

St Helen's Church Magazine

December 24 January 25



December Advent:

**O come, O come, Emmanuel
God with us**

Christmas:

**For unto us a child is born....
And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**



Come and join us to celebrate the mighty God who is still with us and is our everlasting Father and counsellor who brings peace and love. Service details on Pages 6 and 28



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Please feel free to contact any member of the PCC or Social Committee if you have a question or suggestion.

www.darleydale-southdarley-winster-churches.org.uk

A Christmas Thought 2024

Luke 2. 10 – 11

“But the Angel said, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you news that will bring great joy for all people. Today in David’s town a Saviour has been born to you, he is the Messiah, the Lord.’ “



Whether reflecting on illness, family loss, natural disaster, the great global horror of terrorism or nationalistic radicalism, or our own pain, this Word of Scripture always speaks to me. The Creator – ‘the Messiah’ ‘the Saviour’ has become part of our concrete human history. Jesus brings new life and new possibilities. We will hear this in many ways as we journey through December and Christmastide. To slightly simplify the Angel’s words, ‘Do not be afraid for the Saviour has come to walk along with you.’

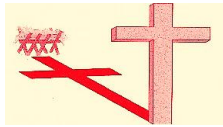
The great Story of Christmas is that God saw hope, light and a second opportunity for the human race. Nearly every negativity, conflict or village falling out comes about because we ‘fear’ something. Think of the riots this past summer. Think of the rhetoric about the ‘boats’. Some very clever and fearful, and morally bankrupt people played on the fears of other people. This fear caused damage to people, to property and to the relationship of neighbours in certain communities. This year we need the message of Christmas more than ever. We need to really hear the message that God promises to be with us - not as a distant king, a mighty ruler, or an organisation like the Roman Empire of Jesus` day. God sent His ruler as a child, born in a stable without power or privilege.



In Matthew 1. 23 The Angel told Joseph that the child would be called Emmanuel – ‘God with us.’ We may well ask, who is God with? Well, the Christmas story tells us that firstly the angels appeared to social outcasts - the shepherds. These people were seen as the lowest of the low. We need to really hear this message, because Christmas is for the

lowly, the broken, the lonely, the fearful, the person who carries illness of mind or body or emotion; and those who feel lost.

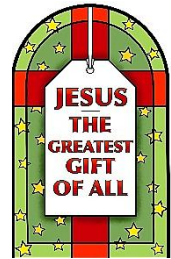
God, in Jesus, offers all of us that peace which the world cannot really know nor understand. This is an amazing peace. It's a reconciliation and a peace which is offered to all people. Or to use less churchy language the heart of the Christmas story is this; God loves us all so much. He wanted us to move away from our self-destructive behaviour and to see in ourselves and in all people – a precious, amazing child of God; a child who God chose freely to die for on Good Friday.



Scripture tells us, Jesus didn't come to earth to condemn us with an angry self-righteousness. No, he came as a baby to walk alongside us and to promise us God's love and to help us carry heavy

loads.

This Christmas, let us celebrate with loved ones, with friends and neighbours old and young. Let us also make a simple commitment to be open to Jesus' invitation to know His divine love. Let us share God's love in the world and may we never forget that our Emmanuel – God - is truly with us all, and that, my dear friends, changes everything.



May I please wish you all a very Blessed and a very Happy Christmas. Much love.

Yours.

Rev. Stephen Monk

Rector of Darley, South Darley, Winster, Matlock Bath, and Cromford

Coming to Church

This year can I please invite you to some or all of our Christmas Services at your local church? You may think: *'I'm a sinner, I'm not perfect'*.

Neither are we church goers. I pray and read the Bible not because I'm holy but because I'd screw up my life if not. I'm certainly not perfect.

'I've not been to church since a wedding or a loved one's funeral. I don't know what to do or wear or I may be upset (how embarrassing).'

The longer you've been away the warmer a welcome you'll get. Church isn't complete without you. Christmas is a time when emotions are high. We all get emotional, but our Churches are safe places where it's OK to laugh, but it's also OK to cry. To be honest my mum died in 2019 after a long battle with cancer. She always loved pickled onions but only at Christmas. I get emotional over an onion!! And as for not knowing what to do, well, don't tell anyone but I often don't know what to do and, it doesn't matter.

'I'm not married to my partner, I'm divorced, I'm gay, I don't know what I believe.' The title I've spoken about above, Emmanuel or God with us, is a clue here. Jesus walked along from town to village to town and he spoke to hundreds of people. But these intimate conversations aren't recorded as there was no one to listen to them. Jesus the Christ invited people to walk with him so that he could be in their stories. The only people Jesus got really angry with were the religious leaders who thought they were more important or more Godly than other people. We all fall short of God's love and grace and so we often have to say those two words which are so vital, 'I'm sorry'. Please remember none of us are perfect. I've been in ministry for around 30 years and ordained for 24 years and it's always great to see people casting off the weight of past sins, mistakes, or feelings that they are not more than just their worse action. Jesus died on the Cross so that all we need to do is turn to him and give ourselves to him. But it is a life long journey.

So, dear friends, please don't worry about anything. You would be very welcome at all our churches. If you look on our websites you can find more detail of all the Christmas Services.

If anyone is unwell or new to our local nursing homes and would like a visit please drop me an email: rev.stephenmonk@btinternet.com or call on 01629734257

Our Churches:

Holy Trinity, Matlock Bath; St Mary's, Cromford

St. Helen's, Darley Dale; St. Mary's, South Darley;

St John's, Winster

December and Christmas at St Helen's

Special Services



Sunday 1st 2.00pm Open Door Christmas Celebration. Bishop Libby is our guest.

If it's anything like their Light party the bishop is in for a good time. Margaret Long wrote 'What a party!! Sunday 27th October! St. Helen's came to life with many children, parents and

helpers attending the Light Party. It began with refreshments in the hall followed by praise, worship, video clips and games in church. What a joy and delight it was to hear the children singing and laughing together.



They sang, This Little Light of Mine.

On this occasion their little lights did really shine, hopefully reminding each person that they are the church.'

Sunday 8th 11.00pm Advent Carol service – all age. We welcome the local scout groups – Beavers and Cubs.

Please note that half of the collection taken that day will be donated to them. If you wish to make a specific gift please put in an envelope and write Scout Groups on it.



They will be holding their Christmas Fair in the hall after the service, with a cake stall, tombola and bric-a-brac stall etc.

**CHRISTMAS
FAIR**

so do come with a bit of extra cash to join in the festive fun.

They will be serving refreshments too but a cup of tea, coffee and a biscuit will be available in church from 10.40am before the service starts.

Saturday the 14th December 7.00pm Carol Service

followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

We would welcome donations of mince pies. Please let Roz know in advance if you are able to make (or buy) and bring some.



Sunday 22nd December New Beginnings Christmas Celebration

Café opens at 10.30am plus there are refreshments after too!

Tuesday 24th December Christmas Eve

4.00pm Crib Service - always fun and joyful and a great way to prepare the children for the next day!



11.30pm Holy Communion



Wednesday 25th Christmas Day

11.00am Family Holy Communion



Sunday 29th December 10.45am Holy Trinity, Matlock Bath.

All five churches of the Darley and Matlock Benefices join together to celebrate the passing year and prepare for the new one.

Also happening in December

Saturday 7th December 1.30p.m. Memory Lane

Christmas Celebration with Gatepost Theatre Company.
All are welcome to join us.



St Helen's December Diary

Chill and Chat with Coffee Toddler Group

Chill and Chat with Coffee toddler group is looking for a new volunteer who is available from 9am to 11.15am every Thursday morning in term time to enable us to stay open after Christmas.

Help is needed with setting up and tidying the toys, playing with children, helping with refreshments, and talking to parents and carers.

This could be split between 2 people on a rota. Please contact Diana Wills for further information 017526 168356 or dwills@doctors.org.uk

If you are not able to volunteer, please could you join us in praying about the future of this group. Thank you.

THURSDAY WARM SPACE

As I shall be away in New Zealand from the 12th December until the 14th January and unable to run the event, it was decided that after the warm Thursday on the 5th December the event will be 'put on hold' until Thursday 23rd January when it will resume.

I wish everyone who attends the event a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and look forward to seeing you all again in January 2025.

Ann Bradley



**Prayer Meeting Saturday 14th December
9.30 – 10.00am in church**

The Saturday Coffee Morning Saturday 14th December 10.00am to 12noon

Home-made scones and cakes, (maybe something



festive?) and a time to relax with friends. Take time out from Saturday chores and come and join us! Bring a friend or neighbour! Or both!



If you are a baker, a cake contribution would be great!

Monday Lunchers meet a week early in December

Salt – 2nd December and Pepper 9th December

11.45am for 12noon dine at the Terrace Café

Ann Bradley is the one to contact if you would like to come.

M Ls won't be meeting in January and future plans are under review.

Ecumenical Holy Communion

Friday 13th December 11.00 a.m. at Darley Methodist church

Come if you can for a time of worship and fellowship with our Methodist brothers and sisters.

Home Groups



Thursday Ecumenical Home Group

Dates in December – please contact Margaret on 735778

Thursday Group led by Diana Wills will not be meeting until the New Year. Details to come as to when and where.

For details contact Diana on: dwills@doctors.org.uk

The Worship Group meets most Wednesdays 6.00pm in church, as arranged. Contact Dea Ayling or Stephen and Jayne Walker for more information and if you are interested in joining.



Looking ahead

Our next All Age Community Service is on Sunday 12th January 11.00am

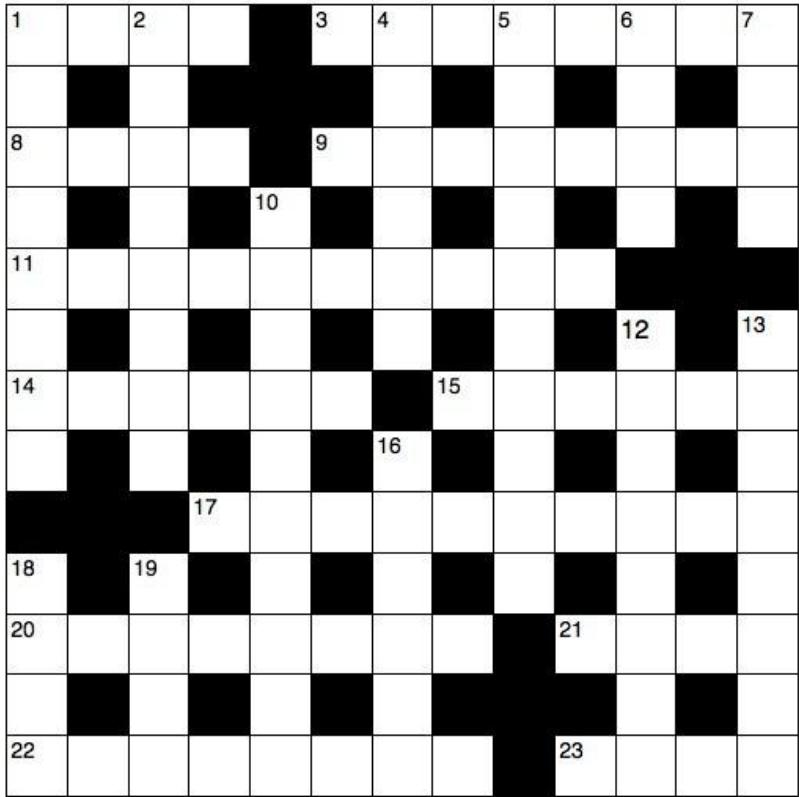
Come and join us for a Christingle Service.

Celebrating Light in Darkness. Donations (half of the collection) will be given to the Children's Society.



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Across

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
- 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
- 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
- 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
- 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
- 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)

- 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
- 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
- 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
- 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "I don't need you"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)

Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
- 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
- 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
- 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
- 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
- 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
- 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
- 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
- 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
- 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
- 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
- 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)

Answers Page 24

Editor: David Pickup via parish Pump, offers a quiz based on events in 2024... Enjoy and hope you do better than me. Mostly hadn't a clue!

Christmas Quiz 2024

1. This year was a Leap Year. Were 1900 and 2000 Leap Years?
2. What is Whamaggedon?

3. Alan Bates hit the headlines in January? He shares his name with a famous actor but why is he well known?
4. HRH Duke of Edinburgh met a special resident at S Helena in January who had also met his grandparents. Who is he?
5. A young actor, fresh out of drama school, was told by Arthur Lowe, “don’t worry if there’s not a lot of lines. They’ll come. In the meantime get yourself a funny costume and stand near me”. Who was the actor who passed away this year and starred in this classic sitcom?
6. Why did a family photo taken for Mothering Sunday lead to a lot of media speculation?
7. Why did North Korean television object to Alan Titchmarsh and his trousers?
8. How did a black cat called Matins get into trouble on 2nd June 1953 at Westminster Abbey
9. Where was the Carnation Revolution fifty years ago?
10. What product manufacturer (a byword in usefulness) announced in 2024 they would introduce the first bladeless version?
11. Which Oxford Don applied unsuccessfully to be a code breaker in the 1940s? there was a note by his name “keen”
12. Where is the Elephant and Bear Line?
13. What is Election purdah?
14. What was Gamblegate?
15. 17th July was National Emoji Day. One of the most popular is known as ROTFL. What does that mean?

16. In this year's Olympics the Philippines gold medallist Carlos Yulo got an unusual reward as well as the medal. What was it?
17. In August a north Italian city advertised for people to learn an ancient skill. The job requirements include being 18 or over, having a high school-level education, knowing how to swim, and possessing a medical certificate that proves "a healthy and robust constitution". What job was this for?
18. What music celebrated its 200th anniversary? Liked by many and Karl Marx thought "it a solemn mass of earthly joy"?
19. Why might you be looking forward to not looking back in anger?
20. What types of special judges were cancelled after 147 years' service and replaced electronically?

Answers on Page 25

Christmas Smile Lines

What would you like for Christmas?

A little girl visited Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and asked what she would like for Christmas. She gasped, and stared at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

What do you get Dad?

December is the month when the family begins to discuss what to get Dad for Christmas. Some argue for a shirt; others hold out for a pair of socks. But the argument usually ends in a tie.

Christmas thoughts and reflections –

Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham gives thanks to the God who comes among us...

Christmas Geese

The story is told of a farmer who didn't believe in Jesus. One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife was taking their children to a service at their local church. He refused to come saying: *'Why would God lower Himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!'* So, they left him at home.

During the evening the winds grew stronger, and the snow turned to a blizzard. He heard a series of loud thumps on the window. In the field near his house, he saw a flock of wild geese. They had been migrating south when they got caught in the snowstorm. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter.



The man wanted to help the geese and so he opened the doors of the barn, hoping they would go inside for shelter. But the geese didn't do anything, despite the man's efforts to move them. He made a breadcrumb trail leading to the barn and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered.

Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn: *'Why don't they follow me?!'* Then he realised: *'If only I were a goose and become one of them, then I could save them.'* Finally, he understood the heart of the Christmas message. God has become one of us in Jesus. The eternal creator God has entered time and space as a baby, to show us who God is and how we can know Him.

This Christmas, let's celebrate again this amazing truth that we have a God who knows and can meet our needs in Jesus. *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means 'God with us''.* Matthew 1:23.

Editor: Canon David Winter reflects on the coming of Jesus...

The most beautiful story

A well-known atheist was being interviewed on Radio 4. When asked how he spent Christmas, he said that he went to Midnight Mass at church. “But you’re an atheist”, his interviewer protested. “Yes”, he replied, “but what they celebrate at Christmas is the most beautiful story ever told.”

That ‘beautiful story’ tells of a Creator who sent His Son to share the life of His creation, to be born as a helpless baby, to grow up as a man of extraordinary wisdom, gentleness, and love, who was executed by the authorities for contradicting the traditions of the time. His followers – who today number about two billion people all over the world – believe that He rose from the dead, and that by His death and resurrection He has made possible forgiveness and eternal life for men and women everywhere.



That is certainly quite a story, perhaps the greatest story ever told, and yes, beautiful. And that is the story that will be rehearsed again this Christmas, in children’s Nativities, in hymns and carols, in Bible readings and sermons all over the country. People who stay away from church all year turn up to hear it, and who can blame them? This is a story of hope, of love and of heaven touching earth.

Probably the best-known statue in the world is ‘Christ the Redeemer’, towering over the South American city of Rio de Janeiro, His arms outstretched in blessing. Christmas celebrates the birth of that great Redeemer – a tiny baby laid in a feeding trough.

His birth changed history, His life transformed our understanding of what it means to be human, His death was at one and the same time a tragedy and a triumph. Yes, it is ‘the most beautiful story ever told’. Enjoy it again this Christmas.

Editor: By the Revd Paul Hardingham.

The Challenges of Christmas

Christmas is a great time of year, but it's not without its challenges! After one family had put up 250,000 Christmas lights outside, they didn't dare boil a kettle for fear of blowing the system!

The challenge of over-indulging

We all remember the episode of the Vicar of Dibley, where she had to consume four Christmas dinners! Christmas is a time when we usually eat and drink far too much, the average person gaining six pounds in weight. But Christmas is not simply about gaining weight, but losing what weighs us down. *'Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.'* (1 Peter 5:7). Whatever your concerns or worries this Christmas, bring them to God.

The challenge of overspending

In the rush to buy Christmas cards, a woman bought a pack of 50 identical cards. Without reading the verse, she hastily signed and sent them off, but for one. A few days later she read the message: *'This card is just to say a little gift is on the way.'* Christmas is not about getting into debt, but God getting us out of debt. He spent exactly what was needed on the first Christmas night: *'You are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.'* (Matthew 1:21).

The challenge is over too quickly

Christmas doesn't last very long, yet the effect of the first Christmas is long-lasting. *'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'* (John 3:16). Jesus has come to bring us life in all its fullness, both for now and all eternity.



How do we face the challenges of Christmas? *'Yet what I can, I give Him - give my heart'*.

Editor: The Ven John Barton considers the Christmas story ...

No Room? On the Contrary

All over the world, doors are being slammed shut this Christmas. As the wars in the Middle East, in Ukraine and in Sudan rage on, millions are losing their homes and places of safety. Elsewhere, hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and would-be immigrants are on the road, seeking refuge anywhere they can find it.

Meanwhile, in recent years vast numbers of Christians have been forced to flee from their ancient homelands in Syria and Iraq. They mirror the Holy Family's escape into Egypt. Every time yet another infant dies violently, it is a reminder of the first century massacre of babies in the Bethlehem region.

So perhaps this year, one carol will be sung with particular poignancy. It retells the message of angels, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests" and continues:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife,
The world has suffered long;
 Beneath the angel strain have rolled,
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring:
O hush the noise, you men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.*



The angels' goodwill message will persist despite our clamour, for it proclaims God's all-embracing and eternal welcome. Whatever is happening on earth, Heaven's doors are ever open: it is home for everyone. The final biblical vision is of an all-encompassing city: "On no day will its gates ever be shut... the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it."

Jesus, for whom there had been no room at the inn, taught that God's kingdom is home for every race: "I say to you that many will come from the East and the West, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." He reassured those anxious about the future: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms..."

No room in heaven? Don't you believe it!

Food for thought – looking at the world

Christmas - time to remember Christians facing persecution.

This Christmas, there are about 360 million Christians worldwide who will not be celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.

They dare not do so.

That's because 1 in every 7 believers globally live in countries where they suffer oppression and discrimination for their faith.

So, instead of going to church and singing carols, they face violence and abduction, while others risk losing their jobs and livelihood. According to the latest World Watch List from Open Doors, there are 13 countries where Christians face extreme persecution, and 37 more where they face general persecution.

Fortunately, there are charities working on the frontlines to help these persecuted believers. You may wish to support one this Christmas, as a way of showing solidarity with our Christian brothers and sisters worldwide.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide - specialises in freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). They work in 25 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin

America, and the Middle East. CSW is the only advocacy organisation with a sole focus on freedom of religion or belief that has United Nations accreditation.

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

Help The Persecuted – works in 13 countries, including the Middle East, Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Yemen & North Africa. They currently provide a safe refuge in Lebanon to those fleeing the Middle East Conflict.

Go to: <https://htp.org>

Open Doors - has been helping persecuted Christians in over 60 countries for more than six decades. They supply Bibles, provide emergency relief and help persecuted believers stand strong for the long-term.

Go to: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org>

Release International - supports persecuted Christians in 30 countries around the world - prayerfully, pastorally, and practically.

Go to: <https://releaseinternational.org/>

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DEC Middle East Humanitarian Appeal

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

Over the past year, war in the Middle East has devastated millions of people's lives across the region, destroying their families, homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses.

This Christmas, millions of people across Gaza, Lebanon and the wider region are in urgent need of food, shelter, and medical care.

The DEC brings together 15 leading UK aid charities to raise funds quickly and efficiently at times of humanitarian crisis overseas. Its member charities are all leading aid charities and include: Action Against Hunger, Actionaid, Age International, British Red Cross, CAFOD,

CARE, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, International Rescue Committee, OXFAM, Save the Children, TearFund, and World Vision.

To look at but two of these:

How Tearfund is responding

Tearfund is currently working with local churches and its partners across the Middle East.

It reports:

“In Gaza, our International Health Partners are providing life-saving medicine and desperately needed healthcare.

“In Lebanon, we are working through local churches to provide food, mattresses and other essentials to people forced from their homes by the fighting.

“In the West Bank, we are working with the Diocese of Jerusalem, who are providing healthcare and education to those affected.”

You can help by going to:

<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/middle-east-emergency-appeal>

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How World Vision is responding

“We’re working most specifically in Lebanon and West Bank. We’re seeking to help vulnerable children, families and communities impacted by this crisis. Donations will be channelled into the areas of greatest need that we can access together with our partners.

Since the crisis began last year, we have provided assistance to over 350,000 people.

“In Lebanon we’re uniquely positioned to respond to this crisis as one of only three organisations already active in southern Lebanon. We have staff and supplies in place meeting people’s needs each day. Your donation will help operations in temporary shelters, ensuring families receive hot meals, blankets, and hygiene kits on arrival. You’ll also be

helping to set up safe spaces for children to play and continue their education with so many schools now being used as temporary shelters.

In the West Bank, we're providing emergency relief supplies to families that have lost everything. Your donation could increase the psychosocial support that we're offering to children, helping them deal with the emotions they're experiencing. You could also help to build and refurbish safe community spaces so that people can come together to lean on each other and find some support amidst the chaos.

Your donation can deliver the lifesaving support children need to survive – before it's too late. Go to:

<https://www.worldvision.org.uk/emergencies/middle-east-appeal/>

Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal

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

This DEC appeal has raised over £438 million and helped an estimated 8.2 million people affected by the conflict. This appeal will close for donations at the end of 2024, but donations will continue to be spent next year.



From delivering essential supplies and services to communities in Ukraine, to helping refugees settle into a new country, your donations have made a huge difference to millions of people affected by the conflict in Ukraine.

The DEC humanitarian response work will continue in 2025, thanks to the incredible amount raised.



Food for thought – here at home

Millions at breaking point as “shockingly low incomes” leave them hungry

Chronically low incomes are devastating the lives of millions of people who don't have enough income to afford food, essential bills, and a safe home to live in.

That's according to the latest report by UK debt advice charity, Christians Against Poverty (CAP).

CAP's YouGov polling, which accompanies the report, shows that 11.8 million (22%) of UK adults say they currently have a deficit budget, which is when a person's income doesn't cover the cost of the core essentials they need to live on.

CAP's clients, on average, are £273 a month short of what they need to be able to cover their basics such as food, energy bills and rent. The report highlights that when CAP's debt coaches go into clients' homes, they find people living in cold properties and with empty fridges. Clients describe sitting in the dark with the lights off and curtains closed, often hiding in terror because they're afraid of bailiffs knocking at their door demanding money that they don't have.

The report reveals that almost half (47%) of CAP's clients have deficit budgets, even after an expert debt advisor has supported them to review their finances, and has worked through suggestions to maximise their income and cut out non-essentials.

Christians Against Poverty's Chief Executive Officer, Stewart McCulloch, said, "Our expert debt advisors, alongside local churches we partner with, are continuing to help thousands of people across the UK to become debt free.

"But it's frustrating for our team when they have the tools to help someone out of debt, but the person's income is so shockingly low that

even when the burden of debt is removed, they still can't afford life's essentials.

“11 million people living lives of hidden desperation is utterly unacceptable. We can't afford the welfare and health costs of this tragedy.”

If you would like to help: <https://capuk.org>

(Don't forget a regular donation to the Food Bank. As a certain retailer says 'Every Little Helps'! Best to check on what is most needed and not assume it should be Christmas food stuff this time of year. *Chris*)



So many of our Christmas cards feature the little donkey carrying Mary, the magi's camels, and beasts in the stable around the manger. Here are a couple of articles to make us think and take action to help the Creator's creatures. *Chris, Editor*

Hedgehog extinction fears grow as population plummets



The status of hedgehogs in western Europe has recently been downgraded to “near threatened”, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

If European numbers decline any farther, hedgehogs will be listed as being at risk of extinction. Numbers have shrunk in more than half the countries where hedgehogs live – including the UK, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. Some national declines have been as much as 33 per cent.

Our rural population of hedgehogs here in the UK has fallen by up to 75 per cent since 2000, although city-dwelling hedgehogs are doing a bit better.

But the combined pressures of intensive agriculture, domestic pesticides, garden strimmers, busy roads and urban development have taken their toll. An eighth of all hedgehogs in the UK die every year just as roadkill.

Now a national hedgehog conservation strategy has been launched by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS).

(Have you seen any hedgehogs in your garden? Is there more that can be done, that you can do, that we all can do to help them? Check out the two organisations listed in the previous paragraph. There will also be information on the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust website. *Chris, Editor*)

Caring for the donkeys of Gaza

A charity based in the UK is sending emergency vets to care for donkeys in Gaza.

Safe Haven for Donkeys was set up about 20 years ago to treat working donkeys across Israel and the Palestinian Territories.



But the charity says that its mobile first aid team is even more necessary now, because with fuel scarce and so many vehicles damaged, donkeys

have become a main mode of transport in Gaza, carrying water and medicine, and even sick people to hospital.

However, the animals are often suffering. They face starvation, dehydration, and open wounds. Since April, the team has treated approximately 800 donkeys and horses.

ACROSS: 1, Lane. 3, Obtained. 8, Omit. 9, Merchant. 11, Burdensome. 14, Crafty. 15, Please. 17, Blacksmith. 20, Splendid. 21, Tier. 22, Singeing. 23, Hand. **DOWN:** 1, Look back. 2, Main road. 4, Breast. 5, Accomplish. 6, Near. 7, Date. 10, Pestilence. 12, Basilica. 13, Tethered. 16, Action. 18, Asa's. 19, Clan.

Quiz solutions

1. This year was a Leap Year. Were 1900 and 2000 Leap Years? *The year 2000 was a leap year. But 1900 was not. Every 4 years is a leap year.*
2. What is Whamaggedon? *Whamageddon is a game played during the 24 days before Christmas in which players try to go from 1 December to the end of Christmas Eve (24 December) without hearing "Last Christmas" by Wham!.*
3. Alan Bates hit the headlines earlier this year. He shares his name with a famous actor but why is he well known? *Sir Alan Bates has been very active in trying to address the Post Office scandal.*
4. HRH Duke of Edinburgh met a special resident at S Helena in January who had also met his grandparents. Who is he? *A giant tortoise.*
5. A young actor, fresh out of drama school, was told by Arthur Lowe, "don't worry if there's not a lot of lines. They'll come. In the meantime, get yourself a funny costume and stand near me". Who was the actor who passed away this year and starred in this classic sitcom? *Ian Lavender, who played Pike.*
6. Why did a family photo taken for Mothering Sunday lead to a lot of media speculation? *The photo taken by HRH Princess of Wales had been not very successfully altered.*
7. Why did North Korean television object to Alan Titchmarsh and his trousers? *He was wearing American style jeans.*
8. How did a black cat called Matins get into trouble on 2nd June 1953 at Westminster Abbey. *The cat fell asleep on the Coronation throne.*
9. Where was the Carnation Revolution fifty years ago? *Portugal.*
10. What product manufacturer (a byword in usefulness) announced in 2024 they would introduce the first bladeless version? *Swiss Army knife.*
11. Which Oxford Don applied unsuccessfully to be a code breaker in the 1940s? There was a note by his name "keen" *JRR Tolkien. The word "keen" may have been a misspelling of his surname.*
12. Where is the Elephant and Bear Line? *Near Coventry from Nuneaton down to Royal Leamington Spa.*
13. What is Election purdah? *The rule that civil servants and others will normally observe discretion about making new announcements or decisions that could influence voters.*

14. What was Gamblegate? *The allegations that some politicians took bets on when the general election would be when they had insider information.*
15. 17th July was National Emoji Day. One of the most popular is known as ROTFL. What does that mean? *Roll on the floor laughing.*
16. In this year's Olympics the Philippines gold medallist Carlos Yulo got an unusual reward as well as the medal. What was it? *A lifetime of free colonoscopies.*
17. In August a north Italian city advertised for people to learn an ancient skill. The job requirements include being 18 or over, having a high school-level education, knowing how to swim, and possessing a medical certificate that proves "a healthy and robust constitution". What job was this for? *Gondolier.*
18. What music celebrated its 200th anniversary? Liked by many and Karl Marx thought "it a solemn mass of earthly joy"? *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.*
19. Why might you be looking forward to not looking back in anger? *The news that the group Oasis are performing again.*
20. What types of special judges were cancelled after 147 years' service and replaced electronically? *Line judges at Wimbledon.*

More Christmas Smile Lines

Christmas gifts

Grandfather was talking to his grand-daughter, "When I was a child all we got for Christmas was an apple and an orange." The little girl clapped her hands in joy. "Brilliant! I'd love a new computer and a mobile!"

Fragile Nativity

A couple visited their son and his family for Christmas, and admired their beautiful nativity set in the hallway. The grandfather asked his young granddaughter if she knew what it was. "Oh yes," she said immediately. "Of course I do. It's breakable."

ED's Endings

No – not written by me but I thought it would make you smile too!

The Everlasting Turkey



On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me
I've bought a big fresh turkey and a proper Christmas tree.
On the second day of Christmas much laughter could be heard
As we tucked into our turkey – a most delicious bird.
On the third day of Christmas people came from just next door,
The turkey tasted just as good as it had done before.
On the fourth day of Christmas came relations young and old
We finished up the Christmas pud and had the turkey cold.
On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the snowflakes scurried,
But we were nice and warm inside, and had the turkey curried.
On the sixth day of Christmas, the Christmas spirit died.
The children fought and bickered – we had the turkey rissoles fried.
On the seventh day of Christmas my true love he did wince
When he sat down at table - and was offered turkey mince.
On the eighth day of Christmas, the dog had run for shelter,
For he'd seen our turkey pancakes and the glass of alka-seltzer.
On the ninth day of Christmas, by lunchtime dad was blotto,
He knew that bird was back again, this time as a risotto.
On the tenth day of Christmas we were drinking home-made brew,
Anything to help us face that steaming turkey stew.
On the eleventh day of Christmas our lovely tree was moulting,
And with chilli, soy and oyster sauce, the turkey was revolting.
On the twelfth day of Christmas we had smiles back on our lips,
The guests had gone, the turkey too – WE DINED ON FISH AND CHIPS.

*May you have a Happy and Blessed Christmas and New Year
(with or without turkey). Chris*

Services in December

St Helen's:

- Sunday 1st** 11.00am Holy Communion
2.00pm Open Door
- Sunday 8th** 8.00am Holy Communion BCP
11.00am All Age Advent Community Carol Service
- Friday 13th** 11.00am Ecumenical HC Darley Dale Methodist Church
- Saturday 14th** **7.00pm Carol Service**
- Sunday 15th** 11.00am Holy Communion
- Sunday 22nd** **11.00am New Beginnings**
- Tuesday 24th** **Christmas Eve** 4.00pm Crib Service
11.30pm Holy Communion
- Wednesday 25th** **Christmas Day** 11.00am Family Holy Communion
- Sunday 29th** 10.45am United Service Holy Trinity, Matlock Bath

St Mary's:

- Sunday 1st** 10.00am Holy Communion
- Sunday 8th** **11.00am All Age Advent Community Carol Service**
@ St Helen's
- Sunday 15th** **4.00pm Carol Service**
- Sunday 22nd** 10.00am Morning Worship
- Wednesday 25th** **Christmas Day** 10.00am Family Service
- Sunday 29th** 10.45am United Service Holy Trinity, Matlock Bath

St John's:

- Sunday 8th** 4.15pm Informal Service
- Sunday 15th** 6.00pm Carol Service
- Tuesday 24th** **Christmas Eve** 9.00pm Holy Communion
- Sunday 29th** 10.45am United Service Holy Trinity, Matlock Bath

Monday Zoom Service 7.00-7.30pm.

Details from: christownsend2@sky.com