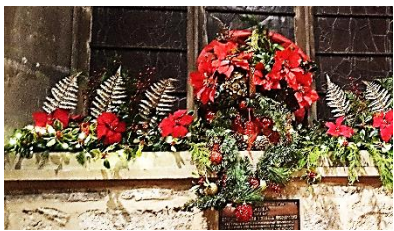


St Helen's Church Magazine
December 23/January 24 double issue

CHRISTMAS



Christmas at St Helen's.



Follow the Star to find the true meaning of Christmas. Come and celebrate God's gift of love to us. Details of all our services and

Christmas events can be found in the diary section and at the back of the magazine.

JOY
NOEL
ANGEL
JESUS
PEACE HOPE
WISEMEN
CHRISTMAS
BELIEVE FAITH
PRINCE OF PEACE
THANK YOU

We do not charge for our magazine but a regular donation would be very helpful and go towards production costs.

Revd. Stephen Monk - Rector of St. Helen's



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

All enquiries and more information on all services and events:

www.sthelensdarleydale.org.uk

Stephen's Christmas Letter

“So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” (Matt 24. 44)

Certain small sects have stated down the ages that Jesus will return at this day and at this time! Remember all the chaos around the year 2000? I say often to Sharon my wife, when I'm watching a Shinedown concert or an Alice Cooper concert at max volume on my Kindle, “Please don't disturb me unless it's the second coming!”

For other people, very concerned about their own mortality due to illness or the death of a loved one, meeting Jesus is very real for them. You may relate to this - waiting on test results or walking the lonely path of mourning and loss. How prepared are you if that day were to be today? Ignore the rationalization that it most likely will not be today and simply consider your preparedness for that definitive moment in time. Use your imagination. What would you do or refrain from doing? What would change in your life?

This preparedness is one of the central keys to our holy living. If we were able to live today and every day as if it were that day, the day of our Lord's return, then there is little doubt that our holiness of life would greatly increase as we live with this ongoing anticipation and preparedness. It's a little like when we see a police car in the rear-view mirror - even if you've not been speeding. Suddenly, we all slow down (whatever speed we're doing) and suddenly go 'Mirror, Signal, Manoeuvre', all with exaggerated movement of one's head so the police person can see you're driving really well!

One of the effects of living day after day, year after year, in a state of 'perpetual preparedness' is that we are not only ready if our Lord does indeed return today, but, just as importantly, we remain perpetually attentive to the countless ways that He does come to us each and every day. This form of perpetual preparedness forms within us a spiritual habit of hearing and responding to the voice of God and the

countless graces He sends to us every day. This 'habitual preparedness' is a virtue by which the coming of Christ transforms who we are, here and now, and enables Him to live more fully within us, accomplishing His mission of redeeming the world in and through us.

Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I don't mean we have to live like a coiled spring which eventually, with all the pressure, bursts. This is dangerous for our spiritual and emotional wellbeing. I mean make love, peace, hope, acts of kindness and tolerance habitual. Live lives of love for all people and that also means the people you don't like. If we practice 'acts of random kindness' we can change the world. Christianity at its best has recommended this for centuries. Advent calls us to be prepared to meet Christ. Well, we meet Christ every day in our neighbours, and especially in the poor, needy and the voiceless. Think how our communities would change if we all took this seriously.

God bless you. You'll find details of our special services for December in the magazine and on the website. Everyone is very welcome.

Stephen

Christmas

“I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt.”

Pope Francis

We all know that Christmas should be peaceful and magical for our children. Yet often there is much stress and breakdown in family units. I want to assure you that you'll all be very much in my prayers in a special way during the Advent and Christmas Seasons. You are always in my prayers but at this time I pray you know how very special and precious you are in the sight of God.

Thank you all who have given toys for Derby City Mission, which distributes them to children living in great poverty. Think for a moment; you've helped a child feel loved. Remember as we move

into 2024 - love and compassion must cost us or it's not real. May we all work together in the new year to build up those knocked down by circumstance and poverty, loss and feeling overwhelmed.

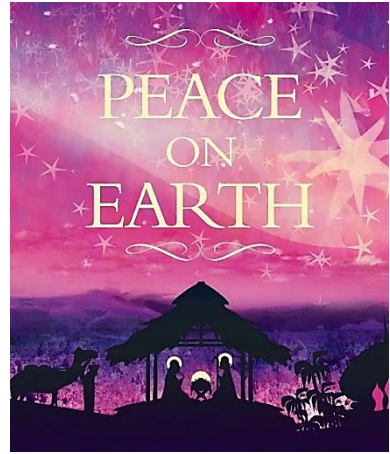
Please keep me in your prayers too.

May I wish you and all those you love a blessed, joyful and peaceful Christmas.

Love & Prayers.

Stephen

Revd Stephen Monk Rector of Darley Dale, South Darley & Winster & Pastoral oversight of Holy Trinity, Matlock Bath and St Mary's, Cromford



St Helen's Gallery



At All Saints, Matlock Bank, for a united service of churches in Matlock and our United Benefice on the 29th October – followed by refreshments in the church hall.



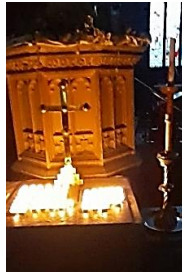
It was so good to be together – sharing worship and fellowship,

On the 19th we gathered at St Mary's to join in with their Toy Service, now an annual event for the Benefice.



Between us we filled two tables and eight bags with toys, glad to be a part of helping to make Christmas a time of joy for children living in real poverty.

The Bereavement Service on the 5th brought comfort to all who attended, many lighting a candle for a dearly missed loved one.



Relaxing and enjoying the company of friends at the Thursday Coffee Social. As the winter and colder months are upon us, we now enjoy a hearty bowl of soup, as well as biscuits and a cuppa!



On his epic run for Children in Need, Vernon Kay's route included the Cycle Path near us.



St Helen's December Diary

with January dates as known

Special Events and Services in December:

Saturday 2nd 6.00pm Advent Service



**Friday 8th 7.00pm Darley Dale Town Council
Christmas Celebration at St. Helen's**

**Saturday 9th 1.00pm to 3.00pm
Memory Lane's Christmas Celebration**

(For details contact Di Cliffe – diane.neil26@live.co.uk)

7.00pm Wyns Tor Singers Christmas Concert

Tickets £10.00. See Steve Walker

**Sunday 10th 11.00am Advent Carol Service with the Scouts
Followed by their Christmas Fayre in the hall.**

(Coffee/tea available in church before the service at 10.40pm and in the hall afterwards)

**Saturday 16th 6.30pm Carol Service
with Cromford Community Band
Mince pies and mulled wine in the hall afterwards**



**Friday 22nd December 2.30pm in church.
Churchtown School end of term service.**

Do come and support this if you can, to wish the children a happy holiday and a Happy Christmas.

Sunday 24th December: Christmas Eve:
4.00pm Carols and Crib Service



11.30pm Holy Communion

Monday 25th December Christmas Day:
11.00am Family Holy Communion



31st 11.00am United Benefice Holy Communion Service
at Christ Church Holloway

Regular Events and Activities

Our next Open Door
is our Christmas special 2pm
Sunday December 3rd

A decorative banner with a light orange background. It features holly leaves with red berries in the top corners, a string of colorful lights (pink, yellow, blue, green, orange, pink) in the center, and a small icon of a church with a cross on top at the bottom center.

Chill and Chat with Coffee Toddler Group

8.45 to 11.00am – term time only.

Light refreshments for parents and carers.

**Toys, games, crafts, singing, a story
and snack for the little ones**



Thursday Coffee Social – a space and time to relax and enjoy good company. Everyone is welcome **12noon to 2.00p Every Thursday** (you will be informed if we have to cancel). As well as light refreshments there is soup with bread, but bring sandwiches instead or to go along with the soup. For more details contact: Chris Townsend 01629 56622



Monday Lunchers:

We meet on a Monday at 11.45am for 12noon at the Whitworth Terrace Café



December: Salt 4th, Pepper 11th (N.b. we meet a week earlier because of Christmas busy-ness at the Whitworth)

January: Salt 8th, Pepper 15th

Kath Dick, who organises M Ls, would like to say thank you to the staff at the Whitworth for making us welcome, and to the kind folk who act as Head of Table for greeting everyone as they arrive and ensuring that the conversation around the table flows to include everyone.

All the Lunchers, including the 'heads of table' thank Kath for all she does behind the scenes and for the inspiration which started and continues Monday Lunchers.

St Helen's Saturday Coffee Morning



Saturday 9th December 10.00 to 12noon Why not take a break on Saturday morning from the daily chores and enjoy a time out with friends old and new?

Delicious home-made scones and cakes! Our great thanks to Sandra Brown who not only spearheads the coffee morning but makes many of the cakes. Her cheese scones are amazing!

Friday 8th December Ecumenical Holy Communion



11.00am Darley Methodist Church.

A time of peace and reflection as we worship together followed by a cup of tea or coffee.

N.b. This will be the last 11.00am Holy Communion until the New Year.

Home Groups and the Worship Group

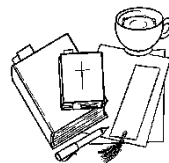
Thursday Ecumenical Home Group

New Year dates

Thursday 4th January 7.30pm

Thursday 18th January 7.30pm

For more details contact Margaret on 735778



Thursday Group led by Diana Wills

In winter we meet on Zoom (2x40minute sessions), term time only.

For details and a Zoom access link, contact Diana

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.

Help needed!



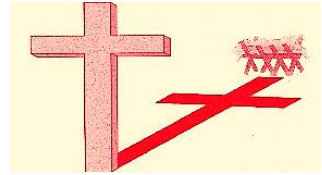
There is a lot happening as ever in December. We need cakes for our Saturday Coffee Morning 9th December, helping hands to serve refreshments at the Wyns Tor Choir concert, also on the 9th, and mince pies for our Carol

Service (the 16th). Speak to one of the Social Committee if you can help with any or all of the above!!!

Growing your Faith

Editor: by Canon Paul Hardingham

The Heart of Christmas



We're at that time of year again! But is Christmas just about the shopping, tree or presents? At its heart, Christmas is all about a God who has showed up on earth. The Creator of the universe, whose hands flung stars into space, cared enough to come to earth as a tiny baby. 'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.' (John 1:14)

Every year we sing carols and retell the same story of the donkey, innkeeper, stable, angels, shepherds, star, wise men, gifts and Mary and Joseph with baby! Why do we do all this? It's to remind us that God deals with the mess of our world by sending His Son to die in our place. This makes it possible for us to have a relationship with Himself:

When the time came, He "did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8)

Reflecting on Jesus in the manger is a great place to start understanding the heart of the Christmas message. However, it's so much more than simply a cute baby lying in the bed of straw:

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator;

If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist;

If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist;

If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer;

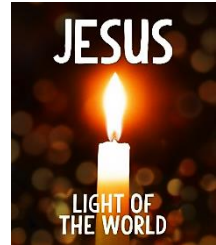
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Saviour.

Editor: by the Revd Jo White

The Light of the World

During the month of December, people are 'counting down' to Christmas Day in an ever-increasing variety of ways.

In my childhood we had a simple card with a traditional picture of a manger scene with doors marked with the countdown numbers and a picture of the different characters behind each. If my parents had extra money to spend, they would buy one with shiny snow made of sparkles!



These days you can pay hundreds to have a gift for each day from toys to jewellery. And don't fret, your pets can have their own also!

Churches don't normally count the days, but they do note the four Sundays before Christmas Day. They give each of those four 'advent' Sundays a theme and light a candle each time. One for the first week, two for the second and so on.

Unlike the secular world, the church counts up, and not down. It increases the light as we get nearer to Christmas Day and then adds an extra light on that day. So, a total of five candles.

Churches vary in their use of colour in the candles. Some will use all white, whilst many only use white for the Christ-light on Christmas Day and 'colours' on the four Sundays.

There again they vary; some use all purple – originally the most expensive colour - as we prepare for The King. In a more modern style, some use blue – perhaps recalling the most associated colour for Jesus’ mother Mary. But perhaps reminding us of creation and that we are surrounded by God’s love as the earth is surrounded by the blue sky.

And again, others will change the colours for each Sunday, often giving the third Sunday to be pink as we are over half-way through Advent and it is known as *Gaudate* – Joyful – Sunday. Or there are those who make the fourth Sunday pink, as that one is often dedicated to Mary and it’s a ‘girly’ colour.

This month

Have a look at the advent candles in your church, or perhaps in your own home, and think about what the colours mean to you. How do they reflect your faith? Whatever the colour – Have a Good Christmas!



Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham continues to his year-long series on the Spiritual Disciplines.

Spiritual Disciplines: Celebration

‘But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.’ (Luke 2:10).

As we conclude our series on the spiritual disciplines, this month we look at *Celebration*, which is very appropriate for this Christmas season. We are called to rejoice in God’s good gifts and celebrate His faithfulness.

Jesus modelled celebration in his first miracle at Cana, when He turned water into wine, enabling the party to continue (John 2:1-12). Celebration helps us with the other disciplines, as it enables us to keep going through times of joy and struggle: *‘Without a joyful spirit of festivity the Disciplines become dull, death-breathing tools in the*

hands of modern Pharisees.' (Richard Foster). We celebrate crucial moments in our lives with unreserved joy and thanksgiving and this shape our lives to be more like Jesus.

Richard Foster offers a few helpful pointers to celebration in his book *Celebration of Discipline*. They may come in handy as you celebrate Christmas this year!

Singing and dancing: how can we rediscover what children do brilliantly, in our families or church? Is there room for singing Christmas carols together at home this year?

Laughter: just as Jesus brought humour into His teaching, how can we laugh more? What does it mean to take ourselves less seriously and encourage more fun with our friends?

Imagination and creativity: how can we invest in our own creativity, as well as other people's? - e.g. in painting, poetry, reading and other leisure activities? God gave us these things to enjoy! As we celebrate our own creativity, we are sharing in God's goodness and joy.

Family events: we can use family celebrations and with Christmas approaching, there is the opportunity of putting God at the centre of our celebration.

'So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor 10:31).

Christmas a little early - from Margaret and Chris Long

We would like to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New year.

Secondly, thank you to everyone who has kindly given lifts enabling Chris to be at church for his duties as churchwarden and for taking me shopping while our car is out of action for the second time. This is the sort of kindness and love Rev. Stephen is always talking about.

Many, many thanks. Chris and Margaret





"For the next part of our carol-service, Nigel, the verger's nephew will play his interpretation of Silent Night..."

Smile-Lines

What do you get Dad?

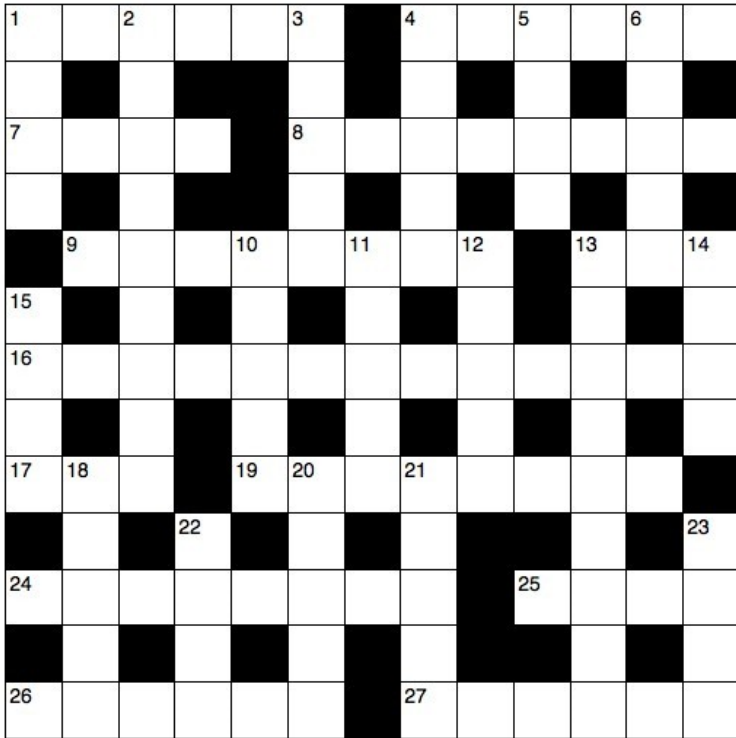
December is the month when the family begins to discuss what to get Dad for Christmas. Some argue for a shirt; others hold out for a pair of socks. But the argument usually ends in a tie.

Christmas in my heart

Christmas is in my heart twelve months a year and, thanks to credit cards, it's also on my Visa card statement twelve months a year.

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Crossword clues

Across

- 1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)
- 4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)
- 7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)
- 8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)
- 9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)
- 13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)
- 16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)
- 17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)

- 19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)
- 24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
- 25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)
- 26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)
- 27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

Down

- 1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)
- 2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)
- 3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)
- 4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)
- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
- 10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
- 21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)
- 22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)
- 23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)

Answers on Page 29

And more Smile-Lines

Christmas gifts

Grandfather was talking to his granddaughter, "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!"

Turkey

He ate so much over the holidays that he decided to quit cold turkey.

Which side of the turkey has the most feathers? The outside.

Sums up Christmas

Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: 'Peace on Earth'; 'Goodwill to Men'; and 'Batteries not included'.

Children's version of the Christmas story

- When the three wise guys from the east side arrived, they found Jesus in the manger.
- When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta
- Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.

What would you like for Christmas?

A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas.

The little girl gasped and stared up at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

In the (church) news

War in Gaza and Israel

From the Parish Pump website:

The situation in Israel and Gaza is moving so quickly that any story we offer you now is bound to be 'out of date' by the time your December magazine appears.

So instead, we are offering you a list of some Christian UK agencies who are working in either Israel or Gaza, and who have launched Appeals for help. We hope that this gives you a way of encouraging your readers to respond with compassion to the on-going crisis.

Each 'Appeal' below has been adapted from the website of the agency concerned, and so it will reflect their particular concern and emphasis at this time. We have listed the agencies in strict alphabetical order.



Bible Society:

Urgent appeal for the Bible Lands

Israelis are reeling from the most devastating attack on their country in 50 years. Palestinians in Gaza are experiencing a humanitarian crisis as more than a million people have evacuated the northern part of the territory.

With your help, our volunteers from Bible Society teams serving in both the Israeli and Palestinian communities can minister to people whose lives have been turned upside down.

Bible Society teams in the Holy Land are now giving out everything from Bibles to food to blankets to hygiene items, but they need your support. If you would like to help, please go to biblesociety.org.uk

Christian Aid

Urgent appeal for the people of Gaza

Thousands of people have been killed and over a million displaced after the recent escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

In Gaza, a humanitarian crisis is unfolding. 7,028 Palestinians have been killed and 18,482 injured. Over 1.4 million have been displaced from their homes; supplies of water and food are fast running out.

We're urging all parties to abide by international law to protect innocent civilians and agree to an immediate de-escalation of this unprecedented violence.

In Gaza, our medical partner is providing mobile medical and psychological care, which ranges from access to a doctor, nurse, social worker or physiotherapist.

In southern Gaza, our partner is responding to those most recently displaced to southern Gaza as a result of the war. They're providing mattresses, medicines, and emergency food items.

We're also actively exploring ways in which we might also support Israeli civilians who've been directly impacted by the violence.

Your donations can make a huge difference to the current conditions of all those affected. Please go to: <https://give.christianaid.org.uk>

Embrace the Middle East

Help the people of Gaza

The people of Gaza are living through an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Israel's response to the terrible events of October has led to indiscriminate civilian suffering, with residents forced to move from place to place in search of safety. Food, fuel, medical supplies and water have all but run out.

If you can help support Embrace’s Christian partners as they work to help people caught up in this crisis, please go to:

<https://embraceme.org/gazacrisis> .

World Vision

Middle East Emergency Appeal

Violence in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel is escalating. Thousands of people have already lost their lives and sadly, this is only expected to get worse.

We’re already working in the West Bank, and with decades of experience in the area, we’re acting right now to support the thousands of vulnerable children, families and communities impacted by this crisis. Your donation will be channelled into the areas of greatest need that World Vision and its partners can access.

Please go to: <https://www.worldvision.org.uk/emergencies/middle-east-appeal/#donate>

Parish Pump Editor: Various Christian agencies have commented on the crisis, including the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. We found the CEO, Paul Woolley’s, comments to be helpful, and so offer an edited version of them here, in case you find them helpful as well.

Israel and Gaza: how should we respond?

By Paul Woolley, CEO of London Institute for Contemporary Christianity

Following the attacks on Israel by Hamas on Saturday 7th October, Israel’s Defence Minister ordered a ‘complete siege’ of the Gaza strip and the cutting off of food, fuel, electricity and water supplies.

Speaking to officials from Southern Israel soon afterwards, the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said “what Hamas will

experience will be difficult and terrible... this is only the beginning... we will defeat them with force, enormous force.”

The world today looks very different from the way it appeared thirty years ago. It was in September 1993 that the then Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, shook hands before cheering crowds on the White House lawn. The handshake – the first ever in public between the two former enemies – marked the signing of a Declaration of Principles for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Since then, peace moves have stalled and more moderate voices who seemed open to compromise have been replaced by more extreme ones.

How should we respond to the recent events?

First and foremost, we must unequivocally condemn the Hamas attacks for what they are – evil acts of terror, including the rape, kidnapping, and murder of women, men, and children. Any attempt to justify these actions is morally indefensible, and we must firmly oppose the arguments of those who seek to rationalise them. Contrary to what one academic at a British University has said, the attack on Israel was not the “consequence” for “partying on stolen land.”

Secondly, we should grieve. The land flowing with milk and honey is instead a land of blood and tears. We should grieve with those who are suffering in the Bible lands, as elsewhere around the world. In the face of injustice, we should weep.

Thirdly, we should pray for those who are suffering, for a de-escalation of violence, and for peace. We should pray that Israel acts justly and proportionately, even as it fulfils its duty to protect its citizens. In waging war on terror, governments should always act to promote good and prevent evil (Romans 13:4). The line



between punishing evil and revenge can be a fine one, but it's an important one.

Finally, we should examine ourselves and work for peace and justice in our everyday lives. Every day we have opportunities, in our workplaces and communities, and even with our contributions to social media. In the words of Isaiah 1:17, we must 'learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.'

*This is taken from and the full text can be found at:
<https://licc.org.uk/resources/israel-and-gaza-how-should-we-respond-blog/>*

Israel-Gaza Conflict – UK faith leaders condemn antisemitism and call for solidarity

The Archbishop of Canterbury was recently joined by Muslim and Jewish leaders at Lambeth Palace to condemn the sharp rise in antisemitic incidents since the start of the war in Israel and Hamas. They called for unity between British faith communities, against the backdrop of the war.



Archbishop Justin Welby, Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg stood together outside Lambeth Palace and delivered statements calling for solidarity and unity between communities in the UK, and rejecting any form of hatred or discrimination.

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra is a scholar and imam from Leicester, and a former Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain. Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg is the Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism UK, and Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue.

Synod meeting to focus on implementation of Prayers of Love and Faith



The General Synod of the Church of England met last month (November) to discuss the steps being taken to implement texts known as *Prayers of Love and Faith*, which ask for God’s blessing for same-sex couples.

In February of this year, Synod agreed a motion welcoming the texts and calling on The House of Bishops to further refine and commend them for use in the Church of England, together with new pastoral guidance and proposals for pastoral reassurance.

Earlier this autumn, the House of Bishops agreed in principle that they Prayers of Love and Faith should be commended for use. They also concluded that special services for same-sex couples, based on the Prayers, should go forward for consideration to be formally authorised under canon law. Synod also voted for no change to the doctrine of the Church of England around marriage and sexual intimacy.

In November, Synod members was presented with the work that the House of Bishops has carried out on the *Prayers of Love and Faith* since February. They the draft pastoral guidance, specifically supporting the Prayers, which has been shared for the first time.

The Bishop of London, Dame Sarah Mullally, who has co-chaired the Living in Love and Faith steering group, said: “This twin-track approach means that prayers asking for God’s blessing for same-sex couples will be available for use in church very soon, as Synod has asked. A means of offering special, standalone services for same-sex couples will go forward to be considered for formal authorisation at a later stage.

“While we do not all agree about questions of marriage and sexual intimacy, a long period of discernment has shown that a majority of

people would like to see a change in the Church of England’s approach to same-sex relationships. Based on what the Church has told us, no change is not an option.

“There are those who would like to see us go much further, and those who believe we are going too far. Yet we have expressed our heartfelt wish to remain together as one Church. The pastoral provision must protect and value both those who struggle so much with this that they need reassurance, and those who wish to place same-sex relationships before God in prayer.

“In other words, it will be ‘both and’, not ‘either or’. We are implementing what Synod asked us to, prayerfully and with the hope of God’s Grace.”

Looking at You – tips and information for everyday life

Could a pothole ruin your Christmas?



Will you be out on the roads this Christmas? Then beware of the potholes. The number of pothole-related breakdown incidents has just hit a five-year high.

Latest figures from the AA report that its breakdown crews attended more than 47,200 pothole-related breakdowns in September. That is 10 per cent more than last September.

The problem is the gap between how much cash Councils *need* to spend on the potholes, compared with how much they actually *are* spending.

Recent analysis by industry experts found that, since 2018, road maintenance budget shortfalls for councils have more than doubled.

They went from £3.4 million five years ago, to an eye-watering £8.5 million in 2023.

Some road maintenance companies argue that road conditions have declined more rapidly since the Government removed its Pothole Action Fund, which provided ring-fenced funding for councils to spend on filling potholes and preventative maintenance.

Drink tea or coffee each day – and keep old age weakness away!

Recent research has found that drinking coffee or tea in midlife may help keep you stronger in later life.



A study at the National University of Singapore concluded that higher caffeine intake is associated with lower odds of physical frailty in old age, regardless of the source of the caffeine.

Physical frailty in old age was defined as having at least two of the following: weight loss, exhaustion, slowness and weakness. The scientists also measured handgrip strength and the time taken to complete a timed up-and-go (TUG) test.

In addition to caffeine, coffee and tea contain rich bioactive polyphenols, which have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. These have been associated with reduced risk for diseases that increase frailty, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and neurodegenerative disease.

No more 'postcode lottery' recycling

Life is going to become simpler when it comes to recycling.



From 2026, the national recycling laws are to be standardised, with Councils across the UK all having to collect the same glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, food waste and garden waste. It is expected that the plans will lead to packaging that is clearly labelled 'recyclable' or not, without the need for households to check local provisions.

“Simpler recycling will help us all recycle more easily, doing our bit to help save the planet and make the best use of precious resources that we use every day,” said Therese Coffey, the Environment Secretary. “Alongside weekly food waste collections, we are ending the postcode lottery of what you can put in your bin, so that wherever you live in the country, you will be able to recycle the same products with confidence.”

Stop mist on your windscreen

If you will be out in your car a lot this Christmas, here's an easy way to stop your windscreen from misting up:

Simply clean it with shaving foam. It provides a protective barrier which stops mist forming. Ice hockey players use it to stop their face masks from steaming up while they're on the ice.



It's easy to do. Put a good dollop of shaving foam onto a clean towel, and then wipe it all over the windscreen. Then take a second clean towel, and gently wipe off the shaving foam. This leaves a protective barrier, but it will need to be regularly reapplied, to continue to work.

This tip can be found on the RAC website: www.rac.co.uk

Prospect of winter energy bills causing anxiety for millions, says Archbishop of York

Millions are looking ahead to this winter with ‘fear and anxiety’ about the cost of heating their homes, the Archbishop of York has said as he backed the recent launch of a campaign to provide a network of warm spaces for people who struggle to pay their energy bills.

Archbishop Stephen Cottrell is encouraging churches to consider getting involved in the Warm Welcome campaign, a network of venues from community centres to churches providing warm spaces over the winter for people struggling to heat their homes.

Archbishop Stephen said: “Sadly, what began as a cost-of-living crisis has simply become the new normal for many.

“Millions of people will look ahead to this winter with fear and anxiety, wondering how they are going to cope with high living costs. That is why I am proud to endorse the Warm Welcome campaign this winter.

“But a warm welcome isn’t only about the temperature. It is about kindness and community, giving people the chance to be seen and known, to belong and to be part of something. It is about celebrating the God-given value and dignity of every single person, finding hope and community together. But of course, none of that will happen if people are cold.”

The Warm Welcome campaign is led by a coalition of over 50 charitable organisations who joined together in response to the cost of living crisis to provide emergency support to communities struggling to pay for rising food costs and to heat their homes.

Crossword Answers

ACROSS: 1, Depend. 4, Canopy. 7, Beak. 8, Irritate. 9, Zedekiah. 13, Ate. 16, Job's comforter. 17, NAE. 19, Lang Syne. 24, Blockade. 25, Five. 26, Enigma. 27, Drench.

DOWN: 1, Debt. 2, Peaceable. 3, Drink. 4, Curia. 5, Nuts. 6, Put it. 10, Excel. 11, Is man. 12, Hoofs. 13, Attention. 14, Ezra. 15, Ijon. 18, Aslan. 20, Abana. 21, Greed. 22, GCMG. 23, Leah.

Ed's Endings

January brings Epiphany and the Wise Men so just an extra piece about them.

Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham considers our own search for God...

Wise Men Seek Him

'A cold coming we had of it. Just the worst time of the year. For a journey and such a long journey.' (Journey of the Magi, T.S. Eliot).



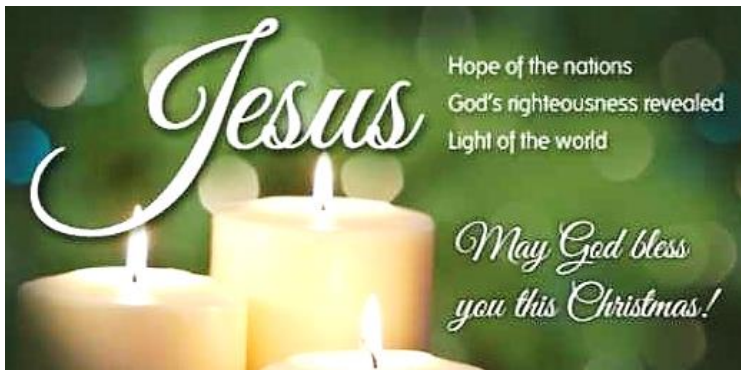
In this poem, T.S. Eliot imagines the journey of the Magi to worship Jesus, as told in Matthew 2. This story is at the heart of our celebration of Epiphany, as we remember the astrologers from the East following a star to find the baby: *'Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.'* (Matthew 2:1,2).

The Magi provide a powerful picture of the journey we make in searching for God in our lives. Like them, it requires time and effort (they travelled for months) and will not always be easy! As they followed the star, so we are called to pursue God's light in our lives.



What does this say to us at the beginning of a New Year? Are we ready to go deeper in our relationship with God? Are we looking for new ways to use our time, treasure and talents for Him? It is a great time to offer these things to Him, and like the Magi, commit ourselves to pursuing Him. His light, through prayer, worship and His Word, will be our guide on the way.

T.S. Eliot used the imagined journey of the Magi to reflect on his own spiritual journey. It reveals the pain and doubts he experienced on his long and troubled journey to find the light of Christ. He describes finding Christ as a '*hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death*'. Are we prepared to make this journey for ourselves?



A prayer for the new year:

Let's end this year with a thankful heart and start the new year with peace and faith. Let us release the bitterness and frustrations of the past year. Let us move into the next year knowing God loves us and wants the best for us. Let's pray that the new year will be focused on healing ourselves through repentance and renewing our minds. Amen

All items for the February 24 magazine to be with me by the **the 15th January**, please: **christowndsend2@sky.com**

Services in the United Benefice December 2023

St Helen's:

Saturday 2nd 6.00pm Advent Service

Sunday 3rd 11.00am Holy Communion
2.00pm Open Door.

Sunday 10th 11.00am All Age Carol Service
with the local Scout Groups

Saturday 16th 6.30pm. St. Helen's Carol Service with
Cromford Community Band

Sunday 17th 11.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 24th 4.00pm Christmas Eve Crib Service
11.30pm Christmas Eve Holy Communion

Monday 25th 11.00am Christmas Day Family Holy Communion

Sunday 31st 11.00am United Benefice Holy Communion Service
at Christ Church Holloway

St Mary's:

Sunday 3rd 10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 10th 11.00am Family Service with the local Scout Groups
At St Helen's

Sunday 17th 4.00pm St. Mary's Carol Service

Sunday 24th 10.00am Christmas Eve Holy Communion with Carols

Monday 25th 10.00am Christmas Day Family Service

Sunday 31st 11.00am United Benefice Holy Communion Service
at Christ Church Holloway

St John's:

Sunday 3rd No service

Sunday 10th 4.00pm Christmas Tree Festival Service

Sunday 17th 6.00pm St. John's Carol Service

Sunday 24th 9.00pm Christmas Eve Holy Communion

Monday 25th No service

Sunday 31st 11.00am United Benefice Holy Communion Service at
Christ Church Holloway

Services in the United Benefice in January 2024

7th January: 10.00 am Holy Communion at St. Mary's
11.00am Holy Communion at St. Helen's
2.00pm Open Door, St Helen's
Service at St. John's to be confirmed

14th January: 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) at St. Helen's
11.00am United Benefice Family Service at St. Helen's

21st January: 10.00am United Benefice Holy Communion at St. John's

28th January: 10.00am Morning Prayer at St. Mary's
11.00am New Beginnings at St. Helen's

Friday Holy Communions:

12th January 11.00am Ecumenical HC at St. Helen's,

26th January 11.00am HC at St. Helen's

Zoom Service – Monday evenings 7.00pm as arranged (not Bank Holidays). For details and invitation, contact:
christtownsend2@sky.com

