

OCTOBER 2026

From the Editors

Welcome to this October edition

We seem to be experiencing a bit of late Summer weather which is nice. At least it's not burning hot.

The Autumn equinox has been and gone and the longer nights are with us now. I think these longer nights can give us time to engage in some of the hobbies which we may have not bothered with during the light nights. Maybe it's a good time to get out one of those books we've been promising ourselves to read, or maybe join an evening class. Whatever we do it can be a more reflective and quieter time.

Over the past month or so things have been quite busy at St. Mary's and more details of our activities can be found on the following pages.

Life offers us many distractions which can take us away from our birthright of peace, and in these times of AI and social media these distractions can come at us from all sides. Jesus offers advice for us asking us to release tomorrow, loosen your grip on possessions and achievement, seek quiet, and return your attention to God.

"And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. ." Mark 6:31

"Just before the death of
flowers,
And before they are buried in
snow,
There comes a festival season
When nature is all aglow."
- Author Unknown



Vacancy or Interregnum—What's Happening?

We have completed and approved our Parish Profile and our advertisement for a new Vicar has been published to the wider Church of England. We must now await any interest. The first possible date we can interview any one is 10th November.

In the meantime we continue being supported by the Area Dean and visiting clergy. The worship pattern for October is:

OCTOBER:

4th Holy Communion – Revd Pat Belshaw
Morning Prayer – led by the Churchwardens

11th Holy Communion – Revd Canon Anne Beverley -
HARVEST Holy Communion – Revd Canon Anne Beverley
This year we are again supporting Penwortham Foodbank. Any non-perishable items of food are welcome. Dave the baker on Liverpool Rd is again donating a bread wheatsheaf. We are very grateful to him.

18th Holy Communion – Revd Pat Belshaw
Morning Prayer – led by the Churchwardens

25th Morning Prayer- led by the Churchwarden
Holy Communion – Revd Michael Woods

Vicarage on Cop Lane:

A 'For Sale' sign has been put up. The Diocese, who owns the Vicarage, had asked the PCC if they had any objection to the Vicarage being put up for sale. **We were informed that no expense to the parish would be incurred**, and therefore did not object. The Diocese said they would find a suitable vicarage in the Parish for our new incumbent **again at no expense to the parish**. We will keep you informed of developments.

177, Cop Lane:

This detached property was left by a parishioner in her will to the Parish and we have been renting it out for a number of years. The occupier has moved into sheltered accommodation so the PCC decided to put the property up for sale. I am glad to inform you that subject to contract we have sold this property but nothing has yet been signed. A 'Sold Sign - subject to contract' is now on display outside the property. Again, I will keep you informed of developments.

Heritage Open Days

The church was open over two weekends in September and around 50 visitors came to see our beautiful church and grounds. The Churchwardens thank all those who helped in any way to make this a success. People are fascinated by our history and we are glad to share it. The church produced an informative booklet detailing a brief history of the church from its early origins (14th century) up to now, including information about the re-ordering. All the visitors were impressed by how welcoming and bright the church looks. Thank you to those who keep the church clean for us all.

Education Sunday

This service was a great success, it was inclusive and joyful. The Rev Nicola Butterworth presented it so well. The choirs from both our church schools sang beautifully. We thank Nicola for her considerable time and effort in supporting this important date in the church year.

Cop Lane Service of the Word.

Cop Lane school again holds a service of the word for each year group. During September Y6 and Y5 came along.

Howick School

It is very difficult for Howick School to visit church in the same way because of logistical and transport issues. Instead our Churchwardens and Foundation governors visit the school and participate in their worship.

Y3 Bibles

All pupils in Y3 in both schools receive Bibles provided by the PCC. This year Cop Lane School will receive theirs on Wednesday 14th October at school. Howick School will receive theirs on 1st December during their Advent Carol Service at church.

Both schools appreciate visiting church and having visits from churchwardens and governors. They strengthen the ties between church and schools.

Visiting Clergy

We give special thanks to those clergy both currently practising and those who have retired for allowing us to have a least one communion service each Sunday. We also thank Revd Hannah Boyd our Area Dean for her help and support during our interregnum. We note she has now been installed as Vicar of St. Paul's Farington and St. James' Lostock Hall. We wish her well.

St Mary's News

Heritage England

The church was visited by a representative from Heritage England at the end of September. She provided us with valuable advice concerning our plans for the new extension. She was very helpful and supportive. Her views will be presented to the PCC at the next meeting.



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

Mud glorious mud! Bishop and clergy set to tackle assault course

The Bishop of Blackburn, Rt Rev Philip North, will lead more than 50 clergy (complete with dog collars) into a quagmire this weekend as they tackle a muddy assault course to raise money for this year's Bishop's Harvest Appeal.

The event, at Whitehough Outdoor Centre in Barley in the Pendle area of Lancashire, will see clergy taking on a series of obstacles to support the Jehovah

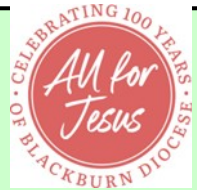


Bishop Philip does a trial run on the assault course in Barley before the main event this weekend

Rapha Healthcare Centre in the Diocese of Liwolo, South Sudan.

Led by Bishop Joseph Aba, Liwolo is a link Diocese of the Diocese of Blackburn. While families of the clergy taking part on Saturday will attend to support, please note, due to restricted parking at the venue, the event is not open for general attendance.

The money raised will help to provide essential healthcare in a region facing a growing medical crisis, following the planned withdrawal of support from Médecins Sans Frontières in a region that has been affected by a series of crises in recent times. Bishop Philip said: "We try to do something different and fun every year to encourage as many contributions as possible to the Harvest Appeal. This time the idea is to invite clergy from across Lancashire to spend a Saturday morning wearing their dog collars while scrambling over obstacles, wading through mud and making complete spectacles of themselves! Thankfully, more than 50 have already said yes!



Churches invited to pray for all affected by drought, heatwaves and wildfires

British churches have been using prayers written for times of extreme weather.

As five successive heatwaves hit the UK this summer, bringing drought, extreme heat and wildfires, local churches have been helping the people affected, both through practical support - and prayers.

The prayers they used are found in *A Time for Creation*, a newly expanded C of E service book (Church House Publishing).

There is a section headlined 'Prayers in times of extreme weather' and 'A prayer for the farming community in a time of crisis', as well as intercessions for those affected by extreme weather through drought, lack of clean water, storms, flood, wildfires and other events.

The Bishop of Lichfield, Dr Michael Ipgrave, Chair of the Church of England's Liturgical Commission, has encouraged churches to draw from the prayers.

He said that this continues "a longstanding tradition going back to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer", which even includes a Prayer for Rain.

"For centuries, the people of England have turned to prayer in times of extreme weather of all sorts," he said. "The prayer book asks that we may receive 'in our necessity such moderate rain and showers' as we need. Our prayers invite us to ask, to wait and to know the glory and awesomeness of God when they are answered."

Meanwhile, the new Festival of Creation was launched last month (September) by the C of E. It sets out the Christian understanding of the environmental crises facing the world, rooting care for creation in the biblical story of creation, redemption and renewal.

May God grant you courage - message of solidarity with the people of Ukraine

The Bishop of Worcester, Hugh Nelson, who is the C of E's Bishop to the Armed Forces, recently went to Kyiv to join Ukrainian church leaders, other religious leaders and government officials at the National Prayer Breakfast in Kyiv. Bishop Hugh also met with the leader of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, His Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphany.

I really don't think I could consent to go to Heaven if I thought there were to be no animals there. - George Bernard Shaw

Bishop Hugh brought a message from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally. She promised that the Anglican Church would continue to “stand in prayerful solidarity” with Ukraine, and she acknowledged the “immense sacrifices” which the Ukrainians are making “in defence of your country, its people and the values of freedom and human dignity”.

Archbishop Sarah also commended Ukraine’s constitutional commitments to freedom of religion and conscience. She rejected the language of “holy war” used to justify the attempts to occupy and subjugate Ukraine by the current regime in Moscow.

“We pray for those who have lost their lives, for those who mourn, for the wounded, the displaced, and all who live under the daily shadow of violence and fear. May the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in the days ahead.”

Afghan Christians at risk of ‘eradication’

Christianity in Afghanistan “now hangs by a gossamer thread”, warns a recent report on persecution in that country.

The report, *Crimes Against Humanity and Potential Genocide: the threat posed by the Taliban regime of total eradication of the Christian community in Afghanistan*, was recently published by the Lindisfarne Centre for the Study of Christian Persecution. It is a Christian research centre that focuses on Christian minorities in the Islamic world. The report warns that the Taliban’s legal framework provides “specific evidence of the intent to commit genocide”.

For Christians in Afghanistan simply have no right to exist as a religious community, according to the Afghan government. Anyone found to be a Christian is seen as merely as an apostate Muslim. The law calls for all such men to be executed, and for women to be imprisoned, and given ten lashes every three days for the rest of her life.

Thus, these laws “provide specific evidence of intent to eradicate the Afghan Christian community”, the report states.

The report is critical of Western governments for failing to address the plight of Christians during the 20-year period of western military and political involvement (2001-21), including the failure to change the sentence of execution for apostasy in Afghan law.

Its recommendations include a plea that Western governments “should, in principle, accept that any genuine Afghan Christian meets the criteria for refugee status.”

Worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop. - Anon

Church singers deserve fair pay

Are you a professional singer, hired by various churches for special services? Then, you have a right to expect transparent pay and improved working conditions. So says Equity, the trade union for the performing arts.

Now its Liturgical Singers Network has launched a code of practice, designed to “celebrate and build on best practice where it already exists, while also sending a clear signal to engagers about what dignity at work should look like for singers in this area of the profession.”

Professional singers often struggle with unpaid cancelled work, late payments, being left in cold waiting rooms, being bullied, and not even given travel expenses.

Tim Parsons, director of music at Wells Cathedral, said: “Professional singers play a hugely significant role in the musical heritage of our cathedrals, churches, and chapels. I warmly welcome Equity’s work to promote fair and sustainable employment of singers in liturgical choirs.”

In the meantime, it seems that most singing is still voluntary. When The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) conducted a survey of church musicians’ fees in November 2024, it found that 92 per cent of choirs, 50 per cent of piano/ keyboard players, 31 per cent of music directors, and 28 per cent of organists were voluntary.

Aid workers in need of more protection

One thousand aid workers have been killed in the past three years, caught up in various global conflicts.

So reports the Christian relief charity, World Vision. It is calling for stronger protection of humanitarian workers, independent investigations, accountability, and consequences for attacks on humanitarian workers, healthcare facilities, and other civilian infrastructure.

World Vision also wants the humanitarian consequences of drones and other emerging military technologies to be addressed.

World Vision says: “When aid workers are attacked or blocked from reaching people in need, children are left waiting for food, medicine, and protection that may never come. Too often those risking their lives to help are local people and members of the very communities caught in the conflict.”

Take time daily to reflect on how much you have... someone somewhere is dreaming to have what you have.” — Germany Kent

Editor: The Revd Paul Hardingham considers our earth.

Season of Creation

In the church year the *Season of Creation* (September 1st - October 4th) is an opportunity for us to reflect on our responsibility to care for the planet. As the season draws to an end for this year, have you considered:

The world is not ours:

'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it' (Psalm 24:1). The world is not ours, but God's! This means we have a responsibility of caring for God's world: *'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.'* (Genesis 2:15). Clearly, we have not done the best job! The effects of global warming have been all too obvious this summer. And 2025 ranked as the third warmest year on record globally, 1.3°C to 1.44°C above pre-industrial levels. This follows the historic peak in 2024, driven by ongoing fossil fuel emissions and high ocean surface temperatures.

Our hope is found in Jesus:

Any hope for the future lies in Jesus Himself. He is the one who sustains creation and will bring everything to completion: *'all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.'* (Colossians 1:16,17). God's plan is *'to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.'* (Ephesians 1:10). We can look forward to the climax of history when God through Christ will restore our broken world and make everything new.

In the present, we are empowered by Christ to take our proper place as stewards of the earth. Simple everyday actions can help to sustain our planet, including recycling of waste, energy saving, choosing reusable options, careful diet and a commitment to simple living can help the planet.

However difficult the climate crisis gets, as Christians, we can engage it with faith and not fatalism!

Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham looks back on a national tragedy...

Aberfan - 60 years on

On 21st October 1966 the Aberfan disaster took place in South Wales. A colliery slag heap collapsed, releasing a torrent of slurry onto the village. It engulfed a number of houses and Pantglas Junior School, killing 116 children and 28 adults. It was a disaster that shocked the nation. As we reflect on it today, we are left asking the question, *'where was God when this happened?'*

At the time there was a mixture of strong emotions: grief and sadness over the loss of those who had died, and anger against the Coal Board in allowing the disaster. However, people gave their energy to support each another. A local Baptist Minister, Revd Kenneth Hayes, who lost his eldest son at the school, responded in this way: *'For 36 hours he was working non-stop either at the school, or going around comforting bereaved and stricken families and kept open house for many who came seeking news and comfort.'*

How should we respond to such an incident? *'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?'* (Romans 8:35). Paul reminds us that even in our darkest times of loss, God is with us to bring comfort. *'Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.'* (34). Paul also tells us that Jesus understands our suffering and is praying for us. *'If God is for us, who can be against us?'* (31). We can let go of bitterness and blame, because God is a God of justice.

King Charles III (then Prince of Wales) on the 50th anniversary summed up the community's response: *'darkest sorrow, but also the most shining selflessness.'*

Editor: By the Revd Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the C of E.

Could sleep be spiritual?

"Sleep is spiritual," is the claim made in a newly-published guide to discipleship, written by London-based Church of England vicar, Sarah Guinness. Although over-looked by many, 'The Alternative Guide to Discipleship' places sleep firmly at the core of growing in Christian spirituality.

Sarah Guinness writes, "Sleep is not wasted time. It is an opportunity for God to seal our dreams, and to deposit things and ideas in our hearts and minds.

"I'd like to imagine that at night God, who knit our brains and bodies together, stands by our beds, ready to sort through the day that we've had, patching the holes, processing that conversation, mending the tears in our armour so that we wake up feeling repaired, refreshed and ready for another day."

Don't be pushed around by the fears in your mind. Be led by the dreams in your heart." — Roy T. Bennett

Guinness, the Vicar of Brentford, West London, believes that sleep can be creative, an opportunity for God to speak to us, a place to be vulnerable and a practice run for our Christian lives.

She cites how Adam fell into a deep sleep, and wakes to find Eve, how God speaks to a sleeping Abram about His promises and seals a covenant with him, and how Jesus sleeps and then wakes with clarity to curse a fig tree and clear the temple.

In Mark 1, Jesus goes to bed, sleeps and awakes early to pray, and later in the day tells the disciples they need to move on to other towns. "It's as though," says Guinness, Jesus "goes to sleep, has a divine download and feels focused on His priorities."

It's in our dreams that God speaks to us most powerfully, she explains. "God, being God, can do far more in our sleeping than we can do in our waking. He uses dreams to get our attention.

"People talk about being woken in the night with a strong urge to pray for a person or a situation. Why? Because sleep isn't dead space when our bodies reboot. Sleep is spiritual."

In 'The Alternative Book of Discipleship,' Sarah Guinness goes beyond the importance of sleep to map out a route to spiritual growth based on managing boundaries, embracing emotions, learning to play, surrendering outcomes, and other insights. It is founded on the author's experiences as a parish priest and, before that, 12 years as an occupational therapist.

Editor: The Revd Dr Jo White continues her series on aspects of Christianity.

Reflected Faith Series – What's it worth?

Last time we reflected on the time of 'Receiving and sharing the Peace' with-in our service. This month, we consider what comes next.

I say 'next' but actually, during that time of sharing the Peace most of us multi-task! We move around saying hello and catching up on the latest news from folk we only see on a Sunday in church; we shake hands and say the words of 'The Peace'; and we also scrabble around looking for cash to put on the plate or in the bag.

Our cash offering to the church is then processed up to the altar to be received by the priest who blesses it and prays over it. (Many years ago, when we were first able to give by standing order to the local church, I recall some people saying they would prefer to continue to give using cash, as the money in the bank was 'not blessed'!)

In more recent years I have attended, and indeed been the incumbent for, churches where no plate or bag is passed around at this point but rather that folk are both encouraged to give by standing order or if by cash then on a plate or in a box as they enter the building.

Some churches today do not bring forward any financial collection, even if there is a plate on entering /leaving. So what has changed?

It's a reflection of our understanding of the real meaning behind the 'collection'. A reversion to the original intention by the church fathers.

It was never intended to be just a small percentage of our possessions or the leftover cash we have lying around. Instead, it was intended to be an offering of our whole lives. The money was just a visible token.

This month Have a think about what you are 'offering' when this time comes in your next church service. Are you able to offer yourself and put yourself to God's use?

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

You've got the wrong person!

At church recently, we stood to sing Charles Wesley's hymn 'Come Holy Ghost our hearts inspire'. Except the organist was playing the tune which normally accompanies the Christmas carol 'While shepherds watched their flocks by night'. (No, not 'On Ilkley Moor bar t'aht'- the other one).

I had never sung Wesley's hymn to this tune before, and it took a bit of believing that it was possible, a bit of getting used to. Some hymn tunes are what I call 'portmanteau tunes'- we can sing a number of hymns to the same tune, and we are usually quite happy about it. But we mess with carols at our peril! Most people know them, and they have become identified with very particular hymn tunes. Give us what we expect, please, organist!

We can all be a bit fixed like this. The Bible is full of examples of 'Who me? You've made a mistake there, God!'. Or it comes down to 'Here I am, Lord, send him!' Perhaps the most well-known example is Jonah, who was so convinced that God had made a mistake in calling him to go and tell the citizens of Nineveh to turn from their wicked ways, that he set off in entirely the opposite direction to Nineveh, and took a ship going west, until he was ambushed by God and ended up in the belly of the great fish. But once Jonah realised God was serious, and that God would be with him, he set off as God had asked him to.

Moses is another example. 'Me, tell Pharoah to let my people go? Me? You cannot be serious, Lord!' But again, once Moses was convinced that this was the way God wanted him to go, he submitted to God's plan, and became the great leader of his people, bringing them out of slavery in Egypt to the boundary of the Promised Land.

God's plans for us are always bigger than our horizons can presently accommodate. If you have a niggling feeling God is calling you to a particular task, or to abandon a particular something, it may take time to come round to God's point of view, but it will ultimately turn out to be a better way. When God calls, He does not leave us at that point; He will always resource us for the task, often in surprising ways.

'Who, me, Lord?' Yes, YOU!

God in the Arts

Editor: Have you ever thought how an actual church building might provide a series of visual aids to spiritual meditation? The Revd Michael Burgess continues his procession through a church building, this month pausing to consider the significance of the church choir stalls.



He gave us eyes to see them' – the choir stall

'Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing *My God and King*.' George Herbert's poem from 'The Temple' tells us that 'the church with psalms must shout. No door can keep them out.' It is a reminder of the rich tradition of music in our worship that reaches back to the people of the Old Testament praising the Lord. 2 Chronicles 5 paints a vivid picture of musicians and singers gathered to welcome the Ark of the Lord to Solomon's Temple.

Because music is such an important part of worship, churches have set aside places for the singers to offer praise and petition. Some of the most wonderful choir stalls in the land can be found in Lancaster Priory, the parish church of St Mary. They are 14 in total, the third oldest choir stalls in England dating back to the 14th century. John Ruskin called them the finest in the country. The canopies are richly decorated with foliage and carved heads, and they enclose tapestries from the 1970s that depict saints and shields. Beneath are the seats: misericords with carvings that have survived the vandalism of the Civil War.

Choir stalls Lancaster Priory . Photo courtesy of Michael D Beckwith CCO

We can imagine the medieval monks gathered in these stalls to sing the offices. Today the stalls are a resplendent, harmonious blend of the old and the new – a work of beauty for the eye, just as the music offered there is a work of beauty for the ear. The word ‘choir’ means a dance to God, and the Priory has a fine choir whose chants and hymns dance from side to side of the chancel and resound in the air. But the music sung there is not just for our enjoyment: its focus is God. Herbert tells us that the songs we create here in our churches on earth have no other destination but the courts of heaven.

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.

Do the Bible and Science contradict each other?

For the Christian, the Bible is God’s Word to us; it tells us about His character and creative purposes, how He has related to people in the past, and His promises for the future. Science is a specific way of studying the world, exploring the physical properties of things – a wonderful way to explore God’s creation. So, the question to ask if the Bible and Science seem to be contradicting each other is, have we made a mistake in interpreting one or the other?

Science is very good at answering certain types of questions: ‘What size is it?’, ‘How fast does it travel?’, ‘What is it made of?’, and so on. Questions like ‘What’s it for?’, ‘What should I do with it?’, and ‘What’s it worth?’ can’t be answered using scientific methods. Some of the misunderstanding in discussions of science and religion come from not recognising the limits of science.

It’s also important to recognise what the Bible is, and what sorts of questions it can answer. The Bible was written well before people began to investigate the world in ways we would recognise as scientific. Of course, people in the Ancient Near East were studying the world around them, observing the movements of the stars, the processes of life and death that happened all around them, the seasons, the behaviour of physical objects, and so on. But they did not study the mechanisms underlying these things systematically using the tools of science, and they did not see or describe the world in scientific terms – not because they weren’t intelligent, but because science as we know it wasn’t happening at that time.

Instead, the biblical writers used words that were commonly used in their own cultures to record events, share truth and wisdom, and tell stories that

Instead, the biblical writers used words that were commonly used in their own cultures to record events, share truth and wisdom, and tell stories that convey deep truth about God's character. If we want to understand God's intention in inspiring these words, we need to do some careful work to connect with those ancient writers and find out what they meant, before we can discover what those words mean to us today.

These principles can help us have far more fruitful conversations about science and Christian faith. If we allow any apparent conflict between Science and the Bible to fuel our search for understanding, not only will we learn as individuals, but we will be able to draw others into a conversation that is relevant to wider society today.

Editor: David Pickup, a solicitor, considers all those possible doors we can take...

Enter Through the Narrow Door

²² Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as He made His way to Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked Him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

He said to them, ²⁴ "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. (Luke 13)

I was waiting for Evensong to start and had got most things ready. I usually sit outside while I wait if it is nice. It was a very hot day and I wondered where everyone was. My seat was beside the south door and people normally trundle in past me, some early some just in time.

This Sunday I did not see anyone and I was getting worried. What I had forgotten was I had opened the west door and the north door to get a breeze blowing in. The congregation had all gone in those entrances.

We normally use the south door because that has a porch, notices and the smartest entrance. The west door is normally for brides and the north door rarely used at all. It has lots of steps going up and down.

Houses are similar. In many places the front door was hardly ever used except very special occasions and friends and family would go around the back because they knew mum would be in the kitchen, near the rear door.

What did our Lord mean "enter by the narrow door"? Perhaps walled cities had big gates and if you went in you would be seen by everyone, but authorities would check what your business was. It was the obvious way in but there would also be small secret doors which only locals knew. Perhaps they were short cuts or direct routes to the best places.

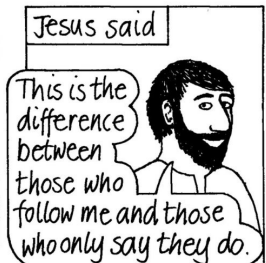
The easiest and obvious are not always the most direct, or best.

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Matthew 24:44-51, Luke 12:40-46

Jesus warned his disciples to be always ready for his return at the end of time by telling the story of two servants



Miscellaneous

All in the month of OCTOBER

It was:

800 years ago, on 3rd October 1226 that St Francis of Assisi, Italian friar, deacon and mystic, died. One of the most venerated religious figures in Christianity, and founder of the Franciscan Order.

300 years ago, on 28th October 1726 that Jonathan Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels* was published.

175 years ago, on 18th October 1851 that Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* was published.

125 years ago, on 19th October 1901 that Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1* and *March No. 2* were performed for the first time, in Liverpool.

100 years ago, on 14th October 1926 that the children's book *Winnie-the-Pooh*, by A A Milne, was published.

90 years ago, from 5th to 31st October that The Jarrow March took place. 200 men set off from Jarrow in north-east England to Westminster, to draw attention to the severe unemployment and poverty in their area following the closure of a shipyard.

75 years ago, on 18th October 1951 that Snowdonia National Park was established in Wales. It was Britain's third National Park.

Also 75 years ago, on 30th October 1951 that Dartmoor National Park was established in the UK.

Also 75 years ago, on 31st October 1951 that zebra crossings were introduced in Britain. The first one was in Slough, Berkshire.

70 years ago, on 17th October 1956 that Britain's first nuclear power station, Calder Hall in Cumbria, was officially opened. It closed in March 2003, nearly 47 years later.

60 years ago, on 21st October 1966 that the Aberfan disaster took place in South Wales. A colliery spoil tip (slag heap) collapsed and fell onto the village. Worst hit was Pantglas Junior School. In all, 116 children and 28 adults were killed.

50 years ago, on 4th October 1976 that the InterCity 125 High Speed Train service began operating in the UK.

Also 50 years ago, on 25th October 1976 that the National Theatre in London officially opened.

40 years ago, on 9th October 1986 that Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *The Phantom of the Opera* premiered in London.

Also 40 years ago, on 29th October 1986 that the M25 orbital motorway around Greater London was opened.

Miscellaneous

Editor: Tim Lenton considers a much-loved bear...

100 years of Winnie-the-Pooh

One hundred years ago, on 14th October 1926, the children's book *Winnie-the-Pooh*, by A A Milne, was published. It was set in the Hundred Acre Wood, an innocent world described as "largely Edenic" but based on Ashdown Forest in East Sussex, which the Milne family often explored from their home in nearby Hartfield. It came about through the encouragement of E H Shepard, Milne's colleague on the humorous magazine *Punch*, who provided the beguiling illustrations.

Alan Alexander Milne was firstly a playwright and occasional mystery story writer who, again with Shepard, wrote the book of children's verse *When We Were Very Young*, which contained the seeds of *Winnie-the-Pooh* and its sequel, *The House on Pooh Corner*, all of which proved extremely popular.

It was apparently during a family visit to London Zoo, where Christopher Robin encountered a tame bear called Winnipeg, that the book was conceived. Winnie's literary friends, such as Piglet and Eeyore, were originally toys of the real Christopher Robin.

Sadly, the book eventually had an adverse effect on the Milne family. The author said that he felt "amazement and disgust" at the fame his son had had thrust upon him: "I do not want C R Milne to ever wish that his name was Charles Robert." Nevertheless, the son did become estranged from his parents, especially following his marriage to his mother's niece.

The effect of the book on others has been happier. A plaque at Ashdown Forest declares that Milne and Shepard "captured the magic of Ashdown Forest and gave it to the world".

Despite creating a kind of Eden, Milne, who was a pacifist, said little about religion. But he did say on joining the Home Guard that "in fighting Hitler we are truly fighting the Devil, the Anti-Christ ... Hitler was a crusader against God." The four *Winnie-the-Pooh* books went on to sell more than 50 million copies worldwide. The first book became the first-ever foreign-language book on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Editor: Tim Lenton looks back on a time of great hardship in the North of England...

Looking back on The Jarrow March

Ninety years ago, from 5th to 31st October, the Jarrow March took place.

Some 200 men walked from Jarrow in north-east England to Westminster to draw attention to the severe unemployment and poverty in their area.

Miscellaneous

Because of the huge number of unemployed in the town, on the banks of the Tyne, the marchers felt compelled to do something dramatic to stir the government out of its apparent complacency. Their loss of Palmer's shipyard two years previously had meant that a staggering 70 per cent of the town were jobless.

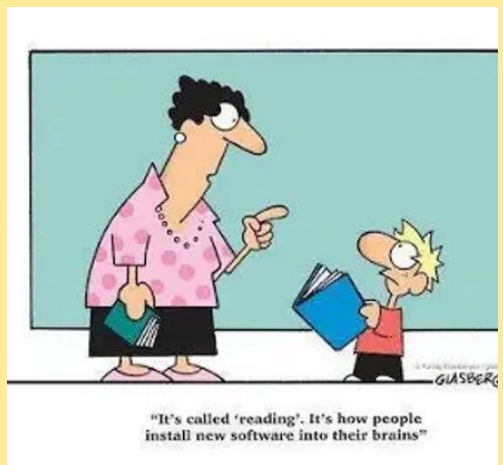
They called their walk of nearly 300 miles a Crusade, and they received widespread support from local political parties of all kinds on their way to London, and from the population generally.

Before they left, the mayor, Alderman J W Thompson, the town clerk, members of the town council, and their extremely supportive MP, Ellen Wilkinson, attended a service at Christ Church, in which all the clergymen and ministers of the town took part. The Bishop of Jarrow, Dr Geoffrey Gordon, gave a blessing.

But there was little official support from the Church at top level, who seemed to regard the Crusade as political and disruptive. Dr Gordon was in fact rebuked for this reason by his superior, the Bishop of Durham, the Rt Revd Hensley Henson.

However, the men walked for 25 days in a peaceful line, causing no trouble at all. Miss Wilkinson joined them for much of the journey. On reaching London, the 12,000-signature petition calling for the government to build more industries was presented to Parliament, but it was not debated.

Although the men from Jarrow, who returned home by train, undoubtedly regarded their Crusade as a failure, it did in fact effect change, leading up to the creation of the Welfare State after the war.



Editor: Tim Lenton considers an iconic road ...you could easily make this local by inviting any of your readers to share a 'horror story' of how long they have spent in a traffic jam on a motorway...

The beginning of the M25

Forty years ago, on 29th October 1986, the M25 motorway around Greater London was opened.

An orbital motorway for London had been proposed in 1944, but by 1966 this idea had evolved into two ringways, to the north and south. By the time the first sections opened in 1975, however, it had been rethought again, and so joining them together to make a full orbital motorway was again the plan. Just over ten years later, in 1986, the final section was opened by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and the new M25 was the longest ring road in Europe. The Dartford Crossing is technically not a motorway, but few would know the difference.

Environmental considerations became a factor, and almost 40 public inquiries took place, the most controversial area being in Kent over the North Downs. However, none of the public inquiries came out in favour of objectors.

At first the M25 was popular with the public. In the 1987 General Election, the Conservatives won everywhere the motorway passed through. But problems quickly surfaced, the obvious one being chronic congestion.

Part of this was due to apparently unanticipated office and retail development along its route, generating in-and-out slower-moving traffic. Also, it was soon clear that more lanes were needed in many places: in some areas three had become five or six. Some churches even objected because it created a kind of stone wall between those congregations within and those without.

A report in *The Economist* said it "had taken 70 years to plan, 12 to build it and just one to find it was inadequate".

The M25 is now well established and used in practice as an alternative boundary for Greater London, especially by haulage companies. If you ever get stuck in a traffic jam on the M25, it might help to remember that it was designed for a maximum of 88,000 vehicles a day, but instead carries at times up to 300,000 a day.



"Wait a moment, dear, this isn't a tourists' attraction ratings guide, it's a Health and Safety warning!"



...if you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this sermon...

My mind is like an internet browser. At least 19 open tabs, three of them are frozen and I have no clue where the music is coming from.

The Wedding Garment

(Matt 22:1-14)

A King was holding a feast
And He wanted His guests to be there;
He sent to the west and the east
But they were too busy to care.

So, He sent out His servants once more -
To the highways and byways they went
And these they brought to His door
Though their clothes were not fit to present.

So, the King, in His bountiful grace
Provided the clothes they could wear
And they could then enter that place
And have every right to be there.

Save one, who refused the King's gift
He had no desire to change!
A decision that no-one could shift
Till the King Himself was in range...

"How dare you come into my home,
"Dressed up like a tramp in the street?
"My courtesy was freely shown!
"Now tie up his hands and his feet!"

They did as their Master decreed
And threw him out like the trash
Too late for forgiveness to plead
He only could weep, wail, and gnash!

By His grace we can come to the King
He gave us His Son through His love.
No clothes of our own should we bring
To His home and His Heaven above.

By Nigel Beeton



God is here

When our minister and his wife visited our neighbour, her four-year-old daughter answered the door. "Mum!" she yelled toward the living room. "God's here, and He brought His girlfriend."

Book the date

Our new curate was very eager to please. When I asked if I could have a church service when I eventually die, he responded with enthusiasm. "Of course," he said, grabbing his date book. "What day do you want?"

The cow and the Bible

A religious farmer lost his Bible out in the field. A few days later he went to answer a noise at his door. Standing there was a cow, with his Bible in its mouth. The farmer raised his eyes to heaven and thanked the Lord for this miracle. "It's not really," said the cow. "Your name was written inside."

Shampoo

Why I didn't realise this sooner? It's the shampoo I use in the shower that is my problem. When I wash my hair, the shampoo runs down my whole body, and printed very clearly on the shampoo label is this warning: 'FOR EXTRA VOLUME AND BODY.' No wonder I have been gaining weight.

Genesis for Cats

On the first day of Creation, God created the cat.

On the second day, God created man to serve the cat.

On the third day, God created all the animals of the earth to serve as food for the cat.

On the fourth day, God created honest toil so that man could labour for the good of the cat.

On the fifth day, God created expensive furniture so that the cat would have objects whereon to sharpen its claws.

On the sixth day, God created veterinary science to keep the cat healthy and the man broke.

On the seventh day, God tried to rest, but the litterbox needed changing.

Picture Parable

