

DECEMBER - JANUARY 2025

## *From the Editors*

*A warm welcome to the end of year edition which covers the months of December and January.*

*Now that we are in the season of Advent our minds naturally turn to Christmas and all that this great yearly event brings. In the material world we spend a lot of our time thinking about Christmas presents, parties, meeting up with family and friends for meals. Christmas can be an expensive business as well, presents don't come cheaply these days and some of us will not be looking forward to the credit card statement in January.*

*Spiritually Christmas is about the celebration of the birth of Christ who came to save us from our misdoings. We are all susceptible to getting things wrong and doing wrongs against others, but the great teachings of Christ show us that we can do things more wisely and with love. During this season of Advent let us reflect on how we can let the spirit of Jesus Christ enter us and show us new ways of living.*

*What ever you do this Christmas we at St. Mary's wish you a happy and restful time. We also wish you a prosperous New Year and hope that 2026 brings health, wealth, happiness and freedom for us all.*

"I heard a bird sing  
In the dark of December  
A magical thing  
And sweet to remember.

'We are nearer to Spring  
Than we were in September,'  
I heard a bird sing  
In the dark of December."

- Oliver Herford, *I Heard a Bird Sing*,





### **Good News**

We now have the necessary permissions to proceed with the build of the new extension. The Chancellor of Blackburn Diocese (The Hon Judge David Hodge KC) visited the church on Sunday 23rd November and subsequently granted the faculty. Shortly, thereafter SRBC gave us their planning permission. We have three years to do the work. The faculty also gives permission to repair the broken stained glass window in the south aisle. The Chancellor's report was positive and encouraging and we are grateful to him for his permission to go ahead. The build of the extension and its subsequent use will need the people of the parish to engage fully with this project. Please read the article on Page 3 which gives more detail about the process we need to follow.

### **Visit by the new Archdeacon**

We look forward to welcoming the newly appointed Archdeacon of Blackburn Diocese the Rt Rev Jane Atkinson on Sunday 14th December. Come and say hello.

### **Churchyard**

The work on the retaining wall is picking up pace now. The embankment at the south east of the church yard is being shored up followed by the building of the new retaining wall. After the retaining wall has been built work will commence on reinterring mortal remains and the replacement of the gravestones.

Following this, work will move toward the retaining wall near the Chancel. This is unfortunately a long process and may last into late Spring early Summer. While the work continues regrettably there is no car parking available at church. Parishioners are requested to park on Hollinhust Ave and walk through the ginnel to Church Avenue. Please do not park in the emergency turn around area near the Lych Gate as access to this will be needed for emergency vehicles.



### **St Mary's Building Project. Fund Raising.**

Now that we have both the faculty and the planning permission for our modifications to the 1956 extension, we need to raise significant additional funds to enable us to complete the work. The money that we do have available will not be sufficient to complete the building and equip it for use. This means we will need to apply for grants to be able to complete our project. We have already started investigating potential donors and are in the process of approaching the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This is a multi-stage application and stage 1 is to complete an Expression of Interest. If this is successful, we will be able to apply for grants to help us complete the works. The first grant is for a development phase to confirm the costs for the building, produce specifications for the tendering process and provide robust plans of how the new extension will be used both to promote the heritage of the site and benefit the community. If the development phase is successfully completed, we would use the information gathered to generate an application for the delivery phase which would provide funds to build and set up the new extension.

To be successful in our bid for money from the National Lottery, we need to demonstrate that what we are doing will help us to maintain an important piece of heritage for the future and that we will be enabling people from the wider community to come and explore what we have to offer. We also need to show that it will benefit the wider community and that they care about keeping St Mary's as part of Penwortham's history. To be able to show this, we need to demonstrate that we have asked as wide a cross section of the local community about our plans and what their response was. We have created a questionnaire to do this, that can be accessed electronically, that we want to get to as many people as possible. The link will be put on our website shortly and we will be sending it to schools, community groups and other organisations to ask them to circulate it. Please do take the time to complete the survey yourself and to pass the link on to family or friends to complete. The more responses we can get, the better our results will be.

We will keep you posted about progress, and we are always looking for volunteers to help us with taking the project forward, so if you are interested in helping, please let us know.



### **Christmas at St Mary's**

#### **Schools' Carols Services**

Whitefield School Y5 and Y6 pupils will hold their Carol Service on Tuesday 9th December 6pm

Cop Lane School will hold their Carol Service on Monday 15th December at 6pm

#### **North West Ambulance Service Choir**

NWAS Choir will be holding their annual Carol Service at church on Friday 12th December at 6pm for 6.30pm All are welcome. This is a most enjoyable event with lots of singing and food and drink. Make it a date!

#### **Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols**

Sunday 21st December at 6.30pm in Church

#### **Christingle Service**

Wednesday 24th December at 4pm in Church

#### **Christmas Eve Midnight Communion**

Wednesday 24th December at 11.30pm in Church

#### **Christmas Day Services Thursday 25th December**

Holy Communion 8.15 am Order 2

Family Communion 10.15 Order 1

**Of all the awkward people in your house or job  
there is only one whom you can improve very  
much. - C S Lewis**





**PENWORTHAM FOODBANK**

*PENWORTHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE  
KINGSFOLD DRIVE PR1 9EQ*

**EVERY FRIDAY\*\*  
BETWEEN 0930 AND NOON**

**DONATIONS OF NON-PERISHABLE FOODS ARE  
URGENTLY REQUIRED**

*We thank all who have donated food in the past but we need further  
supplies: particularly pasta, pasta sauce, tins of soup, tins of baked beans  
and canned fruit*

**BRING YOUR DONATIONS TO CHURCH, OR TO THE  
FOODBANK ON A FRIDAY MORNING**

**OR**

**ARRANGE A BANK TRANSFER/STANDING ORDER\* TO:**

Account name: Churches Together in Penwortham  
Sort Code: 30-96-85 Account No: 00415955 (Lloyds Bank)

**OR**

**MAKE A DONATION (cheque or cash)\***

*\*We are registered for Gift Aid so if you are able to make a  
financial donation and are a UK taxpayer then please let us  
have your contact details so we can arrange for a Gift Aid  
form to be sent to you.*

*\*\*opening times vary over the Christmas period*



### **Diocesan Church Buildings Team hosts special conference at Whalley Abbey**

The conference, open to Inspecting Architects and Surveyors was held in the beautiful setting of our 'Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer' at the Abbey in the Ribble Valley; which is also the site of stunning medieval ruins.

Our own Diocesan Church Buildings Team, hosted the day which was attended by representatives from other Dioceses, including Carlisle, Leeds and Liverpool.



Jen Read, Senior Church Buildings Officer at the diocese, said: "It was great to be able to meet together to network hear some great talks.

"We had a fantastic line-up of speakers to hear from across the day who collectively had a wide range of expertise to share with us. Many travelled long distances to be with us and I'm grateful to them all for being able to attend."

### **Lancashire parish helps people - including 1000+ schoolchildren - find Jesus in Narnia**

A Lancashire parish is transporting people to the land of Narnia via a series of handmade tableaux - including more than 1000 local schoolchildren!

The tableaux have been specially created for a fabulous new outreach mission at St Bartholomew's Church in Colne - using the famous Christian allegories of the Narnia stories to introduce people to Jesus.



Once this current show is over the church generously plans to offer the entire set of tableaux to other parishes across Lancashire.



### **Archbishop Designate, Sarah Mullally, sets out her hopes for the Church**

Shortly after the announcement of her nomination as the next Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop Sarah Mullally delivered an address at Canterbury Cathedral, reflecting on her calling, the challenges facing the Church, and her hopes for its future.

Rooted in her early vocation as a nurse and shaped by her ministry in London, she spoke of “washing feet” as a guiding image of Christian service, and of finding hope in the quiet faithfulness of churches, chaplaincies, and communities across the Anglican Communion.

She addressed the Church’s responsibility in safeguarding, the need to confront power dynamics, and the importance of standing against hatred and antisemitism.

She said she would seek to be “a shepherd who enables everyone’s ministry and vocation to flourish,” and expressed her desire to nurture confidence in the Gospel. “Held fast by the Lord’s hand,” she concluded, “please pray for me as I will pray for you.”

### **Attendance at Church of England churches rises for the fourth year in a row**

Attendance at Church of England churches grew for the fourth year in a row last year, statistics have confirmed.

The overall number of regular worshippers across the Church of England’s congregations rose to 1.009 million in 2024, a rise of 0.6 per cent, according to the annual Statistics for Mission findings.

It was the second year in a row in which the Church of England’s “worshipping community” – the combined number of regular members of local congregations – has stood above a million since the Covid-19 pandemic.

All age average attendance on a Sunday also rose 1.5 per cent to 581,000 in 2024, extending rises over recent years.

And overall attendance across the week edged upwards by 1.6 cent in a year, and stood at just over 702,000 last year, according to the figures.

While the overall figures show that in-person attendance has not fully reached pre-pandemic levels, the figures suggest it is moving closer to the projected pre-pandemic trend and in some cases has risen above the levels that might have been expected had there been no pandemic.



### **Churches are building 'coalitions of goodwill'- Archbishop of York**

Churches bring people together in a world that can become 'too easily' polarised, the Archbishop of York has told a major conference highlighting the value of church buildings. Archbishop Stephen spoke of the contribution that churches make to social cohesion, and called on the Government to make the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme – covering VAT on repairs – to be made permanent, saying that churches are "incredibly anxious" about the future of the "lifeline" scheme.

He said churches are not only places of worship but centres of social support, working with or providing a "staggering" number of social action projects – more than 31,000 - building coalitions of goodwill with people of all faiths and none, hosting services such as food banks, warm spaces, drop-ins and debt counselling. He said there continued to be a need to "make the case" to Government over the Listed Places of Worship Grant scheme – which provides grants covering the VAT on repairs of more than £1,000. He said this had been a "lifeline" since it was first introduced more than 20 years ago by the then Chancellor Gordon Brown.

The LPWG scheme gives grants covering the VAT on repairs of more than £1,000 for listed places of worship. In January, the Government announced a one-year extension of the scheme but reduced the total amount of money available and introduced a £25,000 cap on the amount that can be claimed by a place of worship.

### **Church of England weddings at historic low**

The Church of England conducted fewer weddings than ever in 2023, as the number of people in England and Wales getting married in religious ceremonies has slumped to a new low.

In 2023, 23,004 marriages were recorded by the Church of England and Church in Wales, according to recent data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). It is the lowest number since the 1830s, except for 2020, when churches were closed during the pandemic.

In total, 216,901 weddings of opposite-sex couples took place in 2023. The majority (184,428) were civil ceremonies. There were 32,473 religious weddings, of which 70 per cent were held in Anglican churches.

The Bishop of Manchester, Dr David Walker, told the Daily Telegraph: "We want to reassure couples that they don't have to be churchgoers to have a church wedding, they don't need to be christened, and we welcome couples who already have children."



### **“The suffering in Sudan is almost unbearable” – Bishop of Leeds**

The situation in Sudan is “so dire that ‘urgent’ does not do justice to the need for action,” the Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, has warned in his final speech in the House of Lords. Bishop Nick, who is retiring, used his last appearance in the House after more than a decade to secure a debate on the worsening humanitarian crisis in Sudan. He highlighted mass killings, sexual violence, starvation, and the displacement of millions, with non-Arab Africans among the primary targets. Bishop Nick also emphasised the lack of attention to Sudan in western media and called for stronger UK leadership in diplomatic, economic, and military efforts to end the conflict, protect civilians, and ensure accountability for atrocities.

Bishop Nick said: “The suffering in Sudan is almost unbearable, the worst humanitarian catastrophe on the planet, and it is neither new nor simply a phenomenon of only the last three years. Whatever the causes of and motivations behind the current conflict, it is civilians—women, children, young men and vulnerable ethnic groups—who are being targeted and abused in the most inhumane ways.”

Warning that inaction will exacerbate refugee migration, generational trauma, and cycles of violence, he stressed that Sudan’s plight demands immediate, coordinated global intervention.

### **Dublin given a Roman Catholic cathedral**

Dublin is to have a Roman Catholic cathedral – for the first time in 500 years.

And it has the Pope to thank: Pope Leo XIV has designated St Mary’s Pro-Cathedral as the cathedral of the archdiocese of Dublin.

Before the 16th century, the cathedral in Dublin was Christ Church, and St Patrick’s served as a second cathedral of the medieval diocese. At the Reformation, both buildings became Church of Ireland cathedrals. Today, St Patrick’s is the National Cathedral and Christ Church is that of the diocese. But this has left Roman Catholics in Dublin without a cathedral of their own. It was not until St Mary’s opened in 1825, as a temporary solution, that the Roman Catholics had at least some big church in Dublin. Although long regarded as the de facto Catholic cathedral, its status was never formally recognised – until now.

St Mary’s Cathedral has even been welcomed by the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Michael Jackson. He said it was “a happy day and noteworthy occasion” for Christians across the city, which now has three cathedrals.



Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham considers the Christmas story.

### **Christmas Unwrapped!**

All of us have received unwanted gifts at Christmas. For Joseph the gift of a child, as recorded in Matthew chapter 1, was not something he really wanted. Although he was engaged to Mary, her pregnancy would be grounds for divorce. Not surprisingly, with the associated social disgrace, Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly (Matthew 1:19). However, God intervened in a dream: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means, God with us.' (1:23). In a scary and uncertain world, what does the message of *Immanuel* say to us today?

### **God is present with us**

God assured Joseph that He was working in all that Joseph was going through. The eternal and creator God entered time and space as a baby. This baby is both uniquely divine but also fully human. This means that we can know God personally, not just know about Him. The Holy Spirit is committed to making Jesus' life and character real in us, and bringing meaning to our circumstances, just as He worked in Mary's life.

### **God is on our side**

Christmas touches some raw nerves in our lives, including stress, family rows, loneliness and financial pressures. However, God does not remain aloof from our experiences. In Jesus He enters our world of hopes and fears, joys and disappointments. He understands what we are going through, as He is alongside us. By the cross and resurrection, He gave His life that we might know His love, joy, peace and forgiveness.

For Joseph, as well as us, the Christmas message is one of hope in an uncertain world. It is a time to re-consider the claims of *Immanuel* ('God with us') as we entrust ourselves to Him for the coming year.

**THIS WORLD IS ALL A FLEETING  
SHOW, FOR MAN'S ILLUSION GIVEN;  
THE SMILES OF JOY, THE TEARS OF  
WOE, DECEITFUL SHINE, DECEITFUL  
FLOW,  
THERE'S NOTHING TRUE BUT  
HEAVEN. - THOMAS MORE**



*Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible.*

### **What's the Big Idea?**

#### **An Introduction to the Books of the New Testament: Philippians**

This letter was written to Christians in the Macedonian city of Philippi when Paul was in prison, probably in Rome (60-62 AD). His primary purpose in writing was to thank them for the gift they had sent him upon learning of his imprisonment. However, he also uses the letter as an opportunity to report on his situation; to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances; to exhort the church to live in humility, fellowship, and unity; to commend Epaphroditus and Timothy to them; and to warn them about false teaching. This included Judaizers who were persuading the Philippians to submit to circumcision.

The central message of Philippians focuses on joy (the word occurs some 16 times!). For Paul, joy isn't simply an emotional response to favourable circumstances. True joy is to be found through a relationship with the resurrected and glorified Christ. Death ceases to be an enemy, because through it we can more fully enjoy the presence of Jesus. This joy is also rooted in an expectation of the return of Jesus, which gives urgency to the task of sharing the gospel. So, Paul begins his letter by thanking the Philippians for their partnership together in the work of the gospel through the offerings they have sent. Paul also powerfully appeals to the Philippians to be of 'one mind' in pursuing humility and unity. He gives the example of Jesus himself 'who made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant' (2:7) to the point of dying the death of a common criminal. 'Therefore', say Paul, 'God exalted him to the highest place' (2:9). This 'Jesus attitude' is the one that all believers should share.

#### **Peaceful mind**

The Bible tells the story of Jesus and His disciples in a boat. The wind blows, the waves rise, and the disciples are stressed. Like them, we also get hit by storms in life. Like them, we can't control what comes our way. But like them, we can know that Jesus is also with us.

Why not take a moment to ponder these promises:

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for You alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. (*Psalms 4:8*)

The Lord gives strength to His people, the Lord blesses His people with peace. (*Psalms 29:11*)

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace - as in all the congregations of the Lord's people. (*1 Corinthians 14:33*)



*Editor: By the Revd Roy Shaw, a retired but active priest in the diocese of York, where he is a spiritual director.*

### **Epiphany!**

You probably know from tales of Greek mythology that gods and goddesses would often appear out of nowhere in ancient Greece to beguile or trick mortals. The word for this in everyday Greek was 'epiphany'; - the appearance or manifestation of a divine being on earth to humans. For Christians Epiphany is the season after the 12 days of Christmas.

Our Epiphany Bible readings tell of the 'manifestation' of Jesus to a wider audience than those in the Christmas stories. We mark this in the first instance by placing the Wise Men in the crib scene; they have now arrived to see the consummation of their hopes and travels in the infant Jesus. And our Epiphany readings usually continue through the season with Jesus' baptism; John the Baptist's witness to Christ; Jesus' family attempting to take charge of Him because of His popularity with the crowds; and the Presentation in the Temple. In all these, something of divine glory is being made manifest.

In more common parlance today, an epiphany means a sudden or blinding realisation ('I had a sudden epiphany that John was going to marry Celia'). That modern meaning is helpful; 'Gosh, epiphanies can be part of *our* Christian experience!' Remember that occasion we were so conscious of God's love holding us? Or the time we knew the words we used to that stranger were infused with a grace we didn't know we had? These and similar experiences which we've probably all had can be seen as *our* epiphanies- a time when God was made manifest to us (and possibly through us) in a distinct way.

Have you ever thought of those sorts of experiences as an epiphany? Not ring-fenced to a particular time of year, but part of our everyday experience, as we seek to live out our baptism promises, and follow Jesus through the ups and downs, the humdrum and the extraordinary, the joys and sorrows of the everyday.

The promise and reality of Christmas is 'Emmanuel-God with us'. And the reality of Epiphany is that God *IS* with us, in the everyday realisation of how great God is, how much God loves us, and how God pours upon us grace after grace after grace.

May we have many epiphanies in 2026, and may they all bring us closer to the God who has chosen in His love to reveal Himself to us.

*Liberty without obedience is confusion, and obedience without liberty is slavery. William Penner, Quaker*



### God in the Arts

*Editor: The Revd Michael Burgess completes his survey of sacred art that can be found in various museums...you can see the image by googling the title of the painting and the artist.*

#### **'He gave us eyes to see them': Madonna and Child from Donatello's workshop**

Each month during this year we have visited art galleries and museums in England that are often overlooked by the tourist trail, but which contain treasures that can inspire and deepen our Christian faith. Our final visit in this series is to a gracious, elegant Georgian villa rejoicing in the odd name of the Ranger's House. It is outside the western wall of Greenwich Park in London and is home to the Wernher collection of art.

Julius Wernher was a diamond magnate who died in 1912, and in his lifetime, he amassed an amazing array of 700 works that make up this collection. There are paintings by Joshua Reynolds and Romney, Renaissance jewellery, and a marble statue by Bergonzoli, 'The Love of Angels.'

But this month we focus on another love – the love of a mother and child by the workshop of Donatello. When I was a student I visited Florence for the first time, and I can always remember the impact of entering the Bargello and being greeted by the sculptures of Donatello. It was a special moment of revelation to be able to look around and wonder at the glorious works of this sculptor filling the second floor of the castle.

By contrast the Madonna and Child in the Ranger's House is a miniature, a bronze plaque just 4 inches square. Our Lady is depicted in classical profile with flowing robes and wavy



hair, but the mood is one of tenderness as she cradles the Christ-Child. She holds His left hand in hers, while He looks down at something that has caught His attention. Perhaps it is a noise at the stable door or the sound of an animal in the Bethlehem night. Perhaps it is St Joseph getting everything ready for the Holy Family to leave. We don't know, but it is another special moment of revelation caught in this little plaque. It may not be by Donatello himself, but we sense the master overseeing the creation of this work. At Christmas we ponder the mystery of infinity caught in a little space, the cradle at Bethlehem, just as the mystery of love, maternal and divine, is caught in the little space of this plaque. Margaret Rizza's carol, 'Jesus is our joy' captures the mood of wonder, joy and hope as we open the stable door to see the love of a mother and her new-born baby expressed here and at the heart of the Christmas gospel:

'Lovely in your littleness, longing for our lowliness, searching for our meekness.....

Held in Mary's tenderness, tiny hands are raised to bless, touching us with God's caress. Joy then in God's graciousness, peace comes with gentleness, filling hearts with gladness.'



### 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. A copyright-free image of a fertilised human egg is available at <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/bfsnpdbb?query=human%20egg%20fertilised&page=1>

#### The Incarnation: fearfully and wonderfully made

*My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:15-16*

You began life as a single cell. For a few hours you were a miniscule but highly complex blob of jelly, until it began to divide: two cells, four, eight, sixteen, a ball, a hollow ball, and then something more recognisably like a living organism. You were still tiny, but developing a nervous system, a head, a body, arms and legs. Until recently I hadn't thought much about Jesus being an embryo. Somehow, I find that thought even more shocking than His birth. How could God, who made the universe, have become something so completely and utterly vulnerable? Maybe in the past, when the development of a child happened in 'secret', it was possible just to let that part of the Christmas story go untold. Today, when we see images of a developing child, or even embryos outside the womb, it is harder to ignore the process of Jesus developing into a baby. The incarnation meant that God's Son went through all the stages of 'zygote', 'morula', 'blastocyst', implantation, and so on. Jesus was there in the beginning, and all life owes its existence to Him. But instead of remaining aloof, He chose to become one of us. The Son of God shared the same kind of DNA as every other organism on the planet. He knows what it feels like to have a body, to feel hungry and thirsty, pain and pleasure, dark and light. In Psalm 139, the writer is meditating on God's intimate knowledge of him, which began when he was an embryo. There is nothing God doesn't know about him, and even darkness cannot obscure him from God's sight. The incarnation means that God's intimacy with us now extends even further. He became one of us, lived alongside us, and shared our very fragile material nature. The transcendent God is also immanent, longing for us to relate to Him as Father. He became as fragile as we are so He could rescue us from the messes we so often find ourselves in. With His help, we can remember what it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made.





## **WE ARE MANKIND**

**OUR PRECIOUS GIFT IS THAT WE ARE ALL FREE  
TO MAKE CHOICES, SO LET US PRAY TO  
CHOOSE**

... that which unites above that which divides,  
... to speak words that bring hope and not  
arouse fear,

... understand with compassion – be generous  
with praise, and nurture, not plunder, all in our  
sphere.

... to open our hearts to all those who lack, and  
take just what we need – not indulge in greed.

... to forgive those that hurt us, never act in re-  
venge and be patient not angry, kind not cruel,

... to shun all that is false and value the Truth,

... to enjoy this beautiful, bountiful Earth, our  
Home, our Refuge of immeasurable worth.

If we give up our arrogance for humility

There may then be the possibility

To heal our True, Constant Mother Earth

Where we have our existence, where we had  
our birth

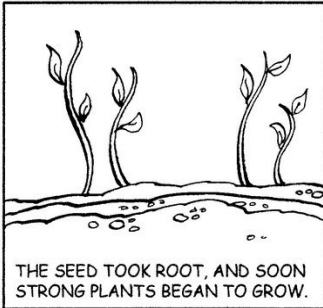
**... LET US PRAY WE CHOOSE WELL**

*Anon*

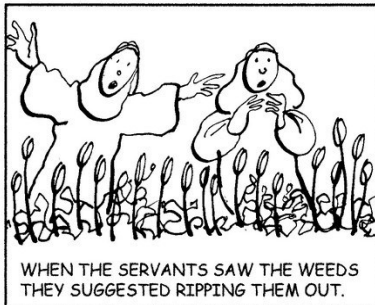
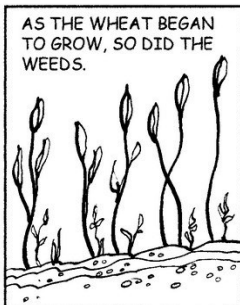
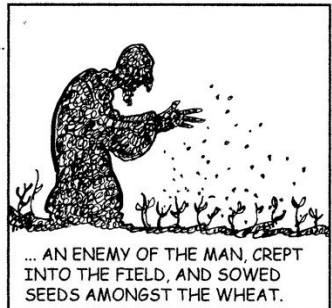
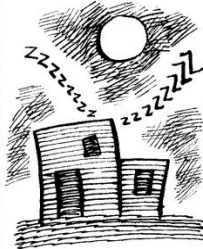


# The tale of the Wheat and the Weeds

JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



BUT ONE NIGHT, WHEN EVERYONE WAS ASLEEP...





## Miscellaneous

### All in the month of DECEMBER

It was:

**250 years** ago, on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 1775 that Jane Austen, novelist (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion*) was born. Over 30 million copies of her books have been sold,

**175 years** ago, on 4<sup>th</sup> Dec 1850 that William Sturgeon, physicist, electrical engineer and inventor died. He created the first electromagnets and invented the first British electric motor.

**150 years** ago, on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 1875 that Evelyn Underhill, writer and pacifist was born. Best known for her books on religion and Christian mysticism.

**80 years** ago, on 27<sup>th</sup> Dec 1945 that The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development were founded. They had been created at the Bretton Woods Conference in July 1944.

**75 years** ago, 25<sup>th</sup> Dec 1950 that the Stone of Scone, the coronation stone of British monarchs, was taken from Westminster Abbey in London by four Scottish students. They transported it to Scotland but broke it. It was later returned to London and used in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Since 1996 it has been kept in Edinburgh Castle, with the agreement that it will be transported to Westminster Abbey when needed for coronations.

**70 years** ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 1955 that African American civil rights activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery Alabama. This violated the city's racial segregation laws, and led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott (5<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 1956) and the birth of the modern American civil rights movement.

**Also 70 years** ago, on 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 1955 that Cardiff was proclaimed the capital city of Wales.

**65 years** ago, on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec 1960 that the first episode of the TV soap *Coronation Street* was broadcast on ITV.

**60 years** ago, on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1965 that Richard Dimbleby, journalist and radio-television broadcaster, died. The BBC's first war correspondent, he was one of the greatest figures in British broadcasting history. Father of the TV presenters David Dimbleby and Jonathan Dimbleby.

**40 years** ago, on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1985 that Philip Larkin, poet, librarian and jazz critic died.

**Also 40 years** ago, on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec 1985 that Robert Graves, poet novelist, critic, translator and classical scholar died. Best known for *I, Claudius*, and *Goodbye to All That*.

**30 years** ago, on 15<sup>th</sup> Dec that the European Council announced that the new European currency would be called the Euro.

**Also 30 years** ago, on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 1995 that the city of Bethlehem passed from Israeli to Palestinian control. On 26<sup>th</sup> Dec Israel also passed dozens of West Bank villages over to the Palestinian authority.

**10 years** ago, on 19<sup>th</sup> Dec 2015 that Jimmy Hill, football player, manager and host of the BBC football TV series *Match of the Day* (1973-88) died.



## Miscellaneous

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Editor: by Tim Lenton

### **Jane Austen – still loved 250 years later**

It was 250 years ago, on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1775, that novelist Jane Austen (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion*) was born. Over 30 million copies of her books have since been sold – 7000 in her lifetime.

She was the second daughter and seventh child of the Revd George Austen, rector of the village of Steventon in Hampshire. Two of her brothers became clergymen, two were Admirals in the Royal Navy and the other inherited substantial estates in Kent and Hampshire from a distant cousin. Neither Jane nor her sister Cassandra, with whom she was very close, ever married.

Jane had a sincere Christian faith which deepened as she got older and is reflected in her novels. She had sympathy with hands-on evangelicalism and a desire to abolish the slave trade, which she refers to particularly in *Mansfield Park*.

She lived at Steventon for 25 years and then moved with her parents and sister to Bath, enjoying holidays in the West Country. Her father died in 1805, and they moved to Southampton and then Chawton in Hampshire, less than 20 miles from Steventon, where they had a cottage on one of her brother Edward's estates – now a Jane Austen museum. This cottage was where she devoted herself to writing, revising her first three novels and composing another three.

But it was here too that she fell ill and died in 1817 – probably from Addison's Disease. She had been published only anonymously in her lifetime, and her style was not immediately appreciated, though its comments on the world of the landed gentry, to which she belonged, quickly became popular – as did her wit, irony and her realistic plots.

She is now more popular than ever, with followers known as Janeites and a flourishing Jane Austen Society with worldwide membership, plus numerous film and TV adaptations of her work.

There are some gaps in her private life, mainly because her sister Cassandra destroyed most of her letters. At the age of 20 she seems to have fallen temporarily for Thomas Lefroy, a neighbour who later became Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, but the relationship never developed. The epitaph by her brother James on her tomb in Winchester Cathedral praises the “extraordinary endowments of her mind”.



## Miscellaneous

### All in the month of JANUARY

It was

**250 years** ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1776 that, according to tradition, George Washington raised the first American flag, the Grand Union Flag, at Prospect Hill in Charleston, Somerville, Massachusetts.

**200 years** ago, on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 1826 that the Menai Suspension Bridge was first opened. It links the island of Anglesey to mainland Wales, and was the world's first major suspension bridge.

**175 years** ago, on 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 1851 that French physicist Leon Foucault set up the first Foucault pendulum in the cellar of his home, to demonstrate the rotation of the earth. On 31<sup>st</sup> March he created his most famous pendulum, hanging a 28-kilogram (62-pound) lead weight from a 67-metre (220 foot) wire from the dome of the Pantheon in Paris.

**125 years** ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1901 that the Commonwealth of Australia was established when the six British colonies of New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia were federated.

**Also 125 years** ago, on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1901 that Queen Victoria died, and was succeeded by her son, Edward VII.

**Also 125 years** ago, on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1901 that Giuseppe Verdi, Italian composer died. Best known for his operas *Aida*, *Requiem*, *Otello* and *Falstaff*

**100 years** ago, on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1926 that Scottish engineer and inventor John Logie Baird gave the first demonstration of his TV system to members of the Royal Institution.

**90 years** ago, on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 1936 that Rudyard Kipling, writer and poet, died. Best known for *The Jungle Book*, *Kim*, *If*, and many more. Winner of the 1907 Nobel Prize for Literature.

**80 years** ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1946 that Elvis Presley received his first guitar on his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday. (Apparently, he would have preferred a bicycle.)

**Also 80 years** ago, on 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1946 that the United Nations General Assembly convened for the first time, in Westminster Central Hall, London.

**75 years** ago, on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 1951 that the UN headquarters in New York City was officially opened.

**Also 75 years** ago, on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 1951 that Ferdinand Porsche, Austrian automotive engineer died. He designed the Volkswagen Beetle, the Tiger tank and founded the Porsche sport car company.

**70 years** ago, on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 1956 that AA Milne, writer, poet, humourist and playwright died. Best known for his stories about Winnie the Pooh.

**60 years** ago, on 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 1966 that the album *Sounds of Silence* by Simon and Garfunkel, was released.

**50 years** ago, on 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 1976 that Dame Agatha Christie, crime novelist, short story writer and playwright died. Best known for creating the character Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, and for the world's longest running play, *The Mousetrap*.



## Miscellaneous

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### Remembering Agatha Christie

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Agatha Christie was born in Torquay in 1890, the daughter of wealthy parents. In 1914 she married Archibald Christie, and Rosalind, their only daughter, was born in 1919.

Agatha produced her first detective story in 1920, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, which introduced Hercule Poirot. Her marriage failed in 1928, but not her desire to write; for in 1930 she produced *Murder at the Vicarage*, and Miss Marple arrived.

That same year, 1930, Agatha married again, this time to an archaeologist Max Mallowan, who was 14 years her junior. They had met when Agatha visited an archaeological dig at Ur, a major ancient Sumerian city-state located in modern-day southern Iraq.

After the war, Max became Professor of Western Asiatic Archaeology at London University and as Director of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq he excavated at Nineveh and Nimrud 1947–61.

Agatha went with him, and her travels in the Middle East inspired *Murder in Mesopotamia*, *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Death on the Nile*. Back home, in 1934 the couple had found a peaceful and elegant home just outside of Wallingford, where they lived for many years.

In all, Agatha wrote more than 100 novels, plays, short stories. The undisputed 'Queen of Crime', she is the best-selling novelist of all time. Some two billion copies of her books, translated into at least 100 languages, have been sold. Her play *The Mousetrap*, has been in continuous performance in London since 1952, breaking all records.

*"Instinct is a marvellous thing, it can neither be explained nor ignored."*

*Agatha Christie; The Mysterious Affair at Styles*



### **Burns Night – 25<sup>th</sup> January**

Each year, Burns Night takes place on 25<sup>th</sup> January to celebrate the life and legacy of Scotland's National Bard, Robert Burns. (1759 to 1796)

Burns Night is usually a combination of haggis, neeps, tatties, and warming 'drams', accompanied by recitals of some of Robert Burns' famous work. Robert Burns was born in 1759 and died only 37 years later, in 1796. But his life and writing certainly left a rich inheritance behind. Here are some interesting facts:

After Queen Victoria and Christopher Columbus, Robert Burns has more statues dedicated to him around the world than any other non-religious figure.

American music legend Bob Dylan said that his greatest-ever source of inspiration was Burns' A Red, Red Rose

J.D. Salinger's 1951 novel 'The Catcher in the Rye' based its title on the Robert Burns poem, 'Comin' Thro' the Rye'.

Auld Lang Syne is a song of friendship in China. Known as You Yi Di Jiu Tian Chang – or Friendship Forever and Ever – the song is played at graduations and other formal gatherings.

'Is There For Honest Poverty' (also known as 'A Man's a Man for a That') was chosen to open the new Scottish Parliament in 1999 due to its themes of equality and universal brotherhood.

'Auld Lang Syne' is recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records as one of the top three most popular songs in the entire English language.

American fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger claims to be a direct descendant of Robert Burns.

In 2009, Robert Burns became the first-ever person to appear on a commemorative bottle of Coca-Cola.

A book of Burns' poetry was carried into space by astronaut Nick Patrick during a two-week space mission in 2010. The book completed a 5.7-million-mile trip, managing 217 orbits of the Earth.

Burns fathered at least 12 children during his short lifetime. His youngest son, Maxwell, was born on the day of Burns' funeral.



### 10 Fun Facts about Christmas trees

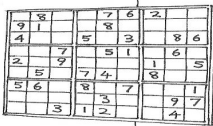
1. Even before the time of Christ, evergreen trees were seen in winter as a symbol of fertility.
2. It was the 16<sup>th</sup> century monk, Martin Luther, who is credited with the idea of having lights on Christmas trees. He added candles to his tree, to look like stars in a forest.
3. Windsor Castle got its first Christmas tree in 1800, brought by Charlotte, wife of George III.
4. It was in 1835 that the term 'Christmas tree' was first used in English.
5. It was in the 1840s, when Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, began bringing trees inside, that led to their popularity throughout the UK.
6. It was Woolworths who first sold manufactured Christmas tree ornaments – back in 1880.
7. The tree in London's Trafalgar Square has been a gift from the city of Oslo, Norway since 1947.
8. The world's tallest Xmas tree, at 221ft high, was erected in a Washington shopping mall in 1950.
9. In a survey of the nation's favourite smells, real Christmas trees came eighth, just behind the sea, but ahead of perfume.
10. About five million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year.







"The vicar's hoping providing a really strong mobile signal will attract more young folk to the church."



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves

*The time to be happy is now,  
The place to be happy is  
here,  
The way to be happy is to  
make others so,  
Wisdom is the science of  
happiness.*

*Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899),  
American lawyer, public speaker*

### Shepherds to Shepherd

(Lk2:8-20, Jn10:11)

You will find the baby,  
Said the angel,  
You will find the baby  
In Bethlehem,  
The baby of glory and peace,  
The baby of good news and joy.

So the shepherds began  
Their journey of trust  
In the word of the Lord.

Hurrying,  
Finding,  
Telling,  
Glorifying,  
Praising,

It was just as the angel had said.  
And they went back to watch over their  
flocks,  
Having met one of their own.

### Epiphany Questions

(Mt 2:1-12)

Those men from eastern lands –  
Were they kings?  
Were there only men?  
Were there only three?  
Where *did* they find the child?

So much we don't know.  
But we do know they left their homes and  
travelled far,  
searching for truth and meaning.  
We do know they brought three gifts, fit  
for a King.

We do know that the Star led them to  
Jesus –  
that, filled with joy, they worshipped  
Him,  
and left Herod to his schemes at the end  
of their visit.

Oh yes, we know that they tuned in to  
God  
and rejoiced in the revelation of His Son-  
King.

Some things we do know, then.  
Certainly, we know they were Wise.

*By Daphne Kitching*





## **Keep it a surprise**

Three-year-old Lily was helping her mother wrap a present for her father. While wrapping, her mother told Lily about keeping the present a secret so it would be a surprise. After the present was wrapped, Lily proudly put it under the tree. When her father asked her if he could shake it and guess what's inside, she said very seriously, "No, that's not possible. T-shirts don't rattle."

## **Big part**

A little boy rushed home from school: "I got a part in the Christmas play!" His mother asked which part it was. "I'm going to be one of the three wise guys!"

## **Let's play**

Four-year-old to her two-year-old sister: "Let's play Christmas. I'll be Father Christmas, and you can be a present and I'll give you away."

## **Stronger**

Statistics show we're getting stronger. 50 years ago, you needed an estate car to hold £50 worth of Christmas presents. 20 years ago, it took two people to carry £20 worth of groceries. Now a five-year-old can do it.

## **New Year's Eve is coming soon...**

The bagpipes are the missing link between music and noise. - E K Kruger

The inventor of the bagpipes was inspired when he saw a man carrying an indignant asthmatic pig under his arm. Unfortunately, the man-made sound never equalled the purity of the sound achieved by the pig. - Alfred Hitchcock.

Bring not a bagpipe to a man in trouble. - Jonathan Swift.

## **Weird Christmas**

Christmas is weird – at what other time of the year do you sit in front of a dead tree and eat sweets out of your socks?

## **Kids' letters to pastors**

Please say in your sermon that Peter Peterson has been a good boy all week. I am Peter Peterson. - Pete, age 9, Phoenix

I'm sorry I can't leave more money in the plate, but my father didn't give me a raise in my allowance. Could you have a sermon about a raise in my allowance? - Patty, age 10, New Haven

I think a lot more people would come to your church if you moved it to Disneyland. - Loreen, age 9, Tacoma

Please pray for all the airline pilots. I am flying to California tomorrow. - Laurie, age 10, New York City



## The Good Samaritan

ONCE, A LAWYER TRIED TO TRICK JESUS WITH A CLEVER QUESTION.

...WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

JESUS REPLIED BY TELLING THE LAWYER A STORY.

HE WAS ATTACKED BY ROBBERS!!

A MAN WENT FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICO. ON THE WAY...

HELP!

THEY TOOK EVERYTHING HE HAD AND LEFT HIM FOR DEAD!

LATER A PRIEST PASSED BY, BUT DID NOTHING TO HELP - NOR DID THE RELIGIOUS MAN FROM A TEMPLE!

BUT A MAN FROM A FOREIGN COUNTRY STOPPED TO HELP THE INJURED MAN. HE DRESSED THE MAN'S WOUNDS, AND EVEN PAID FOR HIM TO STAY AT AN INN.

JESUS THEN ASKED "WHO WAS THE NEIGHBOUR?"

- ☐ PRIEST
- ☐ TEMPLE MAN
- ☐ FOREIGN MAN

WHICH DO YOU THINK WAS THE ONE THE LAWYER CHOSE?