it needs from the

air. So, when you exercise, causing your heart rate to increase and the blood to flow faster, you're still getting plenty of oxygen, as long as you keep breathing!

Redman and Myrin wrote in their song, "You are higher than we ever could imagine, And closer than our eyes could ever see." The universe demonstrates God's awesome power. This is a place made by a Being whose imagination is not limited by time and space.

Biology, on the other hand, helps to remind me of God's creativity and closeness. I am a product of a long and painstaking process of continued development over aeons of time. Beneath my skin are incredibly detailed, beautifully regulated processes that give me life. Jesus said that 'even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' The knowledge that God intentionally made me and knows every detail of my physiology is both amazing and humbling.

*** Indescribable: Encountering the Glory of God in the Beauty of the Universe, Matt Redman & Louis Giglio (David C. Cook, 2011)*

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Conversion of St Paul

January is a month of the beginning of great things! As well as the naming of the Son of God, we celebrate the conversion of the greatest ever apostle of the Christian faith. Many books have been written on Paul, and here is the briefest of introductions.

He was a Jew, born as 'Saul' at Tarsus, and brought up by the rabbi Gamaliel as a Pharisee. A devout, fanatical Jew, Saul persecuted the Christians, and watched with satisfaction the first Christian martyrdom, the stoning of Stephen. Then, on his way to Damascus, Saul had a vision of Christ that stopped him in his tracks. He realised that this Jesus whom he was persecuting was in fact the Messiah for whom he had longed.

Saul changed overnight. He was given a new name, Paul, and became an evangelist for the cause of Christ. He became a leader in the early Church, and his special calling was as an apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote epistles to the young churches that he founded - and thus, inadvertently, wrote a great part of the New Testament.

Life as the greatest apostle was hardly full of perks: Paul was stoned, beaten, mobbed, homeless, hated, imprisoned, and finally martyred. Tradition has it that he was beheaded in Rome during the persecution of Nero in 64AD, and buried where the basilica of St Paul 'outside the walls' now stands. His mighty faith in Christ has kindled similar belief in many hundreds of millions of people down the centuries.



Mothers' Union



As I explained in December's magazine I will report on any information from the Deanery and we had a meeting just after my last report. It was held in Ystrad Mynach church on 22nd November and it was lovely and warm in the church. There were a few parishes missing from the meeting but it went well. Lowrie reported that the Colour Fayre earlier in the year had raised £798.48 and it was agreed to give £715.30 to the caravan. It had cost £40 to hire the hall. The Behind Closed Doors and Rise Up Pledge had seen Bargoed branch get a silver award and Caerphilly a bronze. We explained that although we had the leaflets that could be taken by any visitor to the church none had been taken, but other branches said they had a big response. We explained that we had done a similar campaign years ago by supporting Llamau (the safe house in Gilfach for abused women) but this no longer existed. I actually went to a Christmas party in St. Gwladys church hall this week for Llamau and it is unbelievable how many victims were there, and not only women but a few men. We were told in the meeting that a great number of men would like a safe place for them and their children. Many stories came out about abuse locally and it is a good campaign.

We were informed that the fees for next year will be £26. It was expressed that this is quite substantial for some members but it is not a local decision, as it comes from Sumner House. Lowrie reported that the caravan costs £5000 per year in ground rent and that they have received £600 from Deanery funds. There had been talk about getting a new caravan but they had the carpets and furnishings deep cleaned and it looks as good as new so no new caravan. This caravan is only a few years old so it would have cost a fortune for a new one.

Sue Hankins from Bargoed branch has a connection in Uganda for the Fish and Chip jumpers but it has become too expensive to send them out but was very grateful for all contributions. The Wave of Prayer will be in January and Lowrie will send details as soon as possible. They have held Wedding Fayres where the venues haven't charged for the stall. Lowrie stated that she had been disappointed with the stall allocated to them at the Eisteddfod as it was too small and not very prominent. The Revd. Sandra has been posting Advent Reflections which like her previous posts have been very thought provoking. The next Deanery Festival will be in Pant and like the last

time they hosted it they would like it to be in the afternoon. We will be hosting the 2027 festival.

This is an addition to my report for January as things developed in our Annual General Meeting in January. There were several members who no longer wanted to be members in 2025. I spoke to a few of them and asked for reasons and although the subscription fee was a factor it was mainly that the money raised was significant but we don't really know where it goes. Although in our annual financial accounts we can allocate how much of our money goes to certain projects it was felt that this was rather vague. The salaries of the staff at Mary Sumner House eats away at a lot of the money raised, as does every charity, and now with the extra National Insurance going to the Government it was felt by everyone I spoke to that our money was needed more in our community and our church where we could contribute directly. Although we didn't have a full meeting in January I asked for everyone's opinion and it seemed to be the consensus that we should close. It was on condition for a lot of members that we continue our monthly meetings, coffee mornings and quiz afternoons but the money raised would go to whatever community project needed it. I thought it would be difficult for some members who have been members for such a long time, Lynne Evans having been a member for 55 years, but the feeling was that Mothers' Union has changed and although it is a difficult decision to make it was agreed that most likely we would close our branch. No definite decision was made until our next meeting in February where there should be more members attending.

I spoke to Lowrie explaining everything and she acknowledged that it is an understandable feeling and would be very sorry for us to close as we are the best branch in the Deanery. She asked if Jean Stark could come and talk to us in February as I wanted to know if anyone could remain a member without being affiliated to a branch and she will explain this. I will contact her to arrange this. I also told Lowrie how disappointed I am in that I had no correspondence for the Wave of Prayer in January and how things have changed in that I now have the programme e-mailed to me and I then have to print off however many copies I will need. Another example of how the voluntary sector are being called on to pay for the printing etc. and not getting the information until last minute without considering how we inform all our members of dates and times. Also the bank is now charging £5 per month to keep our account live and it costs money to find a branch open. I told Lowrie that we would probably still support the caravan

as that's a good cause and we can see where the money goes, as I reported above.

I have asked everyone for their honest opinion and hope that was what I got. It is not a decision to be taken lightly but it's one that a lot of members have deliberated upon for a long time. June has done a fantastic job as Treasurer, as she does with the Social club and the dance class, but both of us feel that we have given Mothers' Union our best but know that we can't go on as we have done. As I say it's not done and dusted yet but after our February meeting I will be able to report what was finally decided and if we close our branch how it will be done. Fr. Gary thanked us for our hard work last year and fully understands how we feel and has said that he will support us whatever our decision. We are very grateful for his support which he has given us right from the start and know he will be behind us in the future.

Thank you all for your support and membership and please if anyone has any thoughts on this or wishes to remain a member please let me know and we can arrange it. Thanks.

God Bless

Kath

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Buckingham Palace opens its front gates to tourists



Next time you are in London, you can pop into Buckingham Palace. And for the first time, starting this month (January) tourists visiting the iconic building will be welcomed to walk in through the front gates and then proceed across the famous forecourt.

It is part of the King's vision to give people greater access to Buckingham Palace. You can also now book a 90-minute guided tour, from January to May, to have a more in-depth look at the history of the rooms in the East Wing.

For more information go to: <https://www.buckinghampalace.co.uk/buckingham-palace-tours.php>

Praying with the Prayers of the Bible.



In this series we will be looking at 12 prayers found in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. Some are prayers for personal circumstances, while others relate to family or church or nation. In studying all 12 prayers the emphasis will be on what we can learn about prayer and how we can be encouraged to pray

more regularly, more fervently and more expectantly.

Praying about the Unknown Future: *“O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”* Genesis 15:2-3.

This is the Bible’s first prayer. That doesn’t mean that no one before Abraham had prayed, but this is the first time we have a record of someone praying to God.

We learn as early as Genesis 4 that “men began to call on the name of the Lord” (v.26) but it does not explicitly say that they prayed. We can hardly believe that godly men like Enoch and Noah never prayed. Enoch ‘walked with God’ and in his long pilgrimage of three hundred years of fellowship with God (Gen. 5:22) he must have prayed many times.

Even before Abraham’s first prayer is mentioned we are told that God appeared to him, that he built an altar for sacrifice and worship and that he called on the name of the Lord (Gen. 12;7; 13:18). But now he faces a real crisis in his life.

When God first appeared to him, he had been promised that from his family a great nation would emerge (Gen. 12:1-3). Now many years later he still has no children and custom dictates that his chief servant, Eliezer, will inherit everything. Has God forgotten him? Were all those promises of being a father just make believe or self-delusion?

So he cried to God, “What will you give me?” It was a desperate prayer from a desperate heart. What was God doing? Why had He not kept His promises? Had He forgotten? Was He not able to do what He had promised? We have all been where Abraham was when he prayed that prayer. We want to believe but why is nothing happening?

Then God answered! “Your own son shall be your heir” (v.4). This wonderful answer was sealed with a dramatic illustration. God directed Abraham to look up into the night sky. “Number the stars if you can,” God said. “So shall your descendants be.” Abraham would one day have as many offspring as the stars in the sky! Impossible? Incredible? Far-fetched?

But it happened! The next chapter records the birth of his son Ishmael, and two chapters later we read of the birth of Isaac, the son of promise. And history, both biblical and secular, confirms that the illustration from the stars was no exaggeration!

So, the Bible's first prayer helps us in several ways. First, when our hearts ache because of fear or doubt or uncertainty, take it to God in prayer. Second, God's delays are not denials. Third, with Abraham who 'believed the Lord' (v.6), let us trust quietly in our sovereign and gracious God.

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Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible, which will run until the end of 2025.

What's the Big Idea? - an introduction to the Books of the New Testament: Acts

The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke, a physician-friend and fellow-traveller of Paul. It complements his gospel, both being written for Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), in around AD 63, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

While Luke's gospel records what Jesus began to do and teach, Acts tells us about what Jesus continued to do and teach through the disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit (1:1-3).

Luke's aim is: To present a history. Christianity has a firm historical foundation. The life and teaching of Jesus Christ are recorded in the Gospels; Acts provides an account of the spread of the Church, as the result of the work of the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

To give a defense. We read speeches to both Jews (eg 4:8-12) and Gentiles (eg 25:8-11), showing us how the Early Church challenged pagan and Jewish thought, the Roman government and Hellenistic culture.

To provide a guide. We see basic gospel principles being applied to specific situations in the context of problems and persecution. These same principles are applicable for us today.

To depict the triumph of Christianity in the face of bitter persecution. The success of the Church carrying the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome and planting local churches demonstrates that it operates under the rule of the exalted Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (1:8). Just as the Holy Spirit empowered the first Christians in their witness, so He will do the same for us today!

Services and Holy Days

Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist will be held twice weekly in both our Churches:

*St. Margaret's each Sunday at 9.30am and each Wednesday at 10.00am.
St. Catwg's each Sunday at 11.00am and each Thursday at 10.00am.*

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Services and Holy Days</i>
<i>5th Jan</i>	THE SECOND SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS
<i>6th Jan</i>	THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD
<i>12th Jan</i>	THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST - THE FIRST SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
<i>19th Jan</i>	THE SECOND SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
<i>25th Jan</i>	The Conversion of Paul, Apostle
<i>26th Jan</i>	THE THIRD SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
<i>2nd Feb</i>	THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (Candlemas)
<i>9th Feb</i>	THE FOURTH SUNDAY before LENT
<i>16th Feb</i>	THE THIRD SUNDAY before LENT
<i>23rd Feb</i>	THE SECOND SUNDAY before LENT: CREATION SUNDAY

In place of cabbage

On Sunday after the church service, a woman told the vicar that when she had sent her husband to buy a cabbage for lunch, he had fallen and broken his leg. "That's terrible!" said the vicar. "What did you do?"

"I opened a can of peas," she replied.

Sudoku Challenge

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

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Solution can be found on page 39

Quotes for 2025

Peace is to the soul what health is to the body: a sign of balance and order. – **Guy Appere**

You are today where your thoughts have brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you. – **James Allen**

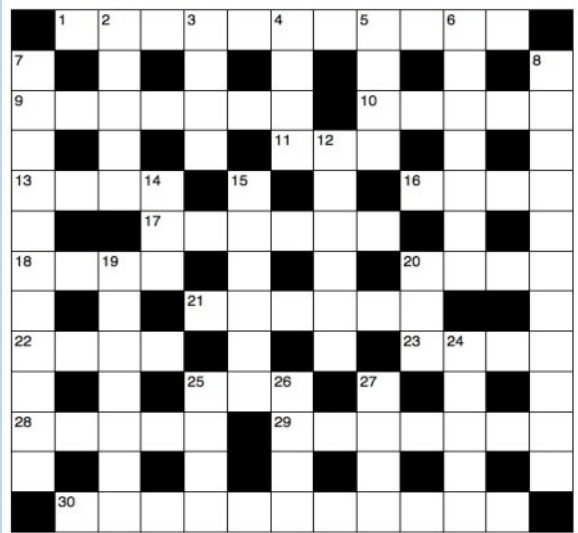
Obedience is the key that unlocks the door to every profound spiritual experience. – **Dorothy Kerin**

The noblest revenge is to forgive. – **Thomas Fuller**

Hope means expectancy when things are otherwise hopeless. – **G K Chesterton**

Labels

I have my own system for labelling homemade freezer meals. I no longer bother with labels like 'chicken casserole' or 'lasagne' or 'steak and ale pie'. Instead, I use 'Whatever', 'Anything', or 'I Don't Know.' That way when I ask my family what they want for dinner, I always have it to hand.



Across

- 1 Paul said the wrath of God ‘is being revealed from heaven’ against this (Romans 1:18) (11)
- 9 Go smite (anag.) (7) 10 ‘But — I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee’(Matthew 26:32) (5)
- 11 ‘Take and —; this is my body’ (Matthew 26:26) (3) 13 Type (2 Thessalonians 2:10) (4)
- 16 ‘Woe to those who — iniquity’ (Micah 2:1) (4)
- 17 ‘How shall we — if we ignore such a great salvation?’ (Hebrews 2:3) (6)
- 18 Opposite of evens (4)
- 20 Previously cited (Latin) (4)
- 21 ‘There is surely — — of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife’ (Genesis 20:11) (2,4)
- 22 The Thessalonians were warned to keep away from every brother who was this (2 Thessalonians 3:6) (4)
- 23 Beat (anag.) (4)
- 25 To trouble or afflict (Job 16:3) (3)
- 28 Part of a roof (1 Kings 7:9) (5)
- 29 Attain (Job 5:12) (7)
- 30 Insect noted for its gymnastic ability (Psalm 78:46) (11)

Down

- 2 Smell (John 11:39) (5)
- 3 Lion’s home (Jeremiah 25:38) (4)

- 4 'Jesus Christ is the — yesterday and today and for ever' (Hebrews 13:8) (4)
- 5 Tidy (4)
- 6 Made their home (Genesis 47:27) (7)
- 7 Their task was to carry the curtains of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:25–26) (11)
- 8 Timothy's was called Lois (2 Timothy 1:5) (11)
- 12 The Lover likened the fragrance of the Beloved's breath to these (Song of Songs 7:8) (6)
- 14 Times Educational Supplement (1,1,1)
- 15 Eight-tentacled sea creatures (6)
- 19 'And lead us not into temptation, but — us from the evil one' (Matthew 6:13) (7)
- 20 D.L. Moody's legendary song leader, — D. Sankey (3)
- 24 Rarely used musical note (5)
- 25 'Your will be done on earth — it — in heaven' (Matthew 6:10) (2,2)
- 26 and 27
 'The Lord Almighty will — them with a — , as when he struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb' (Isaiah 10:26) (4,4)
- 27 See 26 Down

Crossword solution - Page 39

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Windows

A wife texted her husband on a cold winter morning: "Windows frozen."
 Her husband texted back: "Pour some lukewarm water over it."
 The wife texted back five minutes later: "Computer's completely not working now."

March's Magazine 2025

Please can you forward any news, articles etc, to me by Monday 24th February, for inclusion in the March's edition.

Many Thanks Chris (email: chriscorbin1961@gmail.com)

Book Reviews

The Sacraments: Responding to God's Loving Invitation

York Courses, By Jane Williams, SPCK, £14.99



This lively course on the sacraments by Jane Williams, one of the founders of St Mellitus College, is widely accessible, like all York Courses.

The course book contains the transcript of the accompanying audio/video, in which Jane is joined by a number of guests from various backgrounds, as they discuss the themes of The Sacraments.

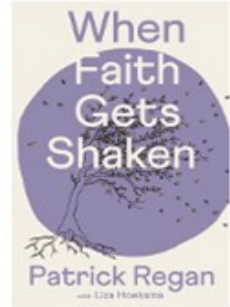
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When Faith Gets Shaken: 3rd Edition

By Patrick Regan, SPCK, £10.99

What do you do when life falls apart and it feels as if God has left you? How do you keep going when your faith is rocked to the core?

Sometimes things get so hard we're not sure where God is - or what He's up to. Patrick was facing pain, illness and loss in his family and community; then a series of excruciating operations took him to the brink - physically, emotionally and spiritually.



Writing during his journey of recovery, Patrick reflects on the true nature of courage as he explores:

- how we find God in times of suffering
- how we can know God's peace when life is anything but peaceful
- how we allow ourselves the grace to rest when we're running on empty
- how we can stay fully present in the moment.

In doing so, he heartens and encourages us to grasp the love of God at an ever-deeper level.

Church Reading / Cleaning Rotas

If anyone wishes to be on either the readers rota for either church, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant church wardens.

St. Catwg's Readers Rota

St. Catwg's Readers Rota					
January 2025		February 2025		March 2025	
5 th	Cheryl Pugh	2 nd	Pat Davies	2 nd	Christine Harvey
12 th	Janeve Manca	9 th	Paul Thomas	9 th	Joan Jenkins
19 st	Christine Harvey	16 th	Cheryl Pugh	16 th	Pat Davies
26 th	Joan Jenkins	23 rd	Janeve Manca	23 rd	Paul Thomas
				30 th	Cheryl Pugh

St. Margaret's Readers Rota

St. Margaret's Readers Rota					
January 2025		February 2025		March 2025	
5 th	June Phillips	2 nd	Kath Llewellyn	2 nd	June Phillips
12 th	Alex Ball	9 th	Christine Thorpe	9 th	Jenn East
19 st	Audrey Powell	16 th	Enid Mayne	16 th	Jennette Jones
26 th	Chris Ball	23 rd	Huw Thomas	23 rd	Linda Bartlett
				30 th	Lynne Thomas

Should you wish to be on the St. Margaret's cleaning rota please contact the relevant Church Wardens.

St. Margaret's Cleaning Rota

St. Margaret's Cleaning Rota								
January 2024			February 2025			March 2025		
5	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	2	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	2	Lynda Bartlett	Sue
12	Lynda Trollope	Enid	9	Lynda Trollope	Enid	9	Lynda Trollope	Enid
19	Jennette	Audrey	16	Jennette	Audrey	16	Jennette	Audrey
26	Kath	June	23	Kath	June	23	Kath	June
						30	Lynda Bartlett	Sue

From the Register

Christian Funerals

December 2024

4th

Ronald Wood RIP

11th

Percy Barrow RIP

12th

Jean Jones RIP

19th

Carol Hunt RIP

20th

Terence Flowers RIP

January 2025

6th

Aerian Carter RIP

9th

Marlene Barnard RIP

24th

Patricia Main RIP

29th

Margaret Irene Davies RIP

30th

Yanto Yemm RIP

*May the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.*





Gone yet not forgotten,
Although we are apart,
Your spirit lives within me,
Forever in my heart.
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Author Unknown

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Prayers for the Bereaved

*May the love of God and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ
console you and gently wipe away every tear from your eyes.
May Almighty God bless you, and look after you at this
difficult time. Amen.*

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-

*Lord, in our time of grief we turn to you. God of love
hear our cries. Listen to our prayers for whom
you have called out of this world. Lead them to
your kingdom of light and peace. Amen.*

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Christine Harvey 01443 833123 /

For the Younger Generation.

The Hired Workers



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS - WE CALL THEM PARABLES.

ONE WAS ABOUT PEOPLE WAITING TO BE HIRED TO DO SOME WORK.



A HOUSEHOLDER HIRED A GROUP OF WORKERS FROM THE MARKET PLACE, FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. HE AGREED UPON A FAIR WAGE.



A BIT LATER ON THE HOUSEHOLDER RETURNED TO THE MARKET PLACE AND HIRED SOME MORE WORKERS.



HE RETURNED SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE DAY, EACH TIME HIRING MORE WORKERS. HE EVEN HIRED SOME PEOPLE JUST AS THE SUN WAS SETTING!



WHEN THE DAY WAS OVER THE HOUSEHOLDER BEGAN TO PAY THE WORKERS, STARTING WITH THOSE WHO HAD ONLY JUST ARRIVED. HE PAID EVERYONE THE SAME.



THIS UPSET THOSE WHO HAD WORKED ALL DAY. THEY THOUGHT THEY SHOULD GET MORE.

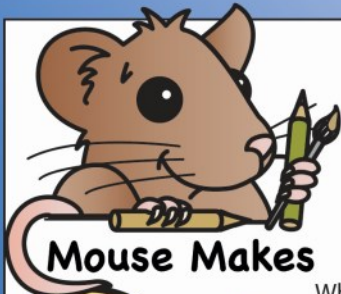


BUT THEY WERE BEING PAID WHAT THEY HAD AGREED AT THE START OF THE DAY.

JESUS CONCLUDED "SO THOSE WHO ARE LAST WILL BE FIRST, AND THOSE WHO ARE FIRST WILL BE LAST" - IT'S A HARD PARABLE!



see Matthew 20:1-16



Mouse Makes

J E W S
M A R Y
W S O N
O T N A

EPIPHANY is the Greek word for **MANIFEST** which means 'to show'. God shows us who He is through His son Jesus Christ

How many other words can you make from:
EPIPHANY



When they saw the star rest over where Jesus was they rejoiced and gave him three special gifts. God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod so they went home by another way.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem looking for the child born to be king of the Jews. They had seen his star and had come to worship him. King Herod was troubled so met with the wise men to tell them to let him know when they found him.



C H I L D K H M Y R R H
F R A N K I N C E N C E
J O Y A N G E L R H
G A E G Y P T P

Herod wanted to destroy Jesus, but God told Joseph to flee to Egypt to be safe.
Where did Jesus finally grow up?



READ the story of the wise men in *Matthew 2:1-23*



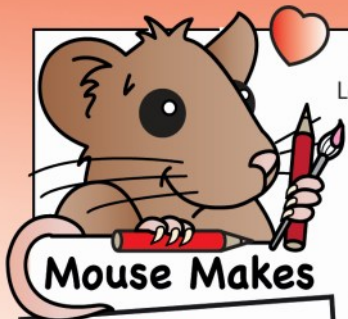
H L A N D T W O A
R E S T A R K I L L C
C R Y W Z J O S E P H
B O Y S A D R E A M R
M D W O R S H I P L I
E Z S H E P H E R D S
N G I F T S V I S I T
B E T H L E H E M
E J E S U S U

E G O D
B O R N
F L E E
L D G E



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





Mouse Makes

"Love is

love is _____
 It does not, _____
 it does not _____
 it is not _____
 it does not _____

others, it is not self -

it is not easily

it keeps no record of

Love delights in

it always

from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

The steadfast **love** of the Lord never _____;

His _____
 never come to an end;
 they are new every

Lamentations 3:20-23

I pray... you will understand...
 the greatness of Christ's **love**,

how _____
 and how _____
 and how _____
 that **love** is.

Ephesians 3:18-19

God is **love**.

whoever _____
 in **love** _____
 in God, and God _____
 in them.

1 John 4:16

Give _____
 to the Lord, for He is

his steadfast **love**
 endures

Psalms 136:1

HOW DOES
 GOD **LOVE** ME?

God sent me a saviour:

He sent His one and only
 Son into the world so
 that we might have
 eternal life through Him.

1 John 4:9

God gave me His spirit:

He has given you the
 Holy Spirit to fill our hearts
 with His **love**.

Romans 5:5

God called me His child:

See what great **love** the
 Father has for us that He
 would call us His children.

1 John 1:3

DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus told us to:

LOVE the Lord your God with
 all your **heart**, all your **soul**
 and with all your **mind**.

Matthew 22:37

LOVE your neighbour the
 same as you **love** yourself.

Matthew 22:39

GOD • **LOVE**

PATIENT • KIND

GRACIOUS • PEACE

JUST • TRUTHFUL

TRUSTING • LOYAL

HOPEFUL

PERSEVERES

ENDURES

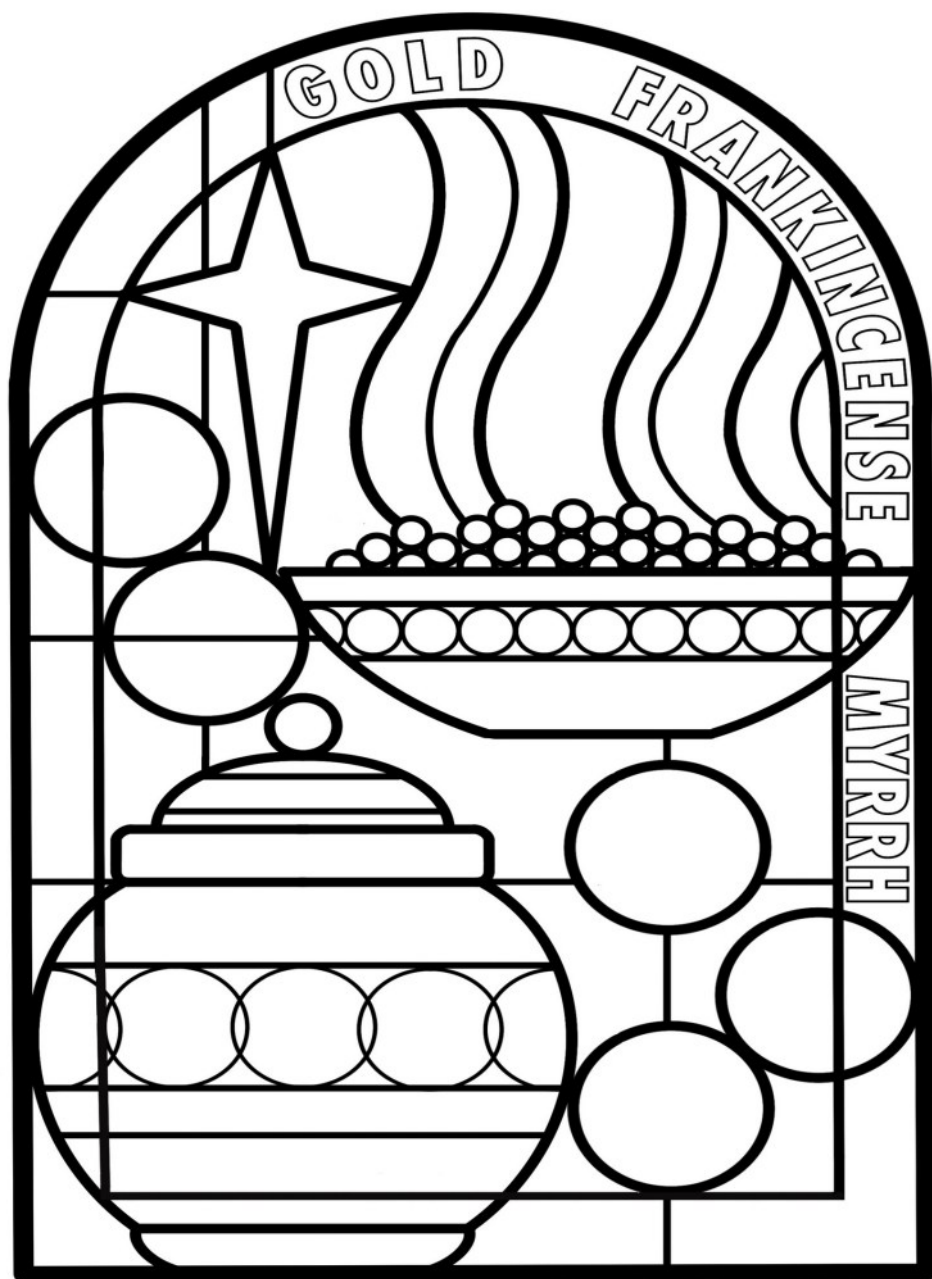
HUMBLE

SELFLESS

PROTECTS • DEFENDS

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

Colour in!



Service Times

Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist will be held twice weekly in both our Churches:

*St. Catwg's each Sunday at 11.00am and each Thursday at 10.00am and
St. Margaret's each Sunday at 9.30am and each Wednesday at 10.00am.*

Both of our Churches have a friendly and welcoming atmosphere where you can worship our Lord, Jesus Christ. Everybody is welcome to attend any of our services listed below. If it is your first visit to the Parish and you are new to our Church please do not hesitate to make yourself known to us.

SUNDAY

9.30 am. Sung Eucharist at St. Margaret's Church

1st Sunday of each Month - Family Services

11.00 am. Sung Eucharist at St. Catwg's Church

WEDNESDAY

10.00 am. Holy Eucharist at St. Margaret's Church,
followed by Tea and Coffee

THURSDAY

10.00 am. Holy Eucharist at St. Catwg's Church

General Disclaimer

The appearance of comments, articles, advertisements, hyperlinks, or statements made within our District magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the District of Gelligaer Wardens and Committee. While we aim to include accurate and up-to-date information at the time of publication, we make no warranties or representations as to the accuracy. We therefore assume no liability or responsibility for any error or omission in the content.

Directory of Contacts

*Should you wish to contact a specific group that meets in our churches,
please use the relevant telephone number from the list below.*

Thank You!

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Family History Research: Carolyn Corbin Tel: 07983677360
Email. carolyncorbin63@aol.com

Mothers' Union:

Branch Leader Kath Llewellyn. Tel: 01443 829658
Branch Secretary
Branch Treasurer June Phillips. Tel: 01443 835977

Community Dance Group: June Phillips. Tel: 01443 835977

Flower Arranging Group: Nesta Williams. Tel: 01443 831009

Arts and Crafts Group: June Phillips. Tel: 01443 835977

Neuadd St. Catwg's Hall: Christine Harvey. Tel: 01443 833123
(Bookings and Enquiries)

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Solutions to this month's puzzles.

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

G	O	D	L	E	S	S	N	E	S		
G	D	A	A	E	E	G					
E	G	O	T	I	S	M	A	F	T	E	R
R	U	R	E	A	T	T	A				
S	O	R	T	O	P	P	L	A	N		
H	E	S	C	A	P	E	E	D			
O	D	D	S	T	L	I	D	E	M		
N	E	N	O	F	E	A	R	O			
I	D	L	E	P	S	A	B	E	T		
T	I	A	I	L	W	R	H				
E	A	V	E	S	A	C	H	I	E	V	E
S	E	I	S	I	V	E	R				
G	R	A	S	S	H	O	P	P	E	R	

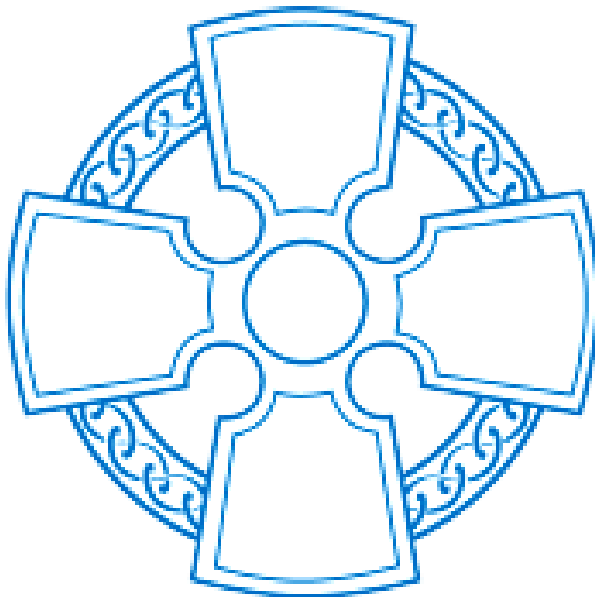
Answer to **Sudoku** on page 21

Answers to **Crossword** on page 22

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ARDAL WEINIDOGAETH
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MINISTRY AREA



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