

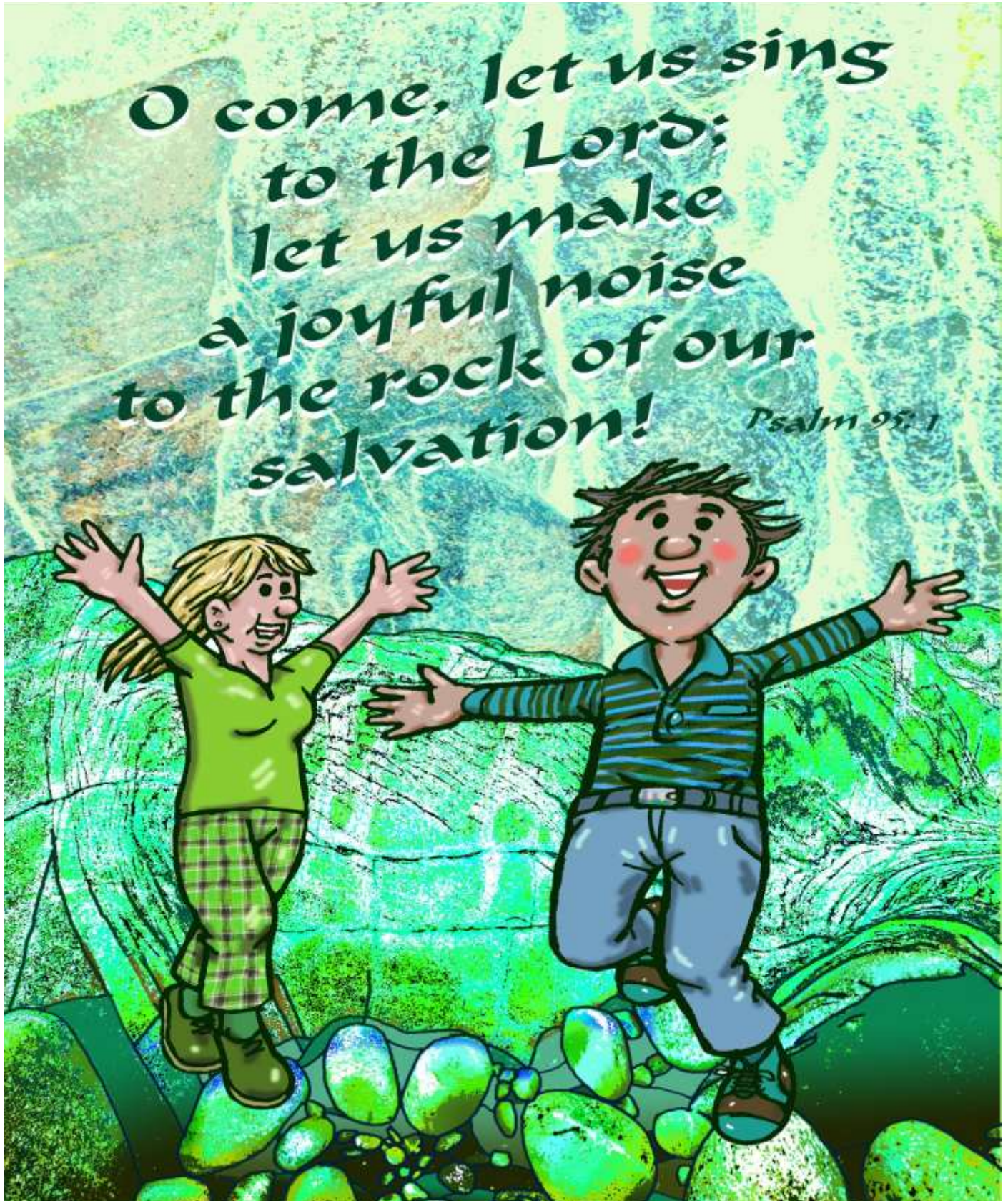
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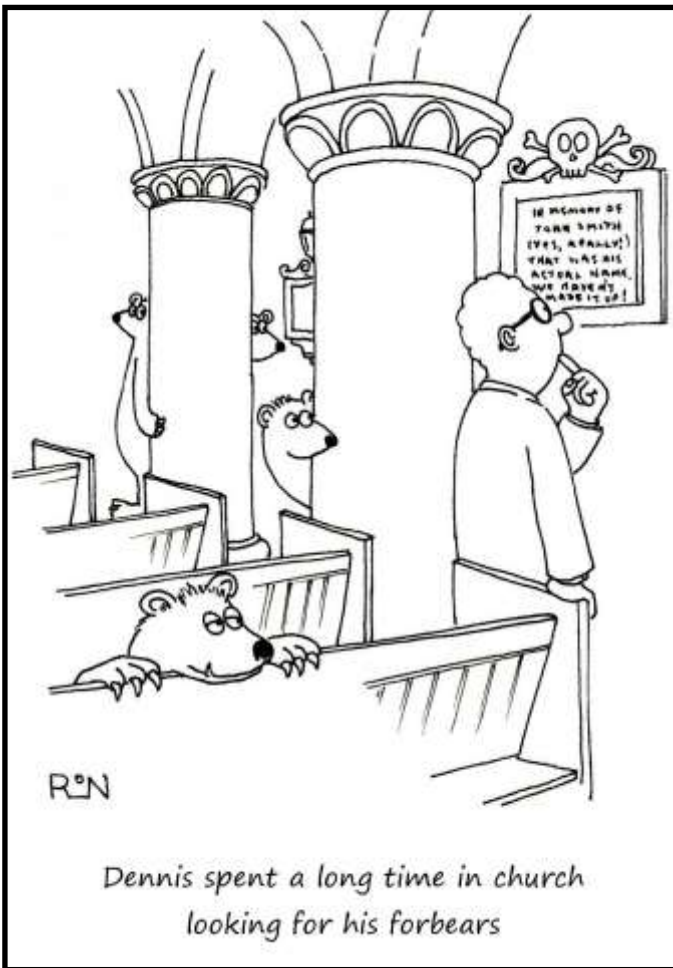


The Parish Magazine of St Bartholomew with St Chad
www.thurstaston.org.uk

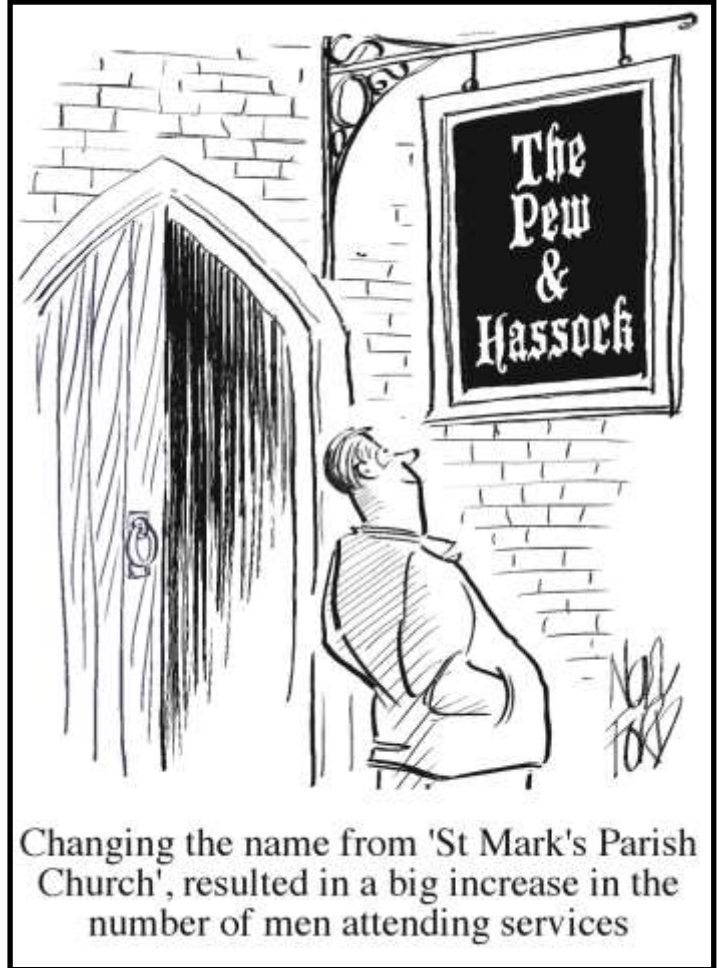
 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Chester

May 2024





Dennis spent a long time in church looking for his forbears



Changing the name from 'St Mark's Parish Church', resulted in a big increase in the number of men attending services

St Bartholomew and St Chad takes its duty and obligation to protect all extremely seriously. We have adopted the national Church of England's robust procedures and guidelines. You can find out more about the national policies and procedures at www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding

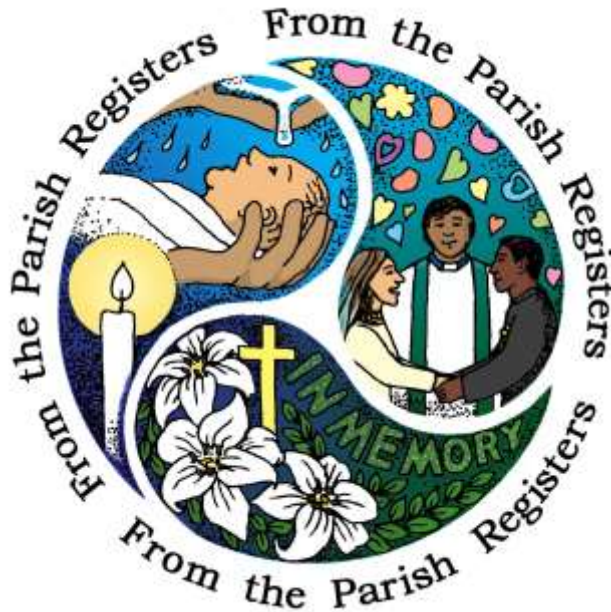
**Safeguarding is
Everyone's
Responsibility**

 * "Your magazine needs you" *
 * Please send your contributions *
 * (eg. Poems. Prayers, interesting *
 * articles etc.,) *
 * to office@thurstaston.org.uk *

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 The views and opinions expressed in the articles in this magazine are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the editor, the Rector or the PCC.

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Baptisms

28th April - Isabelle Vickers

Weddings

27th April
Chris Parkes and Lauren Jones

Funerals

3rd April - Robert Jamieson
15th April - Sheila Hunt

From Your Rector

'While He was blessing them, Jesus left them and was taken up into heaven.' (Luke 24:51).

The Ascension is a hugely neglected festival, which deserves to have a bigger place in our church life. How do we understand it?

The Ascension tells us that Jesus is in control: 'Jesus has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand' (1 Peter 3:22). Jesus occupies the top spot in the universe; the control of our world is in the safe, scarred hands of Jesus. We can offer Him our worship and allegiance, knowing that His plans are better than those of any Prime Minister or President.



The Ascension tells us that God is committed to His world: 'And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:6). Jesus did not leave His humanity behind when He ascended, for we are raised with Christ to heaven. Therefore, God is bound to His world and we can trust Him to fulfil His purposes for our lives and world.

The Ascension gives us a job to do: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:18,19). God's way of working in the world is through us. He commissions us for this task at the Ascension and equips us at Pentecost. We are called to make disciples, starting in our workplace, family and community.

'Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world.' (Teresa of Avila).

Revd Jane



A message from Ailsa



It's been an exceptionally busy few weeks at the regiment.

“A” squadron returned from Poland following a grueling and cold tour of 6 months. They were all pretty exhausted, but the tour of duty has gone well, the main feature being the cold!

Literally as they left, B Squadron flew out to take over – they have the much better weather to look forward to as they commence their 6-month deployment and duty. I am very much hoping that I will be able to visit them out there having been unable to go to see A Squadron.

I was home for Easter and was delighted to be able to hand out chocolate eggs to “A” Squadron as they returned in batches, before I left. These were donated by a member of the congregation, and I am extremely grateful, as were the soldiers and officers who received them.



I am also grateful to all those who sent cards which went out to Poland which were so welcomed, thank you.

Over the next few months, the activity will ramp up as C Squadron commence preparations to take over duty in Poland in September and HQ Squadron on rotation to train the Ukrainian Army.

Peace and love to you all.

Ailsa



A soldier from A Squadron on Exercise

A Soldier from A Squadron on Patrol





WEDNESDAYS

12th, 19th, 26th June,

3rd, 10th, 17th

July

TABLE TALK

**11.30am - 12.30pm at St Chad's
OR 7.45-9.00pm in the extension**

Table Talk provides an opportunity to take part in meaningful conversations about the things that really matter. Gather around a table to talk, laugh, be understood and get to know another's point of view.

The themes we will explore are:-

Burnout: How can I balance my life?

Friendship: How do we make and keep friends?

Destiny: How do we live a meaningful life?

Beauty: What does it mean to live an attractive life?

Ecology: How do we care for the planet?

Spirituality: How can we experience God?

Community and social events dates for Diary All at St Chad's unless otherwise indicated

June 1st

Walk to Hilbre Island – Details yet to be confirmed and weather permitting

July date to be confirmed

Guide Dogs Demo - in St Chad's garden - weather permitting



August/September Saturday mornings

Summer Saturdays St Chad's Garden – details to follow

August Saturday 24th

Ready Teddy Go! St Bartholomew's Day Teddy parachute from St Bartholomew's church spire.

Ness Gardens



Sat. 11 May

Car Share from St Chad's carpark 10 am

Groups of over 10 £6.50
Adult £8.50 Concession £7.50
Child £4.50 (under 5 free)

Book your place and please say if you will
drive or require a lift

Email: office@thurstaston.org.uk
Tel: 0151 648 8169

**St Chad's Church, Roslin Road,
Irby CH61 3UH**

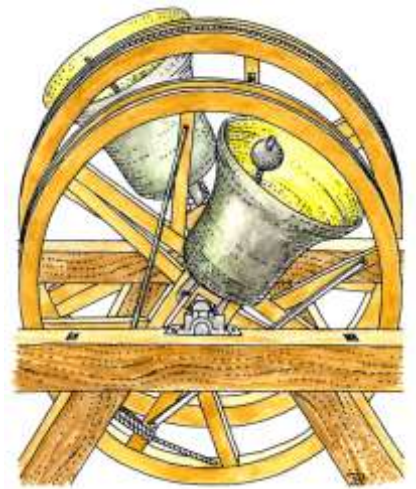
Ruth's Reflections

Hello again, I hope you all had a happy Easter. It seems quite a long time ago, but I had a really lovely time. On Good Friday I went to the afternoon service at St Bartholomew's, it was a lovely service and a good way to recognise the meaning of Easter. Prior to the service I went to Neston to meet up with friends for coffee followed by a trip round Neston market, very enjoyable.

When I woke up on Easter morning I had a very bad headache so didn't make it to church, I thought I would have to cancel my plans for the rest of the day, but I felt a lot better by midday, so I was able to go to my daughters for Easter lunch. It was delicious as always, my son-in-law is a great cook.

On Easter Monday I went with two other ringers on a ringing tour round six churches in Cheshire. It was a very enjoyable day with a very nice lunch in a pub in Great Budworth.

Also on the subject of ringing, or rather ringers, we celebrated, with afternoon tea at the Shippons, Richard Turners' sixty years of ringing at the church, forty five of which he was Tower Captain. It was a lovely afternoon, enjoyed by all.



Again I have to grumble about the weather! Yesterday was OK, I managed to cut the grass after church and coffee, but today has been horrendous. Wind, rain and a hailstorm as I write this. In spite of all this bad weather my garden is not looking too bad. All the plants I moved and planted seem to be doing quite well.

I have been doing some photography but I don't seem to be improving at all! I am hoping to take some photos on Thursday when I am going to Ness Gardens with the WI. Weather permitting. We have several more outings planned throughout the summer and where possible we like to include lunch!

I don't think I have any further news for now, so I will say Goodbye.

Take care and stay safe everyone.

Ruth.

A warm welcome at the **Warm Hub**

Every Tuesday 9.30am - 12.30pm

Open to everyone, so please drop in!

**St. Chad's Church, Roslin Road, Irby CH61 3UH
0151 648 8169**

***Guest speaker
on 4th Tuesday of the month
Talks start at 10.30a.m.***

TUESDAY 28th May 2024

Mary Ward,
(a historian who used to live in Irby)
**An illustrated talk on the history
of Irby and Thurstaston.**



**The Warm Hub
belongs to a
growing national
network of
Places of Welcome**



Jigsaw Library

Over the time that Warm Hub has been operating, we have been gifted many jigsaws. While we always have a jigsaw in progress at Warm Hub, there are many waiting for us to use in the future. Rather than these jigsaws just piling up, with the winter nights ahead we would like to make these jigsaws available for individuals to borrow and then return to us. We can't vouch that all the jigsaws are complete as they are donated to us but if you would like to borrow one then we can make them available on a Tuesday morning when the Warm Hub is open – 9.30 to 12.30 at St Chad's

Susan Smale and Cheryl Goddard



You can make donations to Foodbank by placing items (non perishable food and toiletries) in the box by the office door at St Chad's.

Donations of Flowers for Church

You can make a donation
“in memory of”, “in celebration of”,
or just because you like seeing flowers in church!

Please sign up at the back of church.

The money for your donation should be given to the parish office.

Your **cash or cheque** donation should be placed in an envelope with your contact details and the date that you have signed up for.

You can donate by **BACS transfer** (followed by email to the office stating the amount you have donated and the date that you have signed up for.) indicating that it is for the Flower Fund.



Why your television is like the Trinity

Here is a trick question: How many colours does your television set use?

Answer: Just three: red, green and blue. And in that order, just like a rainbow (where reds are at one side, blues at the opposite side, green in the middle). This is known as "RGB".

These are TV's three primary colours which, when their luminescence is fired at your **eyes, give all the colours of the visible spectrum. These are all 'additive' colours. In fact,** mix these three together in different proportions, and your screen can offer you 16 million colours.

You thought the sequence was red/yellow/blue? No, that's for painted or printed colours. A TV set positively gives out light in three different colours, whereas paint daubed on paper absorbs and removes some colours, to reflect back merely a small part of the light falling on it the colour that you see.

You'll soon call out the repair man if your television loses one of its three colours and all the presenters look as though they came from Mars. But change the intensity of any one colour (red, green or blue) even slightly and you change the overall colour.

Switch them all off, and you are left with black. Let all three of them shine at full brightness, at the same point – and then as if by magic you have a totally different colour: WHITE!

It's a parable which illustrates the Holy Trinity. Three completely distinct persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), just as your TV set has three quite separate colours: red, green, blue.

Take away any One member of the Trinity, and you slip into theological error; take away any one of the three colours, and you call out the TV repair engineer!

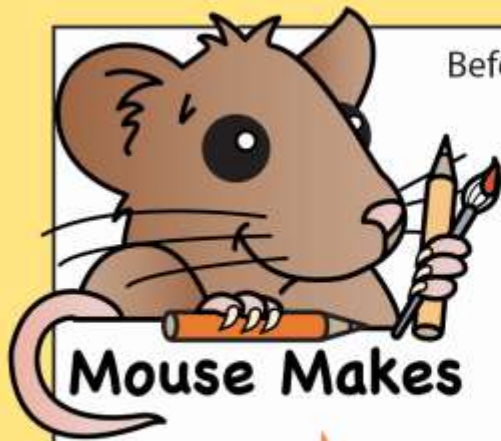
So -

It DOES matter that God is our Creator and Father - otherwise our whole life is merely a meaningless illusion.

It DOES matter that Jesus is God the Son, for otherwise His death is simply a human tragedy, with no promise of salvation or eternal life.

It DOES matter that the Holy Spirit is with us here and now, otherwise we are disconnected from God.

Yes it really does matter! Just as it is essential that a TV set can produce white by the equal intensity of all of its three colours. In fact, the more you think about it, the more it seems that the doctrine of the Trinity is far from being a complicated bit of theological nonsense, but is a sort of theological test-card, **to make sure that we've got the right picture of God, without distortion.**



Before Jesus ascended to heaven he told his disciples
*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit
 has come upon you, and you will be my
 witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea
 and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"...*
 ...When the day of Pentecost arrived,
 they were all together in one place,
 and they were all filled
 with the Holy Spirit."



READ the story
 of Pentecost
 in Acts 1-2
 Look up the Bible
 verses to find
 the answers to the
 crossword clues.

How many
 words can you
 make from
 the letters of:
 DAY OF
 PENTECOST



- 1 After Jesus ascended into heaven, which city did the Apostles return to? *Acts 1:12*
- 5a What did the Apostles devote themselves to? *Acts 1:14*
- 6 Who was chosen to replace Judas? *Acts 1:26*
- 5d Which special day was it? *Acts 2:1*

- 8 What rushing sound came from heaven? *Acts 2:2*
- 2 What appeared? Tongues of ...? *Acts 2:3*
- 4 What were the disciples filled with? *Acts 2:4*
- 9 What did they start speaking in? *Acts 2:4*
- 3 Who spoke to the crowd? *Acts 2:14*
- 7 Who had prophesied this? *Acts 2:16*

Reflecting Faith: the church as a building

Today's church buildings are rich and varied in their designs, sizes, materials, plans and groupings; from large cruciform churches to simple single room designs; from red brick to stone, and so on.

I wanted to look up some information about the fact that today's church buildings, although they may be 'modern', are usually built upon or very close to a previous church building. In other words, they stand quite literally in a long succession of church buildings.

However, on entering 'church building footprint' into the computer search engine, it responded in a related but unexpected, to me, way: '*The Energy Footprint Tool is a great way of monitoring your church building's carbon usage and energy efficiency.*'



A very real issue for today's world! - and one we are very conscious about when we enter the building on a Sunday morning to find, even with the heating turned on for a number of hours, that it is considerably cooler than our own centrally heated homes.

Whilst it is theologically wonderful to have high ceilings, we can see how future remodelling might well lower the ceilings, bring in the walls, and shrink the glassed areas.

And so it has been through the ages - church buildings have constantly been amended.

When you look carefully at a church that is more than a few hundred years old, in any part of the world, you can trace the development of its use by its architecture. Perhaps you'll see a door or window bricked up or a new one opened. The widening of the nave by the addition of arches and one or more aisles. Change in stone or building materials as later technology was available or even a change in design as new techniques came into safe use.

This month:

Have a look at a couple of local churches and spot the changes in their buildings over the years. Why do you think they took place? What changes would you make and why?

The Story behind the Hymn – ‘Praise my Soul the King of Heaven’

*Praise my soul the King of heaven,
To His feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Evermore his praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.*

*Praise Him for His grace and favour
To our fathers in distress;
Praise Him, still the same as ever,
Slow to chide and swift to bless.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Glorious in His faithfulness.*

*Fatherlike, He tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame He knows;
In His hands He gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Widely yet His mercy flows.*

*Angels in the height, adore Him,
Ye behold Him face to face;
Sun and moon bow down before Him,
Dwellers all in time and space;
Praise Him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!*

By Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

This stately poetic paraphrase of Psalm 103 has been included in probably more solemn ceremonies than any other hymn in the English language. It was even chosen by Queen Elizabeth for her wedding to the Duke of Edinburgh in 1947.

Henry Lyte had been a brilliant theological student at university in Dublin, with a gift for versifying. After graduation he moved to a tiny and remote parish in County Wexford to serve his curacy. It was here, when he was about 25, that Henry had a religious experience which would transform his life.

A close friend of his, another clergyman, had fallen ill, and was clearly dying. Henry went to visit him. The friend was not as distressed as Henry had imagined he would be. Instead, the friend confessed that he had been re-reading the New Testament, with an eye on eternity, and had made a great discovery. There was no need to rely on religious duties and formalities and good deeds to gain peace with God. Instead, we can trust completely in the mercy of Christ and His saving power.

Henry was sophisticated and had been very formal in his ministry. But this encounter with his friend's faith at death's very door, made him reconsider his faith. He wrote later that his dear friend 'who died happy in the thought that there was One who would atone for his delinquencies' made him 'study my Bible and preach in another manner than I had previously done'. And soon after this hymn appeared, in 1834.

Lyte rejoices in the majesty and wonder of the living God, who in turn loves us. He captures the measure of the Psalm in enduring lyrics, which combine time, eternity, God and man all swept up into one embrace. Its last verse summons all the created order to join in a great act of joyous praise – surely a preview of eternity!

Christian Aid Week – 12th – 18th May

Christian Aid is urging its supporters to “push back against poverty” this Christian Aid Week by bearing in mind the coming General Election.

The charity says that “people hoping to represent us” in the next UK Parliament will soon be on our doorsteps, “vying for our vote”.

Christian Aid says that these would-be MPs will: “be in listening mode, keen to hear what makes the voters in their community tick.” And so, urges the charity, Christians can use this opportunity to “show them that your church cares about poverty, and tell them that you expect them to act on poverty too, if they are elected.”

This year the charity has launched the ‘70K Challenge for May’, encouraging its supporters to do a sponsored “Move 70km during May. Walk, run, cycle, however you move is up to you.”

Details at: <https://fundraise.christianaid.org.uk>

Christian Aid Coffee Morning
on Saturday 18th May
between 10am and 12 noon
at Irby Methodist Church.

Refreshments including toast, teacakes and biscuits (Gluten free available).

Possibly a small cake stall.

Concluding with a short time of prayer.

Everyone welcome.

There will be envelopes available and Gift Aid form.

Dawpool WI - Remembrance Poppies

Dawpool WI are planning a “cargo net” display of Poppies

for Irby Village for November. If you would like to support them by knitting poppies or supplying red (poppy colour) wool, please speak to Elizabeth Barton. The knitting pattern is available at the back of church.



What's the Big Idea?

An Introduction to the Books of the Bible: Judges

Following Joshua's death, a generation grew up who didn't know God (Judges 2:11) and 'every man did what was right in his own eyes' (17:6, 21:25). The book of Judges is a study in God's response to a permissive society.

The book takes its name from the deliverers that God raised up during this time. God empowered both men and women with His Spirit to rule and deliver the people. They included Ehud, Deborah, Gideon and his son Abimelech, Jephthah and Samson. The judges operated in the 350 years (from 1050 BC) between Joshua's death and the monarchy.

We see a recurring cycle of apostasy, oppression, penitence and deliverance played out. When the people fell into sin, God sent an enemy nation to oppress them. As a result, they cried to God for help, and He responded by raising up a deliverer to free them.

The saddest words in Judges are those applied to Samson, 'He did not know that the LORD had left him' (16:20). Rejecting God in our lives can begin with tolerating those things that are not in harmony with His will for our lives. The people's toleration of the beliefs of their pagan neighbours led to a conformity in life and worship with them. Yet God waited for His people to return to Him, when He responded with grace to deliver them.

Gideon stands out as somebody who was unwilling to compromise with the surrounding culture. Despite his weaknesses, God used him to deliver Israel from the Midianite invaders. We read: 'the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon', lit: 'the Spirit clothed Himself with Gideon' (6:34). God's grace and faithfulness is at work in those who are prepared to trust Him.

Judges Cycles

Today's picture shows a cycling judge to remind us that the book of Judges is about a deadly cycle of events that repeat themselves. There are 7 'Cycles' like the number of spokes in the rear wheel. The front wheel has 5 spokes to remind us of each of the main steps in each cycle -

1. They begin by turning away from God and then **SIN** against Him
2. They soon find themselves in **SLAVERY** to their sinning
3. A first step back to God is when they say, "**SORRY**"
4. God steps in and we read that a Godly Judge **SAVED** them
5. During the reign of each Judge they know peace and **SILENCE**



Of the 13 judges we know most about the Lady Judge Deborah, the Uncertain Judge Gideon and the Strongman Judge Samson. The final words of this book sum up the whole 400 years of Judges – when 'Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.' It was chaos!

Quiz on the Book of Judges

1. Which tribe was the first to fight the Canaanites?

- Judah
- Zebulun
- Dan

2. How old was Joshua when he died?

- 80
- 100
- 110

3. Who sang a song celebrating the downfall of Sisera?

- Hannah
- Deborah & Barak
- Shamgar & Ehud

4. What offering did Gideon present to the angel of the Lord?

- Two turtle doves
- A bullock and a grain offering
- A kid and some unleavened cakes

5. How many volunteer soldiers did Gideon have initially?

- 5000
- 10000
- 32000

6. What equipment did Gideon issue to his soldiers?

- A sword, a shield and a helmet
- A trumpet, a pitcher and a torch
- Slings and stones

7. How many sons did Gideon have?

- 10
- 24
- 70

8. What was the name of Samson's father?

- Manoah
- Phileas
- Amon

9. What surprised Samson on his way to Timnah with his parents?

- A thunderstorm
- A young lion
- An attack by his enemies

10. What animal did Samson send through the Philistine fields?

- Cattle
- Foxes
- Sheep

11. Which of these was the source of Samson's strength?

- New ropes
- Uncut hair
- Woven hair

12. Where was Samson when he died?

- Philistine temple
- Delilah's house
- Jerusalem

A poetic prayer for Pentecost

Happy Birthday to all Christians,
This is where it all began;
Out from here went the apostles,
Taking Christ to everyone.

Able now to speak to nations,
With the good news to proclaim;
Crucified for our salvation,
Hear His message, learn His name.

Out they went to every corner,
Fearless as they spread the word;
Bringing light to those in darkness,
Giving hope to all that heard.

So must we with every blessing,
Follow in the steps they trod;
Showing love and help and kindness,
All come from the breath of God.

By Alan Millichip



St. Chad's Tots and Tinies

St Chad's Church (Roslin Road, Irby)

Every Thursday 9.30-11.30am
(Term Time Only)

£1.50 for one Adult and one child - All Welcome

Additional children £1.00
Additional Adults £0.50



Parents/Carers will be
responsible for their child(ren)
during the sessions

For further information
please contact **Allison**
via the Parish Office 648 8169

The first Sunday in May is Rogation Sunday. This is when many parishes still 'beat the bounds'. Rogation means an asking of God - for blessing on the seed and land. The practice began with the Romans, who processed around the cornfields each Spring, singing and dancing, sacrificing animals, in order to get rid of evil. About 465 AD the Western world was suffering from earthquake and storm. Mamertius, Bishop of Vienne, aware of the pagan custom, ordered that prayers should be said in the ruined or neglected fields. Thus 'beating the bounds' became a Christian ceremonial. It arrived in England early in the eighth century. Each Spring, led by the priest, a little party from the parish would set out with a Cross to trace the boundaries of the parish. They'd implore God to keep their corn and roots and boughs in good health, and bring them to harvest. In the days when maps were scarce, 'beating the bounds' helped remind everyone just where the boundaries were. Do you know yours today?

Sunday
 May
 Rogation
 Beat
 Bounds
 Asking
 Blessing
 Seed
 Land
 Romans
 Processed
 Cornfields
 Spring
 Earthquake
 Storm
 Prayer
 Cross
 Boundaries
 Crops
 Harvest
 Maps

H	E	M	S	S	P	S	K	I	D	R	A
E	A	S	D	L	E	I	F	N	R	O	C
Y	E	P	A	S	K	I	N	G	S	R	P
K	C	R	O	G	A	T	I	O	N	R	R
G	R	I	D	S	U	S	S	S	R	S	A
N	O	N	O	S	Q	E	E	P	S	N	Y
I	P	G	S	S	H	V	T	E	A	A	E
S	S	O	R	C	T	R	D	T	D	M	R
S	P	S	E	I	R	A	D	N	U	O	B
E	A	I	A	E	A	H	U	S	A	R	E
L	P	R	O	C	E	S	S	E	D	L	A
B	O	U	N	D	S	M	R	O	T	S	T

Answers to Quiz—page 17

1. Judah (Judges 1:2), 2. 100 (Judges 2:8), 3. Deborah & Barak (Judges 5), 4. A kid and some unleavened cakes (Judges 6:19), 5. 32000 (Judges 7:3), 6. A trumpet, a pitcher and a torch (Judges 7:16), 7. 70 (Judges 8:30), 8. Manoah (Judges 13:2), 9. A young lion (Judges 14:5), 10. Foxes (Judges 15:4), 11. Uncut hair (Judges 16:19), 12. Philistine temple (Judges 16:23-27)

God in the Sciences:

Finding Expression – and God’s Response – in Lament

The question of suffering comes up regularly in discussions about science and faith. I once visited a school to speak to some of the older teenagers. One of the pupils had sadly passed away from cancer a few weeks before and his classmates asked, “How could God let this happen?” Of course, these young people’s questions about where God was in this situation were important. But the chaplain also gently reminded the class that their friend’s family were Christians, and that they were finding that their experience of loss had brought them even closer to God than before.

One way that grief can bring us near to God is when we share it with Him, telling Him exactly how we feel. The biblical writers had no scruples about expressing themselves to God, giving vent to emotions we often hold back in a church context. As my colleague Roger Abbott has written in his book on ‘Unanswered’ Prayer, “Let us not confuse reverence with spiritual prudishness. Perhaps honesty, the way it feels, is precisely what God is waiting to hear from us.”

About one third of the Psalms express some form of grief. The book of Job is a series of responses to one man’s suffering as he loses his children, property and health in quick succession. Lamentations is also one long outpouring of sadness at what happened to Israel under the Babylonians. Some of the prophets, especially Jeremiah, also express their pain at these sort of events – which reflect something of God’s own feelings at the suffering of His people.

Most of these biblical authors would have had access to Scriptures that encouraged them to turn to God whatever the circumstances. Emboldened by their knowledge of His character and promises, these divinely inspired writers even express their anger to God about the things He lets happen, or complain that He seems to act unfairly or ignore them in their plight. Not only do these people let out all their feelings without fear of reprisal, but they also clearly expect a helpful answer. Some record a resolution to their troubles – often simply because God speaks to and comforts them, enabling them to keep going.

The biblical writers demonstrated that God can handle pretty much anything – anger, blame, bitterness – if we are actively looking to Him for help. As Pete Greig of the 24-7 prayer movement has written, “pain that is not expressed can never be transformed”.

God in the Arts : ‘Glorious the song when God’s the theme’: the Stabat Mater

May is traditionally the month of Mary, the mother of Jesus. When we read of Mary in the Gospels, we sense the heartache and trial of much of her life: a teenage mother giving birth in a stable, fleeing with her new-born baby and Joseph to Egypt, losing the child Jesus while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, following her son on His ministry but always in the background, and there at the foot of the cross as her son is crucified. It is then Mary must have thought back to that occasion in the temple when Simeon took her child and told her that a sword would pierce her own soul.

That sense of heartache and the sorrow it brings is poignantly expressed in a beautiful poem of the Middle Ages called *Stabat Mater*, which pictures Mary at Calvary and that sword of desolation and sadness that pierces her soul. We are not sure who wrote this poem. It is ascribed to Jacopone da Todi, who became a Franciscan friar on the death of his wife in the 13th century. **The contemplation of Mary’s sorrows in the *Stabat Mater*** has inspired many composers, and there are wonderful settings by Palestrina, Rossini, Dvorak, Verdi and Poulenc.

This month let’s focus on a very simple setting, but one that captures those searing pangs of sorrow at the heart of the poem. It is by Antonio Vivaldi, who was born in Venice in 1678. In 1703 he was ordained a priest, but by then he had made his name as a skilled violinist and composer. He continued to compose throughout his life: a vast amount that includes some 40 operas (though only 18 survive), 400 concertos, and over 100 choral works. In 1730 Charles de Brosses described him as ‘an old man with a prodigious fury for composition.’ For much of his life Vivaldi was music director of the Ospedale della Pieta, a music school for girls. Then in 1740 he left Venice hoping for preferment in Vienna. That was not to be, and his final days were marked by poverty and neglect, and in 1741 burial in a pauper’s grave.

Most of us know Vivaldi through the brilliance and colour of ‘The Four Seasons’ and his setting of the Gloria. The tone is more restrained in his setting of the *Stabat Mater*. There is a very fine CD recording entitled ‘Vespers of Sorrow’ where the work is linked to a sonata, a psalm setting and the Magnificat for an imagined celebration of our Lady’s feast.

The *Stabat Mater* is a long poem and Vivaldi restricted himself to setting eight verses for contralto and strings: the solo voice standing for Mary as she sings of the despair and agony as the mother of Jesus. **The opening verse, ‘At the cross her station keeping’ captures the intensity of emotion with the throbbing rhythms of the accompaniment – that mood recurs throughout the work. And then with the verse, ‘Eja Mater, fons amoris’ (O thou Mother! Fount of love!) the violins and viola accompany without any bass instruments. It is a pivotal point in the work as the solo voice cries out ‘Mater’ across the heights and depths of the music, leading into the prayer that the love of Mary will touch all human hearts. The final verse set by Vivaldi begins ‘Make me feel as thou hast felt,’ and so Mary stands for all mothers who have lost loved ones: perhaps sons killed in Afghanistan, perhaps daughters dying through disease.**

Mary’s love for Jesus, her son, touches the hearts of them and of all parents. Hers was a protective, sacrificial love that led her to the foot of the cross, where Jesus gave His mother and John, the beloved disciple, into the care of each other. The sacrificial love of a mother mirrored in the sacrificial offering of her son in death.

Julian of Norwich meditated on this motherly love in her Revelations. In chapter 60 she wrote, ‘A mother’s caring is the closest, nearest and surest for it is the truest...As we know, our own mother bore us only into pain and dying. But our true mother Jesus, who is all love, bears us into joy and endless living. Blessed may he be!’ So the protective care of mother Mary cries out to us in Vivaldi’s setting of the *Stabat Mater*. The closing lines of that poem look to Christ’s maternal love like Mother Julian:

‘Christ when Thee shall call me hence,
Be my mother, my defence,
Be thy Cross of victory.’

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MAY 2024 SERVICES

Morning Prayer St Chad's Prayer Room 9.00am MOST Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays
(check with Revd Jane for cancellations due to other meetings or commitments)

EVERY Wednesday 10.30am HC at St Chads

Sun 5th May	9.00am BCP Communion at St Bartholomew's 10.30am Holy Communion at St Bartholomew's
Sun 12th May	9.00am BCP Communion at St Bartholomew's 10.30am All Age service at St Chad's
Sun 19th May PENTECOST	9.00am BCP Communion at St Bartholomew's 10.30am Morning Worship at St Bartholomew's
Sun 26th May TRINITY SUNDAY	9.00am BCP Communion at St Bartholomew's 10.30am Communion at St Chad's with Junior Church
Sun 2nd June	9.00am BCP Communion at St Bartholomew's 10.30am Holy Communion at St Bartholomew's 3.00pm Choral Eucharist at Chester Cathedral to celebrate thirty years of the ordination of the women priests in the Church of England.

Prayer for May 2024

Dear Lord,

May, the loveliest of months – and this year, as we welcome the blossom and the beauty of late Spring, we also welcome Your Holy Spirit afresh, as we celebrate Pentecost.

May we open our hearts to receive Your Spirit, as Your people did on that first Day of Pentecost. May we be filled and empowered and emboldened to witness to Your goodness and love.

May we be transformed by Him and reflect Your transforming grace to the broken world in which we live. May people who meet us ask, "What does this mean?" May they turn to You and hear You speaking in ways they can understand.

Without Your Holy Spirit we can do nothing. With Him living in us, we can do all things.

Come Holy Spirit, come to us, we pray,
In Jesus' name.
Amen.