

# St Helen's Magazine

February 2022

50p



St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch



Loving God, loving others, loving the world

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# Editor Writes ...

## Leaving

I came across this quote when I was wondering what to write this month. For some reason 'leaving' was on my mind.

*We leave something of ourselves behind when we leave a place, we stay there even though we go away.*

Pascal Mercier, Night Train to Lisbon



Reverend Mary taking her leave of us, from us here at St Helen's and from our Flagstaff Family of Churches, is reflected in several of these pages, not surprisingly, including her final letter to us on page 5, the psalm Judith Lewis created as part of our farewell to her on page 7, and photographs, courtesy of Martin Vaughan, of her 'leaving do' on page 20.

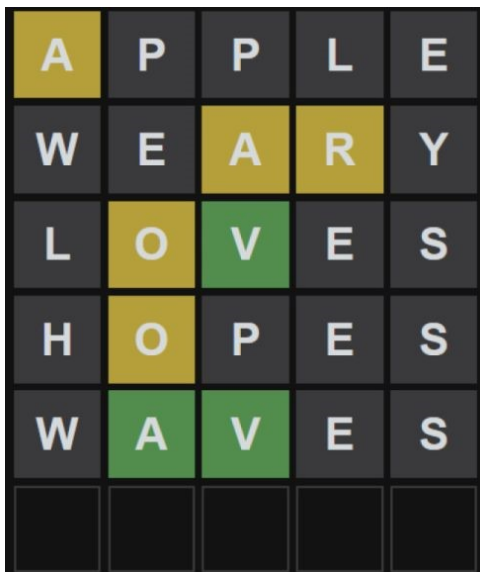
We head into a time of interregnum, repeating to ourselves very convincingly that, 'Vacancies are an integral part of the life of all parish churches' and 'They're a time for opportunity and growth!'

We will remember for a very long time all that Mary has been to us and all that she has shown us. I recall so many sermons that touched me - I expect we all do. How encouraging it was to be assured that I am the apple of God's eye; to hear, as if for the first time, how God knitted each one of

us together in our mother's womb; to realise so surely that God knows each one of us by name. When Mary spoke of the Slaughter of the Innocents I was transfixed.

When we were weary in Lockdown, Mary helped, supported and encouraged us all, and inspired us to do those things for each other too – We were to 'be more goose'! In her final sermon to us, a transcript of which is on page 16, she talked to us of love.

And as she waves us goodbye, she definitely leaves a lot of herself behind for us to cherish.



(There's more about Wordles on page 19)

*Jill Chapman*



# Revd Mary Writes ...

Dear Friends

It feels very strange to be writing what will be my last letter to this magazine as Rector of this parish. (I'm hoping you might allow an occasional guest column from Coventry Cathedral!)

It's not possible, of course, to neatly sum up six plus years of parish ministry. There is always - or should be - a sense of vision, of direction - but this is especially a calling to be responsive, to fall in step with others, to listen and to interpret, rather than to impose. This has always been so, and perhaps has especially been the case over the pandemic where we have had to recreate ministry online, to care remotely, when our whole mode of being has previously been in person, up close.

If I can write of a 'desire' in my time here (can you see I am obstinately resisting management-speak!), it has been that the people within our seven churches might come to know one another and then to love one another. I have measured the fulfilment of this desire in decibels!

When we first met as a group of churches in Lent 2016, it was very, very quiet, and people gathered in their church groups, staking a claim to a block of pews as their temporary church.

Now, there is a buzz of glad recognition as people see their friends from other congregations and chairs are rearranged to include more and more people within the circle. Now, we live out the name we have given ourselves 'The Flagstaff Family'.

If I can offer you a prayer as I move to my new post, it is that you would continue being family to one another through this interregnum and beyond it; that you would have particular care for those branches of the family which are more remote or in need of extra support. 'Once, you were not a people. Now you are the people of God' (1 Peter 2.10). Love one another.

If 'family' is one picture for my time here, then another might be 'guest'. As I've thanked individual churches at my last service with them, it is this image that I have had in mind; that parish priests are guests, for a time, in settled communities; that you play host to us - and all our foibles; that you accommodate our particular quirks, before we are called to move on again. Thank you for your hospitality. I am aware that I might have been a guest that has irritated you from time-to-time, that I may have trespassed





into areas that you have felt to be off limits, but we have laughed, too, and cried, and discovered more of God together. We have shared moments that will stay with me, and will bless me for the rest of my life.

Mine has not been a perfect ministry. How could it be when I am, like anyone, a human 'misshape' wholly reliant on the grace of God? Where I have got things wrong - however unwittingly - I am truly sorry. I pray that you will forgive me. And where, however unwittingly, you may have hurt me, I am forgiving you (for like us, forgiveness, too, is always a work in progress).

For all that has been - including those difficult moments when we learn so much about ourselves and one another - I am truly grateful; grateful, especially, when you have invited me to walk beside you at the most significant moments of your lives, when you have shared yourselves with me. And although we are moving into a time when we will not be so intimately involved, we will always be joined in the body of Christ, in the communion of saints --and I will carry you in my heart, as e.e.cummings once wrote.

And now, for all that God has in store for us - for you in the Flagstaff Family, for me in Coventry - yes! Never a dull moment!

With very much love  
**Mary**

**Chris Lewis**

Counsellor / Psychotherapist

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# Psalm for Mary Gregory's departure

**A**s sung by the choir at the service on 30<sup>th</sup> January when we said our farewells:

<sup>1</sup>Why do the / people cry / out?

Yea , why do they gather to / gether in / songs of la . men / tation?

<sup>2</sup>Is it not to mark our farewell to / Mary / Gregory;

With joy and gladness for her, but with / woe and / sadness for . our / loss?

<sup>3</sup>Who did come amongst us first but / six short / years ago;

And pledged allegiance to the bishop of Sheffield,\* so that we wonder if her / tenure has / ever been / legal?

<sup>4</sup>Who hath dwelt among us and been much be / lov - ed / of us;

We have also a soft spot in our hearts for her / cher - ished / grey - hound, / Freya.

<sup>5</sup>Who hath brought us together as a family,\* yea even the Flagstaff / family of / churches;

The citizens of Ashby de la Zouch, the people of Coleorton, Staunton, Worthington and Isley Walton,\* and / also of / Breedon on .the / Hill:

<sup>6</sup>Who hath introduced us to the / wonders of / Zoom;

And the mystery of live-/ streaming / un - to / Facebook.

<sup>7</sup>And who hath blessed us / richly with . her / ministry

Both be / fore and / du - ring / Covid.

<sup>8</sup>We know not the at / trac - tion . of / Coventry;

We do not comprehend the ap /peal of its / inner / ring-road.

<sup>9</sup>We fear she hath given up hope in the highways of Ashby,\* and in the byways of / north-west / Leicestershire:

Of / ev - er / meeting . George / Clooney.

<sup>10</sup>But we think that if she hath more hope of an encounter with him in Coventry; \* even the broad streets of the / city of / Coventry;

She will / also be/ dis - ap /pointed.

<sup>11</sup>She should also be reminded that if she seeketh out chocolate,\* yea, even

the Cadbury Dairy Milk, chocolate buttons, crème eggs, crunchie bars and / cur - ly-/ wurlies;

That she would have done / bet - ter / going to / Birmingham.

<sup>12</sup>In March the people shall come together in a / four . wheeled / chariot;

To celebrate her induction, even her installation as a / can - on / in the . Cath /ed -ral.

<sup>13</sup>We had thought a / canon . was a / large gun;

And an installation\* - a work of art in an exhibition, even such as one of her own quilts \* and / we feel / somewhat . be / mused.

<sup>14</sup>Dear Mary we pray a / blessing . up /on you,

Even as you have been a blessing to us and / shalt . be / now . to / Coventry.

<sup>15</sup>May you be upheld in the / strength of . the/ Lord;

May he lay straight paths / ever . be /fore your / feet. [Amen].

Judith Lewis



### A PRAYER OF JULIAN OF NORWICH

In you, Father all-mighty,  
we have our preservation and our bliss.  
In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving.  
You are our mother, brother, and Saviour.  
In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit,  
is marvellous and plenteous grace.  
You are our clothing;  
for love you wrap us and embrace us.  
You are our maker, our lover,  
our keeper.  
Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well,  
and all shall be well,  
and all manner of things shall be well.  
Amen

# Are Unicorns Mentioned in the Bible??

Yes they are!

## **Numbers 23:22**

<sup>22</sup> God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

## **Numbers 24:8**

<sup>8</sup> God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.



## **Deuteronomy 33:17**

<sup>17</sup> His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

## **Job 39:9-10**

<sup>9</sup> Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? <sup>10</sup> Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee?

## **Psalms 22:21**

<sup>21</sup> Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

## **Psalms 29:6**

<sup>6</sup> He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

## **Psalms 92:10**

<sup>10</sup> But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

## **Isaiah 34:7**

<sup>7</sup> And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

## In Which Andy Shares Some Thoughts on the Pennies...

**H**ello everyone, and welcome to this, the second in an occasional series of articles sharing what the PCC have been thinking about and doing with the church's finances – and the answer to that is “quite a lot really,” as you will see.

So, very briefly I'm going to let you know how things looked at the end of our Financial Year in December and tell you about some important decisions the PCC have made in relation to the management of our money.

While the financial year has ended, the accounts have yet to be independently examined, and the full picture, including how the cash held is allocated between the various funds, will be given in my report for the APCM, but this will give you a good indication of where we are.

The headline figures are:

- At the end of December, total cash in our bank accounts was just over £104,000 - a reduction of £8,826 from January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- This is nonetheless a healthy cash balance to have given, that there was over £30,000 of unplanned expenditure on the church building (roof alarm, intruder alarm, and electrical circuits) in 2021. And I am pleased to report that the installation of the roof alarm and upgrade of the intruder alarm has reduced our annual insurance premium by almost £1,000.
- December was a healthy month for St. Helen's, with income exceeding expenditure by £6,278. Eileen Coombs and her team pulled together the Christmas Fayre which brought many people into church on the day and raised £3,400 as well. Gift Aid on contributions not made via the Parish Giving Scheme came to £2,713 and an additional £1100 in various grant funding helped.

So, the PCC have done well, and we are in a healthy position - but there is no room for complacency!

In November and December, the PCC had considered a recommendation from me about establishing a formal reserves policy. This means setting a level of funding that we will always look to maintain in our General Fund and has two benefits:

- It ensures that we always have sufficient funds in the bank account to keep running for a period should there be a catastrophic loss of income.
- It highlights when we are holding significant cash above that level and encourages us to consider how to use it, rather than doing the equivalent of burying it in a hole in the Heritage Centre Garden.





The PCC agreed to set the reserve level at an amount equivalent to three months' normal expenditure which currently equates to £14,000 and funds held are now reported in relation to this figure.

At the end of December, funds in the General Fund were almost £26,000 above this reserve level. And at their November and January meetings, the PCC reflected on what "good stewardship" of these funds looked like. They decided to allocate most of these funds by:

- Increasing the Building Fund by £15,000.  
This will enable the Buildings Committee to begin conducting works that recommended in the Quinquennial Report by our Architect. I hope that this is the start of a prolonged period of planned investment in our church building, to preserve the building and gradually bring it to a higher state of repair and decoration.
- Donate £5,000 in total to charitable cause - a reflection of God's generosity to us.  
This will begin with payments to two local charities close to our hearts – Ashby Street Pastors and Ashby Youth for Christ – totalling £1,000 and the PCC will be involving you in deciding how to allocate the remaining £4,000.
- Donate £1,650 to Isley Walton to help them with their Parish Contribution – a decision made by the PCC earlier in 2021.
- Allocating £2,000 to improving the technology in church

I am pleased that the PCC has considered and agreed a Budget for 2022

that will function as a broad route map to allow them to monitor our income and expenditure as we move through 2022.

The budget results in a small surplus of income over expenditure, a couple of points to highlight from the discussion are:

- Currently there is no provision in the Budget for income from major events such as the Christmas Fayre. As you've seen these events can be extremely profitable but require significant preparation and so rather than drawing false comfort from a nominal amount entered in the budget, should the PCC wish to include income from one or two of these events in the financial plan there must be a named event champion, a clear date agreed and a rough indication of how much income the event will generate.  
Please do not be shy in offering to organise a Summer Fayre or Christmas Fayre!
- The Building Maintenance expenditure line will include £12,000 which is the balance of the rough estimation of the cost of work identified for this year in the Quinquennial report.
- The PCC also agreed to include £5,000 of Charitable contributions in the 2022 budget.

Finally, I would remind everyone that as previously announced I shall be standing down from this role on 31<sup>st</sup> May this year at the latest. The PCC are seeking someone to take on the role and if you feel that this is something God may be "nudging" you towards taking on, I am extremely happy to answer any questions that you may have.

When I wrote for the November magazine, I asked for your prayers and the church has come through a challenging period in reasonable financial health. I hope that this will continue and ask you to pray that someone will feel able to come forward to support the PCC as they work to raise and spend income wisely to grow God's kingdom here in Ashby.

Yours in Christ,  
**Andy Smith**



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## Ashby Street Pastors – Update

The ministry of Ashby Street Pastors has now entered its twelfth year and after missing last year (due to Covid-19 and the lockdown) we were back with our annual commissioning service and AGM on Sunday January 23<sup>rd</sup> at St Helen's Church and Heritage Centre. Reverend Mary led us in a moving service, encouraging us to see Jesus out on the streets in the work that we do.

There are currently eleven Street Pastors and four Prayer Pastors, and we are back out on the streets of Ashby on Saturday evenings from around 9.30pm till anything up to 2am.



We continue to help those who are vulnerable or who find themselves in vulnerable situations during their night out. We are part of an increasing number of people trying to make the experience of a night out in Ashby a safe and pleasant one.

Our volunteers come from the various churches both in Ashby and the surrounding villages. If you would like to consider helping then it would be great to hear from you. Initially you are welcome to come out with us for a night (or part of a night) to simply observe what we do, and then if you want to get more involved you can either start to train as a Street Pastor or join our Prayer Pastor team.

For more information please get in touch.

**Chris Lewis**  
**Coordinator for Ashby Street Pastors**  
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## The Tragedy of Dr Mark Gregory Baker

**I**t should have been a fairly straightforward job at the farm in Ticknall, back in August 1955, when the elderly farmer decided to get the old well cleaned out. An Ashby firm was engaged to carry out the work, but there was water in the well that needed to be pumped out first. On 16<sup>th</sup> August, a petrol driven pumping motor was lowered into the well and left to run for some time.



The next morning, two workmen arrived and one of them descended into the 50 foot well. It was only about five minutes later that a shout from the second workman attracted the attention of the farmer, and he went to see what was happening. It appeared that the first workman was in difficulties as his workmate could get no response to his shouts.

Not everyone had a telephone in those days, and this appears to have been the case at the farm, because the farmer sent his son by car to the next farm to phone for help. Before he could return, the second workman had also descended into

the well to try to help his stricken workmate.

Soon after that, Dr Baker arrived in his car. The farmer and his family begged him not to go down the well himself, but Dr Baker insisted that he would be OK. They tied a rope around the doctor's waist and he climbed down the ladder, but after a short time they heard him shout up from the well that there was nothing he could do for the men. He then shouted "No!" and the farm family began to haul him up. Part way up the rope got caught on a beam, or something similar, and the family were unable to haul him any further.

Next on the scene was a police officer from Melbourne. He too tried to descend into the well by squeezing through an iron manhole but was quickly overcome by fumes and was helped out in a dazed condition.

An emergency call was sent out to fire stations at Loughborough and Swadlincote and fire fighters arrived with full breathing apparatus. The leading fireman descended into the well and found the bodies of the two workmen with Dr Baker unconscious slumped over them. It was estimated that the doctor had been there for about three quarters of an hour, and the workmen considerably longer. The fireman reported that there had been a



strong smell of petrol and other fumes in the well. Even with breathing apparatus, he too suffered some ill effects, and when he came out had to lie down on the grass with a blanket over him, some distance away from the well.

Dr Baker was the first to be brought to the surface, but although thought to be still alive, showed no signs of response to oxygen treatment. He was rushed to Derby Royal Infirmary where he was pronounced dead on arrival. The two workmen were already dead when they were brought up from the well.

At the inquest which followed, the coroner said that Dr Baker had acted “in the finest traditions of the medical profession”. He also praised the actions of the police and firemen who, he said, had “acted with alacrity and no one could have done more.”

The 41 year old Dr Mark Gregory Baker had been a GP in Ashby for 15 years when the tragedy occurred. He had lived with his wife and two children in Huntingdon House in Market Street and was a very popular practitioner. He was also widely known for his interest in motor rallies and model engineering, having built a model railway in the garden of his house.

On the day of the funeral, Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August, Market Street was closed to normal traffic as the cortege moved off. The route of the procession was lined with hundreds of local people as it proceeded to the Methodist Church, which then stood in Kilwardby Street. The service was attended by representatives from

“every organisation in Ashby and many from outlying districts”. The Head of the British Medical Association and a representative of the Leicestershire branch were also present, and the coffin was given a guard of honour by members of staff from Ashby and District Hospital and the St John Ambulance Brigade.

In memory of Dr Baker, a plaque and

commemorative bench were placed in Ashby Cottage Hospital. That bench can now be seen in the Ashby Town Council building, Legion House. The doctor himself lies in a family grave in Ashby cemetery.



**Wendy Freer**

# Our Worship on Sundays in February

Week	8.30am	10.30am	pm
1 6 <sup>th</sup> February 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday before Lent	Staunton Holy Communion	St Helen's All Age	6.00pm St Helen's Evening Prayer 6.00pm Isley Walton Holy Communion
2 13 <sup>th</sup> February 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday before Lent		St Helen's Holy Communion Coleorton Holy Communion	12.30pm St Helen's Baptisms
3 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Lent	Staunton Holy Communion	St Helen's Morning Prayer Breedon Holy Communion	
4 27 <sup>th</sup> February Next before Lent		St Helen's Holy Communion	3.30pm Coleorton Messy Church

Revd Mary Gregory's final sermon at St Helen's, 30th January 2022  
- Presentation of Christ; 1 Corinthians 13; Luke 2

## Fiercest, gentlest love

Whenever the windows of Market Street blush red in anticipation of Valentine's Day, I'm transported back to 2013, and the Spalding branch of Sainsbury's. It was just a few days after Dad had died, and Mum and I were doing a prosaic grocery shop of potatoes, milk and bread. The teenage boys of Spalding Grammar School, though, had their minds on *higher* things, and were gathered around the seasonal display of teddy bears, love hearts and red roses. They looked part-excited, part-*appalled* that it had come to *this*.

Occasionally, one lad would look over his shoulder nervously to check that no-one was watching, before picking up a love-heart hugging teddy bear by its ear as if it might bite, and then shoving it unceremoniously back on the shelf as if it *had* bitten. The whole thing was *excruciating* for them—not helped by a middle-aged woman—yours truly—giving them what I like to



think of as ‘helpful’ advice.

Looking back, I wonder whether it’s possible that some of their discomfort was borne of their conviction that there must be more to love than this sugary sweetness, more authentic expressions of it than the greetings card’s skippity rhymes.

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There’s a sense in which we’ve filed our well-known first reading from 1 Corinthians under ‘romantic literature’, framed it with hearts and flowers and set it in Sainsbury’s seasonal aisle alongside those greetings cards. Certainly, it’s the go-to choice of many wedding couples, a way of them expressing their aspirations for their love for each other.



Now, I’ve nothing against romance—even now, I trust my postie is limbering up in readiness to deliver my sack of post on 14<sup>th</sup> February—and 1 Corinthians is a very beautiful reading for a wedding — *but* if that’s where we leave it, if we colonise it to the happily-ever-after of a Hollywood romance, then we seriously misunderstand it. We drain it of its challenge. And we miss out on the rich opportunities of being shaped by it.

So let’s rehabilitate it. And let’s begin with setting it in context.

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In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul has focused on the roles the Corinthian Christians are to play within the body of Christ; on *what* they are to do as prophets, teachers, leaders, assistants. But here, in 1 Corinthians 13, he focuses on *how* they are to play their part—only, ever, with love—and love of a particular quality—the fiercest, gentlest love.

So essential is this love, Paul writes, that if we try and act without it our very best efforts, our most exquisite performance, our highest achievements are completely nullified. They become nothing.

An eloquent speaker eulogising *without* love? - sounds like a claxon going off or fingers being scraped down a blackboard. A bold champion of faith working miracles *without* love? - a meaningless charade. An act of spectacular generosity *without* love? - the emptiest gesture. Love is the decisive movement, Paul writes. Love is the only reality.

Isn’t that striking? - that in a world that sets the highest value on power and delivery and influence and showboating oratory in fact, *all* you need, *all* that counts, is love. And that, without it, there is nothing. And that after all the sound and fury, it is only love that lasts (v8). Love is our legacy.

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And that’s how I want to weigh my time here—not by listing what

I've '*achieved*' - if such a list even exists; not by considering a balance sheet of loss and gain, but by asking myself 'Did I love?'

It's a question we might each ask ourselves; ponder how we might reshape our priorities, if we *really* grasped that love is our only legacy, the lasting imprint we make on any community, on this world 'Do I love?' we might ask ourselves. 'How could I love *more*?'

---

These are dangerous questions, because the love we are called to offer is not abstract or philosophical or sentimental, but *the* most rigorous, most demanding version of love imaginable; the stuff not only of heart, but of will and endurance; love in imitation of Jesus Christ who is the supreme proponent of this fiercest, gentlest love.

Simeon saw this. Why else would he warn Mary that a sword would pierce her heart (Luke 2.35)? - only because he saw that this fiercest, gentlest love would be literally *excruating*: would set Jesus on the cross and break her heart.

*Jesus* is patient and kind; *Jesus* is not envious or boastful or proud or rude. *Jesus* does not insist on his own way, but submits himself to others. *Jesus* is not irritable or resentful; *Jesus* doesn't rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth and embodies it. And, with the cross-beam on his shoulder, and with the crown of thorns on his head, Jesus bears all things. And as he cries, 'It is finished', Jesus believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

*This* is love. This is the love Paul has in mind. This is the love he calls us to. And this, Jesus says, is how people will know that you belong to me, if you have love for one another (John 13.35); if your love, like mine, is life-laying-down-love (John 15.13).

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When I'd been here about a year, we decided to give our team of churches a name, and invited suggestions. They were, let's just say, *varied*. Amongst them the 42 Team—after the road, and in homage to Douglas Adams' answer to the 'Ultimate question of life, the universe and everything' - and, my particular favourite, the Corkscrew Team—after a lane that twists its way around our boundaries but which might also suggest a predilection for tipples of a certain kind.

In the end, the much-loved, much-missed Suzanne Edwards suggested that we should call ourselves the Flagstaff Family and I am so proud that it is a family that we have become.

And it's a family that beyond all else I pray you will remain. For if a family should be characterised by anything, it is by *love*; by love that persists through hurt and disagreement; by love that forgives and forgives and

forgives again; by love that holds fast through change; by love that hopes through disappointment.

Beloved, love one another as Jesus has loved you with the fiercest, gentlest love. This is the only thing that counts; this is the only thing that lasts. Amen.

## Byrdle - the Wordle for Music Nerds

**A**re you playing Wordle? It's an on-line word-based daily guessing game where you have six attempts to try to figure out the five-letter word of the day, and it's become quite a craze – the game was launched in October 2021, and now has approximately 2.5 million players.

Apparently it was created by a software engineer for his partner - he knew she loved word games, so he came up with it for just the two of them to play. After a few months of enjoying it themselves they introduced it to their family's WhatsApp group, where it soon became an obsession. At that point he wondered if he was onto something - and so it was released to the world.

If you use Facebook or Twitter you'll know if your friends are keen Wordlers by the rows of green and yellow squares which appear on their timelines, indicating how many goes they needed to reach the correct answer.

But would you believe there is a spin off called Byrdle, which uses entirely choir-related words, and takes its name and inspiration from Renaissance composer William Byrd? I didn't. In fact, when Andy Smith first told me I assumed it was a joke. But it's true. This new version of the word-play game may be quite niche but, according to the Church Times, it has gone from 7000 players to 30,000 players in just two weeks. (A major advantage it has over Wordle is that there won't be any American spellings!)

It seems inevitable that an ongoing challenge is going to be coming up with new words to guess. But according to its creator, Dr Robert Brignall, there are currently 75 words on the list: enough to last until the end of March. (Another spin-off, called Swardle, will surely have even more of a problem?)

The possibilities for ingenious Wordle spin-offs seem endless, with Absurdle, Squirdle, Greener Wordle, and even a number-based version called Primal, to name but a few. I don't think I am going to be tempted though, because I'm not very good at them, although there was one which caught my eye recently – the intriguingly named Prayerdle.

BYRDLE



**Jill Chapman**

From the Albums ...







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# Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

We held our first meeting of 2022 which was our AGM on 18<sup>th</sup> January and I am pleased to report that there were 14 members present. With the exception of Val Bowron the present Committee Members were re-elected and Lyn Price was added. Sadly during the pandemic we lost our indoor member Margaret Stalker, and two members (Val Bowron and Beryl Stephens) are moving away from Ashby. We thank them both for their commitment and hard work they have freely given to the Branch over their many years membership – they will be very much missed. Our branch continues to grow in numbers and our commitment to the aim and objects of the Mothers' Union is as strong as ever.

Julie Ann Heath has agreed to be our Branch contact with the Diocese and both Margaret Worrall and Eileen Barradell have agreed to continue as Secretary and Treasurer respectively.



The subscription of £27 is now due and it should be paid before the end of January please. If you pay direct into the bank account on line then please let me know when you do so because notification does not come to me until a bank statement.

We have produced a full programme for the year that we hope members will enjoy and we look forward to welcoming anyone who may be interested in Mothers' Union to attend our meetings. If you would like to receive a copy of our programme please contact Eileen on 01530 838029. Our next meeting will be on 15<sup>th</sup> February at 10.30 am in the Heritage Centre, and the speaker will be Steph Whiten.

**Eileen Barradell**  
Branch Treasurer



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# February

**F**ebrile, fecund, fragile February  
Falls forward following  
January's jubilant dance

Solidifies the winter holding all  
nature in its trance

Baby coots flutter hopelessly  
against her icy grip

Spring seems silently distant  
There is plenty yet of winter's woes to sip

Yet why do we bemoan the weather?  
Why are we always eager to advance  
Rushing headlong through the seasons  
Instead of giving winter her fair chance?

For rest, recuperation, redemption of the heart  
Oh, to be still as nature is and let the Spirit surely start  
to melt sin's sinews silently  
and align the will with the Holy One  
in whose control are all the seasons  
as they follow one by one



**Chris Lewis**

# Christian Aid Prayer for a Just and Fair Future



*A prayer written by South Africa's Bishop Geoff Davies, known to many as 'The Green Bishop'. He urges all religions to recognise their calling to care for God's creation.*

Great Spirit, heavenly Father, source of life and love.

We rejoice and give thanks for your bountiful planet. Great plains, verdant forests, deserts of rock, sand and ice, mountain ranges, rivers and oceans: ecosystems to meet the needs of all your creatures.

We mourn our separation from you, each other, ourselves and all creation.

We have forsaken your calling to be custodians: When we drill for oil, gas and minerals, despoiling the earth, poisoning the waters and fouling the air with climate changing gases; When we fell ancient trees, over-exploit the oceans and techno-farm food, destroying soils, traditional food systems and indigenous communities; When we desecrate your world with trash where nothing in nature is intended to go to waste; When we live lavish lifestyles and turn our other cheek to poverty, injustice, war, famine and unbearable human suffering. When world leaders and multi-national corporations put profit before the wellbeing of people, communities and a flourishing planet.

We pray that our words, our pilgrimage and our actions may be a witness to world leaders, encouraging and inspiring them to make radical commitments. Commitments that will restore the earth and lead to justice for communities confronted by the climate crisis. May they lead us onto a new path for a sustainable future where we live in harmony with all life.

Open our senses to all we encounter and be with us that we may walk in safety. Awaken us to our true nature, to live in peace with you, each other and all creation. By restoring harmony and balance we too will be restored to wholeness.

Amen.



## Rock Solid

Following our professional advisory body's guidelines, face coverings must be worn by our young people (11+) when we meet them indoors (unless medically exempt or sat down). This makes for a challenging management task at Rock Solid. Some of our activity (like Bible Study) is whilst we're sat; easy. Some involves fairly vigorous physical activity. Asking a child to wear a mask whilst they need to breathe hard is probably some form of torture / abuse. We also play games involving eating whilst stood up... As you can imagine, trying to do the responsible, Covid secure thing throughout Rock Solid is highly taxing. Especially if you have the IQ of a dried apricot - like Vernon does.

For the above reason meeting outdoors is simpler. For weather related reasons it may be differently challenging.

Thankfully God is immune to viruses and is with us, unaffected every week. Please pray that despite all the calls on our attention we might be more aware of him and open to him than we are to anything else. Pray we will be conspicuously blessed with peace and patience so that those who believe they don't need supernatural help will be ever more interested in his invitation to know his peace-bringing, change bringing lordship.

**Vernon & Kate**

## Football

When we started back after Christmas, at the end of the game I chatted with



a parent of one of the younger footballers. His son hasn't been playing with us for long and it was the first time he'd seen the session for himself. As we chatted it was apparent that to him we were unusual amongst local sports provision for yp: We didn't charge players to attend, we weren't a team (that plays other teams competitively), we were mixed age, we were a gift from the Church and other things too. He asked some questions about our aims and values and there seemed to be a lot about our long range concern for young people that rang pleasingly to him. He later mailed me to let me know his son would be back.

Thank you for your prayers for those who God is calling and touching. Please pray we would continue to prayerfully discern and respond to the will of the One who is sending us - in terms of who to notice, how to listen to them and what to say to them. When Jesus says in Mark 4 'Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.' there's the obvious implication that some just don't. Pray God would gift more people with hearing ears and that we would boldly and tactfully give them good news to hear.

**Vernon**

## **Sk8ers**

At Sk8ers at the beginning of January, we shared with the young people about our failures at setting New Years Resolutions, and how what we hope for is often destined for failure, as we rely solely on ourselves. But, our Hope in the Lord will never be misplaced - as He never lets us down, never stops being our Hope, as He is perfect. Psalm 33:20 "We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield."

Afterwards, as leaders, we were reflecting on how our young people at Sk8ers have changed over the years. For example, we might now all sit around a table for the whole evening playing various dice and card games and sharing about all of our weeks - laughing and looking forward. When we share during our 'God spot', the young people listen without interrupting, and several now bow their heads when we pray.

In Psalm 33, it says *..the plans of the Lord stand firm forever...(v11)*. Lord, we pray that we are doing Your will each week as we meet for Sk8ers. Continue to challenge us, to give the young people you put into our care the opportunity to respond to the Good News, and to stand firm! Lord be with those young people (probably now young adults) whom we no longer see at Sk8ers; send people around them to continue to plant seeds and water those sewn - for your glory and their Salvation.

In Him,

**The Sk8ers team,**

**Kate, Katie, Vernon, Eileen, Mike & Debbie**

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# Quotes for the Month

'He lived (despite his faults) as a resurrected being, in the way that all Christians are called to live, and yet so few manage. The image of such a life as being one of fearlessness and humour must not be allowed to die with him.'

*Church Times leader on Desmond Tutu's passing, Dec 31<sup>st</sup>*

'To hurt a woman is to insult God, who from a woman took on our humanity.'

*Pope Francis, new year message, Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, January 1<sup>st</sup>*

'Exeter Cathedral is recruiting a professional 'Riddler in Residence''

*www.radioexe.co.uk, January 6<sup>th</sup>*

'Nothing pleases God more than the sound of a biro on a gift aid envelope.'

*Rev Richard Coles, Winter Walks on BBC 4, January 6<sup>th</sup>*

'There is a line, attributed to the mathematician G.H. Hardy, that "if the Archbishop of Canterbury says he believes in God, that's all in the way of business, but if he says he doesn't, one can take it he means what he says".'

*Chris Grey blog & FAB group, Facebook, January 7<sup>th</sup>*

'Wedding at Cana sermon tip: WHEELIE BIN! Around 150 gallons is around 3x wheelie bins, way more than the gathering could even drink. Evidences the abundant generosity of Jesus.'

*Hannah Baraclough, Twitter, January 15<sup>th</sup>*

'There must be a God if a poem such as this can be written by a mere human.'

*Guest Sophie Hannah on BBC radio 4's Poetry Please, January 16<sup>th</sup>*

'We commend Novak's grace and tolerance in the face of our government's capricious exercise of unashamed overstepping.'

*The Serbian Orthodox Church of Australia and New Zealand, January 16<sup>th</sup>*

'Church's investing bodies separate greener wheat from oily tares.'

*Church Times, January 20<sup>th</sup>*

'The Jesus of fluffiness can never compete with real teddy bears.'

*Andrew Brown, Church Times, January 21<sup>st</sup>*

'No vice is condemned more strictly by St Benedict than that of murmuring.'

*Erik Varden, Scripture makes it clear that murmuring is harmful, Church Times, January 21<sup>st</sup>*

'Rules around soft furnishings in churches could soon be relaxed in a bid to help the Church of England meet its target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030'

*Premier Christian News, January 23<sup>rd</sup>*

'Norwich parish promotes the holy Tea Tray as a spiritual aide.'

*George Conger, Anglican Ink, January 25<sup>th</sup>*

'It isn't that the Bible is true. It's that the Bible is the precondition for the manifestation of truth, which makes it *way more true than just true*.'

*Controversial author & psychologist Jordan Peterson, The Joe Rogan Experience, Jan 25<sup>th</sup>*

'I would like to volunteer to be ambushed by cake. Any time. Any place.'

*The Church Mouse, Twitter, January 25<sup>th</sup>*

'Our youth prayer ministry is called Kneel Young.'

*Church Curmudgeon, Twitter, January 26<sup>th</sup>*

'Crumbs, if this woman is half as good as we think she is we're all in for a bit of a shake up.'

*Pat Stafford quoting Vivien Elphick re Mary's interview, eulogy at Mary's leaving do, Jan 30<sup>th</sup>*

'Let me finish with one piece of advice that I've given you before, but it bears repeating - remember when it comes to rugby, always a Tiger, never a Wasp.'

*Caroline Essex addressing Mary, eulogy at Mary's leaving do, January 30<sup>th</sup>*

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