

# CORNERSTONE

The Magazine of  
**WITNEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**



Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone.  
In Him the whole fabric is bound together, as it grows into a temple,  
dedicated to the Lord (Ephesians 2:21)

## February & March 2025

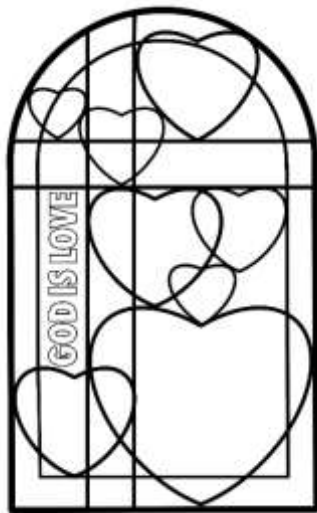
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This is the first edition of the magazine for 2025, and, as at this time last year, I hoped it would be a good year. However, a year has passed by and the scenario is much worse especially Russia and the Ukraine, in Israel and Palestine, in Yemen and so many troubled places of the world; and therefore, we must pray for the leaders of the nations, that they would be wise, just and compassionate as they exercise their authority.

Once again, and as stated in previous editions, I hope this edition of the magazine will keep reminding you that you are not forgotten; may God bless us for He alone is our refuge and strength when times get tough. May we continue to do our work for Him in the grace which He alone can provide



I now turn to some of this month's contents: Tony Houghton gives us two books & Lesley Barter gives us Carpe Diem, and along with the standard contributions, some articles have been extracted from Parish Pump, to name but a few

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone

to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition by either:

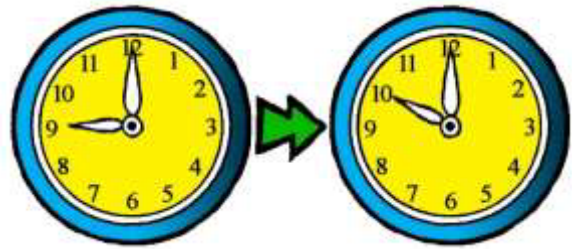
E-mail: [terrypowlesland@uwclub.net](mailto:terrypowlesland@uwclub.net)

[jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net](mailto:jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net)

or, just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up

The next 2-monthly edition, covering April & May is due on **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April**

Your Editor



**BST starts on 30<sup>th</sup> March**

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# February & March 2025 Diary

**Services:** 10.30am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month

## Feb

|                  |         |                                  |           |
|------------------|---------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | 11.00am | Saturday Praise                  |           |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | am      | Rev Judi Holloway                |           |
|                  | pm      | Revs Bryan Doyle & Judi Holloway | Communion |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>  | am      | Rev Bryan Doyle                  |           |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> | am      | David Kinchin                    | Communion |
| 23 <sup>rd</sup> | am      | Rev Bryan Doyle                  |           |

## Mar

|                  |         |                              |           |
|------------------|---------|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | 11.00am | Saturday Praise              |           |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | am      | Nanna Blackman               |           |
|                  | pm      | Rev Elaine Kinchin           | Communion |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>  | am      | Rev Bryan Doyle              |           |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> | am      | Rev Judi Holloway            | Communion |
| 23 <sup>rd</sup> | am      | Rev Bryan Doyle              |           |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> | am      | Rev Bryan Doyle              |           |
|                  | pm      | Madley Park Residential Home | 3.00pm    |

## Apr

|                 |         |                   |           |
|-----------------|---------|-------------------|-----------|
| 5 <sup>th</sup> | 11.00am | Saturday Praise   |           |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> | am      | Rev Judi Holloway |           |
|                 | pm      | Nanna Blackman    | Communion |

The following events are given for your particular attention:

## Feb

|                  |                            |  |                 |
|------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------|
| 4 <sup>th</sup>  | Chair-based Exercise Class | repeated on 18 <sup>th</sup> /25 <sup>th</sup> | 10.45 – 11.45am |
| 5 <sup>th</sup>  | Hi 5's Fish & Chips Supper | Wednesday                                      | 6.00pm          |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> | Witney Book Circle         |  | 10.30am         |

## Mar

|                  |                              |  |                 |
|------------------|------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| 5 <sup>th</sup>  | Hi 5's Indoors Treasure Hunt | Wednesday                                      | 6.00pm          |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> | Chair-based Exercise Class   | repeated on 18 <sup>th</sup> /25 <sup>th</sup> | 10.45 – 11.45am |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> | Witney Book Circle           |  | 10.30am         |

## Apr

|                 |                            |                              |               |
|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| 5 <sup>th</sup> | Hi 5's Beetle Drive        | Saturday                     | 6.00pm        |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> | Chair-based Exercise Class | repeated on 15 <sup>th</sup> | 10.45 – 11.45 |

## Rotas

### WELCOMING TEAM

|            |    |                   |
|------------|----|-------------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 02 | Jean Hodgson      |
|            | 09 | Janet Hayes       |
|            | 16 | Pat Smith         |
|            | 23 | Lesley Barter     |
| <b>Mar</b> | 02 | Jacqui Powlesland |
|            | 09 | Janet Hayes       |
|            | 16 | Jean Hodgson      |
|            | 23 | Lesley Barter     |
|            | 30 | Jacqui Powlesland |
| <b>Apr</b> | 06 | Janet Hayes       |
|            | 13 | Lesley Barter     |



## FLOWERS

|            |    |                   |
|------------|----|-------------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 02 | Janet Hayes       |
|            | 09 | Jacqui Powlesland |
|            | 16 | Judi Holloway     |
|            | 23 | Rita Hayes        |
| <b>Mar</b> | 02 | Janet Hayes       |
|            | 09 | Jacqui Powlesland |
|            | 16 | Judi Holloway     |
|            | 23 | Rita Hayes        |
| <b>Apr</b> | 30 | Janet Hayes       |
|            | 06 | Jacqui Powlesland |
|            | 13 | Judi Holloway     |



## SUNDAY COFFEE

|            |    |                                   |
|------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 02 | Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack          |
|            | 09 | Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward    |
|            | 16 | Jacqui & Terry Powlesland         |
|            | 23 | Janet Hayes                       |
| <b>Mar</b> | 02 | Elaine Kinchin & Heather Houghton |
|            | 09 | Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack          |
|            | 16 | Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward    |
|            | 23 | Janet Hayes                       |
| <b>Apr</b> | 30 | Jacqui & Terry Powlesland         |
|            | 06 | Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack          |
|            | 13 | Elaine Kinchin & Heather Houghton |



## THURSDAY COFFEE

(10 – 12)

Soup Lunch (12.00 – 1.00)

|            |    |                |
|------------|----|----------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 06 | Elaine Kinchin |
|            | 13 | David Kinchin  |
|            | 20 | Judi Holloway  |
|            | 27 | Ann Clack      |
| <b>Mar</b> | 06 | Jean Hodgson   |
|            | 13 | Elaine Kinchin |
|            | 20 | Judi Holloway  |
|            | 27 | David Kinchin  |
| <b>Apr</b> | 03 | Ann Clack      |



Nanna Blackman as standby - We would be extremely grateful for other people to join

## SOUND SYSTEM

|            |    |                  |
|------------|----|------------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 02 | Terry Powlesland |
|            | 09 | Nanna Blackman   |
|            | 16 | Nanna Blackman   |
|            | 23 | Tony Houghton    |
| <b>Mar</b> | 02 | Terry Powlesland |
|            | 09 | Tony Houghton    |
|            | 16 | Terry Powlesland |
|            | 23 | Nanna Blackman   |
| <b>Apr</b> | 30 | Tony Houghton    |
|            | 06 | Terry Powlesland |
|            | 13 | Nanna Blackman   |



**For ALL the Rotas, every effort has been made to meet individual circumstances.**  
However, if the dates are not convenient for you, please change with someone else

**Feb** 04 Elaine Beechey  
08 Pat Brent  
13 Judi Holloway  
16 Leah Cotton  
22 Dave Wesson  
24 Marion Kew



**Mar** 08 Joan Currie  
11 Lesley Barter  
17 Willow Birdseye-Hartshorn  
22 Peter Sellman  
28 Wendell La Fortune  
30 Sue De Fraine

**Apr** 04 Sarah Murrey

The following have been extracted from Parish Pump:

### **Bishop**

A vicar was expecting his Bishop to come for lunch. He told his small son to be very polite to the visitor, and to address him as 'My Lord.' As they all sat down, the bishop smiled at the little boy and asked him how old he was. The little boy gulped and said: "My God, I'm seven."

### **No news**

A traveller was marooned in a small town because of a landslide caused by heavy rain. It fell in torrents for three days. Looking out of the window of the restaurant, he finally remarked to the waitress: "This is like the flood."

"The what?"

"The flood. Surely you have heard about the great flood and Noah and the Ark?"

"Sorry, sir," she replied. "I haven't seen a newspaper for four days."

### **Visit**

The new vicar was doing the rounds to meet his parishioners. At one house where he knocked, a woman inside called out: "Is that you, Angel?"

The vicar hesitated and then called back: "No, but I'm from the same department."

### **Car-ride**

A teenager who had just received her provisional licence offered to drive her parents to church. After a hair-raising ride, they finally reached their destination. The mother got out of the car and said in a quiet but fervent voice: "Thank you!"

"Anytime," her daughter replied.

As the woman slammed the car door she said, "I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to God."

## Minister's Letter

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Here we go again! Another year, another leg on life's journey together.

Before we look ahead, let's reflect on the past for a moment, with a specific focus on God and His goodness toward us.

"Footprints" by Mary Stevenson, is a beautiful poem which highlights God's goodness and His constant presence in our lives:

*One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.*

*Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.*

*In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.*

*Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,*

*Other times there were one set of footprints.*

*This bothered me because I noticed  
That during the low periods of my life,  
When I was suffering from anguish, sorrow  
or defeat,*

*I could see only one set of footprints.*

*So I said to the Lord, "You promised me  
Lord, that if I followed You,*

*You would walk with me always.*

*But I have noticed that during the most  
trying periods of my life*

*There have only been one set of footprints  
in the sand.*

*Why, when I needed You most, You have  
not been there for me?"*

*The Lord replied,*

*"The times when you have seen only one  
set of footprints in the sand,  
Is when I carried you."*

Let's look back and remember God's goodness, through the good times and the difficult ones, and let's praise and thank Him for His faithfulness, and for being our constant companion who loves us with an immeasurable love.

I hope and pray that as we go forward, we'll be able to live our lives to the full, being single-minded for Jesus – living in Him and for Him!

As Paul writes in Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me,"* and Luke writes in Acts 17:28, *"For in Him we live and move and have our being."*

Let us live each day in faith, trusting that the Lord is our strength, hope, peace and joy, and let's walk with Him, in a loving relationship, so that as children of God, we live out His purposes for our lives, to His glory.

I pray that each of us will have a deeply intimate relationship with Jesus, and live Christ-centred and Spirit-filled lives, and that our journey with Jesus will be one in which we not only seek His face but hear His beautiful voice as we speak with Him.

I close with these words from a wonderful hymn, *I serve a risen Saviour*, written by A.H. Ackley, and trust that they encourage you on your journey with Jesus:

*"I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today.*

*I know that He is living, whatever men may say.*

*I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer;*

*And just the time I need Him, He's always near  
He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me along  
life's narrow way.  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives?  
He lives within my heart.  
In all the world around me, I see His loving care,  
And though my heart grows weary, I never  
will despair;  
I know that He is leading, through all the  
stormy blast;  
The day of His appearing will come at last.  
Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your  
voice and sing  
Eternal hallelujahs, to Jesus Christ the  
King!  
The hope of all who seek Him, the help of  
all who find,  
None other is so loving, so good and kind."*

Let Jesus be our *all-in-all* !

Your brother in Christ,

Bryan

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The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **What you have in common with a woodcarving?**

Woodcarving isn't as straightforward as it seems. You don't begin with a block of wood; you begin with a piece of paper. The first step is to draw a plan of what you want to carve, and only when you've got

that right do you start to shape your piece of wood.

The carver then works his block with his plan alongside it. He cuts those bits of wood away that he doesn't want, and shapes what's left until it ever more closely resembles that original plan.

Only when the design on the wood and the paper plan *are identical* has the carver finished his job. He's then made exactly what he'd hoped for, while working all along from that original plan.

It's the same for our lives. God is the master carpenter. He has a unique plan for each one of us, which is a blueprint of what He hopes we will become.

As we go through life, God shapes us, cutting away those bits of us that He doesn't want and which would spoil what He hopes we'll come to look like. He then gradually moulds what's left until we look ever more like that original blueprint. Only when the two are identical will God's work be over.

But there's one big difference between a human being and a block of wood. A block of wood sits impassively on the carver's bench while he works at it. The wood cannot help the process along and has no idea what's happening to it.

God very much hopes that we'll help Him in the process of being moulded and shaped into His pattern. That's why we read the Bible and worship and pray: to find out just what His plan is for each one of us. Only when we have some idea of what He wants us to be can we help Him in the process.



## PRAYER LETTER No 216

### Are you doing justice to prayer?

This morning as I opened my email inbox up popped an email from Pinterest showing different ways to pray – sitting down, standing up with your head bowed, while walking, or kneeling, with your hands up reaching to the skies, bowing or prostrate, and a whole raft of other ways. Each picture shown was linked to a different bible passage – sitting down: 1 Chronicles 17: 25-27; standing up: Mark 11:25; and so on. It made me pause and reflect on my own prayer life. Had I got into a rut? Was I guilty of sticking to easy prayer and what was familiar? 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 reminds us “Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Jesus Christ”.

When we think of ‘justice’, we tend to think of doing wrong, or having wrong done to us, and criminal justice which goes through the court system. But what about doing wrong by God? What about prayer and whether we are doing justice to our prayer life and our relationship with God. Looking at the email I’d received I realised that I maybe wasn’t doing Him justice at all!

How do you go to God? Do you always kneel, or sit when you speak to God? Has your prayer life become narrow and stunted, preferring to stick to the same few subjects that you take to Him? Sometimes we need reminding of the many ways we can meet with God. Maybe it is time for a review – a pause, time for a ‘clear out’, a refresh, maybe even starting again!

Recently, through a variety of reasons, none of which were excusable, I had got into bad habits, praying for just a few things that I needed help with. I needed reminding, “Be persistent in prayer, and keep alert as you pray, giving thanks to God”. Colossians 4:2

Stop, breathe, order your thoughts. Use whatever resources you have access to, to help you. Make some notes, use objects around you, use the season or the day behind or ahead of you. Maybe a poem or a psalm or a hymn could inspire you and trigger your thoughts. Whether you pray kneeling by your bed, or jogging in the park, do it justice. I urge you to STOP and think rather than launching straight into your prayers. You owe it to yourself, as well as God to make a change and do it justice.

And remember “For this reason I tell you: when you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you ask for”. Mark 11:24

Lord,

I’m sorry for the way I often come to you,

In a rush, no time, without preparation.

Without justice to its importance.

Help me to use the tools around me to guide my thoughts.

Keep my prayers fresh,

Keep my prayers purposeful,

And most of all help me to grow my faith through talking with you.

Amen.

*This is largely based on a reflection in the Congregational Federation Life Light series. Permission was granted by its author, Kathy Shaw.*

Every Blessing, Elaine



The following article, written by Rev Dr Herbert McGonigle, formerly principal of the Nazarene Theological College, Manchester, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and considers prayer, and is entitled:

## ***Prayers of the Bible: Praying in your Discouragements***

*'Moses said to the Lord, "...I am not able to carry all these people alone, the burden is too heavy for me..." Numbers 11:10-15.*

Moses prayed this prayer in a day of dark depression and discouragement. The opening verses of the chapter relate how divine punishment fell on the people of Israel because they complained about almost everything. Moses prayed and the punishment stopped but not the people's complaints. They wanted meat to eat.

For years they had been sustained by manna from heaven, but now they longed for the fish, cucumbers and melons they had eaten in Egypt (vv.5,6). They forget how the Lord had delivered them from Pharaoh's bondage. Now they preferred Egyptian food, and the slavery that went with it, to the goodness of the Lord and His provision for them.

Moses was beside himself with despair. Would these ungrateful people never stop complaining? Then the Lord's anger threatened the people again (v.10). Moses was caught in the middle. On one side of him the people complained, and on the other side God's wrath was about to fall. Moses couldn't go on.

His frustration broke out in petulant questions to the Lord. 'Why are you dealing so severely with me?' 'Why do you lay this burden on me?' 'Did I conceive these people?' 'Why am I a nursing mother to them?' 'Am I responsible for getting them to Egypt?' 'How can I provide meat for so many?'

'Lord, this burden is too great for me.' 'I'd rather die now than go on like this' (see vv.11-15).

Moses was depressed, irritable and resentful. He poured it all out before the Lord. It was a prayer born of frustration and anger. He was angry with his ungrateful congregation, and he was angry with God. Why did the Lord leave it all to him? After all, it was God's plan to bring the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. Moses had only gone along with it because God commanded him. But now it was all too much. Worn out with listening to the people's whining and not sure of what God would do next, Moses had had enough. He blamed the Lord for giving him a burden he couldn't carry, and he wanted to die.

But God answered Moses graciously! He understood the frustration, the petulance, the lack of faith and the rebellious spirit that blamed God for it all. He provided Moses with seventy elders who eased the burden of leadership (vv.16, 17). He sent an east wind that brought quails into the camp and provided meat for them (vv.31, 32). In grace and mercy God 'overlooked' the faults of Moses and sent him help and refreshment.

In our deepest disappointments, God understands. In our frustrations, God is merciful. When we lash out at circumstances and even at God Himself, He does not answer in kind. In our deepest discouragement, His love and grace and understanding are with us still.



The following article has been written and submitted by Lesley Barter, and is entitled:

## **Carpe Diem**

According to a recent survey of people in their teens and twenties living in the UK are less likely to be atheists than their parents or grandparents. In fact, they are more likely to describe themselves as 'spiritual' than does the older generation.

On the face of it this is good news to those of us of the older generation who are going against the general trend and attending church regularly. However, it does not mean that we can expect to see crowds of them worshipping with us any time soon. The survey also makes it clear that they are 'put off by organised religion'. Figures from the Church of England show that almost a third of churches have zero children in their congregation. Sobering data indeed.

What does engage young people is 'enjoying nature' and 'mindfulness'. They are clearly seeking some deeper meaning for their lives than ubiquitous consumerism offers, but they are not finding it in churches – or even mosques. This is an age-old problem. We read accounts of it in the Bible over and over again. In the Old Testament God's chosen people keep forgetting their side of His Covenant with them and looking for spiritual fulfilment in the old pagan Gods or in Worldly Things. How history repeats itself. One of the problems is that being a Christian is hard work. It involves self-sacrifice, turning the other cheek and giving up our precious time for other people. No wonder we are tempted to take the easier route through life. But it does leave a certain hollowness and it is

this that our young people are seeking to fill.

There are no easy answers to this dilemma but we do need to look further than what we are offering now on our Christian menu. Sunday worship is not hitting the spot for young people who have not been brought up in churchgoing families. We have to find new times and places to engage with them and we have to make Christianity attractive, not simply formulaic. I am not expecting we at Witney Congregational Church to solve this problem, but it would be good to think and pray about it. It is the right moment – if not now, when? With God's guidance we need to seize the day.

(Acknowledgement to The Times newspaper 25.01.25)

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## **THANK YOU!**

I would like to thank all my Church Family for the lovely 25 Year's Service plaque and Gift Voucher together with the lovely card with all your lovely messages inside. It was really appreciated and a surprise!

I would also like to thank you for all your prayers and support over the last few months for Alan and myself.

As many of you know Alan passed away a week ago and I would like to thank all my Church Family for their cards and messages of support during this time. It was a big shock at the speed in which his illness took him and to feel your love and prayers was a great blessing.

Thank you  
Sue

The following article has been written & submitted by Tony Houghton, and is entitled:

## Two new books



We have had a couple of new acquisitions at St Andrew's Bookshop that you might be interested in. The first is a very easy to read, beautifully presented Bible and the second a lovely reflective poetry book by a local author.

The New Easy Read Bible Gospel Story has just been published by the Bible Trust. It is in easy to read language and weaves the gospels into one narrative. It is also beautifully illustrated with gorgeous photographs celebrating the wonders of nature. Amazingly this attractive little book is only £1 at St Andrew's. Make sure you go and get a copy or several to give to people who have not yet met Jesus. Be guided as the Holy Spirit leads to reach out to the lost.

There is also a full Bible version which includes a more selective sequence of events from the Old Testament. (only £3.99)

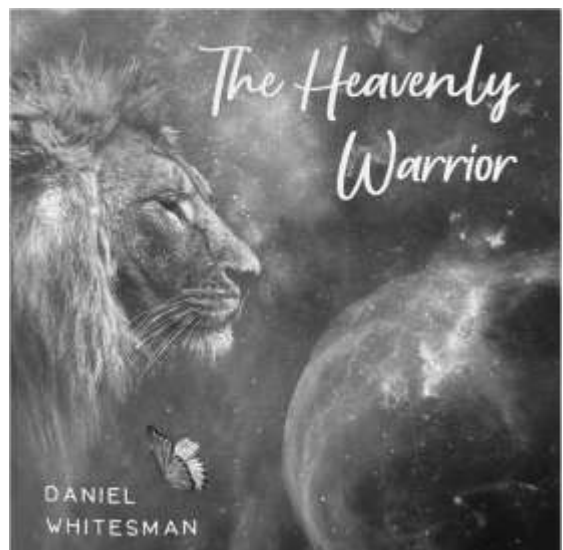
The second new book I wanted to highlight is called *The Heavenly Warrior* by Daniel Whitesman who lives in Oxford. He has written a number of reflective poems. Each poem is based on Bible verses which are given at the beginning of the poem. Again, it is a beautifully presented book in that for each poem there is a stunning photograph to help a time of reflection with the Lord.

The author came into the shop the other week. I asked him if I might adjust the words of one of the poems a little so that it could be brought forward as a worship song. Here are the first couple of verses from his poem, "Be still and bow down."

Be still and know the presence of his fire  
Hear the angel choirs lift you ever higher  
His flaming presence, cleanse you and refine  
His voice internal, whispers, "You are mine."

Let heaven's sounds ring around your ears  
And commune with Him, He who spans the years

Lift worship to Him, Ancient of all Days  
Raise your hands to sing, joyful words of praise



The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **All in the month of February**

175 years ago, on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1850 that Cesar Ritz, the Swiss hotelier, was born. He founded several notable hotels including the Ritz and Carlton Hotels in London, and the Hotel Ritz in Paris.

125 years ago, on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 1900 that the Labour Party was founded in the UK.

Also 125 years ago, on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 1900, that the German football club FC Bayern Munich was founded.

90 years ago, on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1935 that US President Franklin D Roosevelt banned aircraft from flying over the White House – because the noise kept him awake at night. The ban remains in place today, but mainly now for security reasons.

Also 90 years ago, on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 1935 that British radio engineer Robert Warson-Watt demonstrated a working radar system for the first time, in Daventry.

80 years ago, during Feb 1945 that Anne Frank died. The young Dutch Jewish diarist and Holocaust victim died in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the age of 15, probably from typhus.

Also 80 years ago, from 4<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1945 that the Yalta Conference took place in Crimea. US President Franklin D Roosevelt, Winston Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin met to plan the final defeat of Nazi Germany. Stalin also agreed to enter the war in the Pacific, within three months of the war in Europe ending.

Also 80 years ago, on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 1945 that Bob Marley, the Jamaican reggae/ska/rock steady singer, songwriter was born. He became a musician and cultural icon (died 1981).

Also 80 years ago, on 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1945 that the bombing of Dresden took place. The Allies carried out four massive bombing raids, completely destroying the inner city, and killing about 25,000 people.

Also 80 years ago, on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb to 26<sup>th</sup> Mar 1945 that the Battle of Iwo Jima, Japanese volcanic islands, took place. The iconic photo of US Marines triumphantly rising the American flag on top of Mount Surabachi was taken on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb.

Also 80 years ago, on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 1945 that Eric Liddell, Scottish athlete, died. An Olympic gold medallist in 1924 (400 m), he had withdrawn from the 100m heat because it was held on a Sunday and entered the 400 m instead. The story is featured in the film *Chariots of Fire*. (Liddell died in a WWII internment camp in China, aged 43.)

75 years ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1950 that the world's first payment by credit card took place. The founders of Diners Club (now Diners Club International) used it to pay their restaurant bill at Majero's Cabin Grill in New York City.

70 years ago, from 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 1955 to March that Britain's Big Freeze took place. Deep snow and freezing temperatures caused havoc, with many places cut off. The RAF dropped food and medical supplies to affected areas, while thousands of sheep died from exposure.

65 years ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1960 that the Hollywood Walk of Fame was established in Hollywood. It consists of more than 2,700 stars embedded in the pavement, that bear the names of notable figures from the entertainment industry.

Also 65 years ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1960 that Queen Elizabeth II issued an Order-in-Council stating that she and her family would be known as the House of Windsor, and that her descendants would use the surname Mountbatten-Windsor.

50 years ago, on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1975 that Margaret Thatcher became the first female leader of the Conservative Party. She became Britain's first female Prime Minister in 1979.

Also 50 years ago, on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 1975 that P G Wodehouse died. This well-loved British-born American comic novelist, short story writer, lyricist and playwright is best known as the creator of Jeeves.

40 years ago, on 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985 that the Mayor of New York City, Ed Koch, adopted the song *New York, New York* by Franck Sinatra as the city's official anthem.

Also 40 years ago, on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985 that the Islamic militant group and political party Hezbollah was founded in Lebanon.

30 years ago, on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1995 that the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation held an emergency summit in Cairo, where they reaffirmed their commitment to the Middle East peace process.

Also 30 years ago, on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1995 that the environmental campaign group Greenpeace discovered Shell's plan to dump its defunct *Brent Spar* oil rig in the Atlantic. It launched an international campaign to stop it, and the rig eventually was taken to Norway where it was dismantled and part of it were used to extend a quay.

Also 30 years ago, on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1995 that James Herriot, veterinary surgeon and best-selling author, died. Best known for his autobiographical book *All Creature Great and Small*, which was adapted into a popular TV series.

Also 30 years, on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 1995 that Barings Bank, the oldest merchant bank in London, collapsed after its chief trader in Singapore, Nick Lesson, lost £827 million on unauthorised transactions.

25 years ago, on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb to 29<sup>th</sup> May 2000 that the British government suspended the Northern Ireland Assembly, after it failed to strike a deal on decommissioning IRA weapons.

20 years ago, on 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2005 that yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur broke the record for the fastest solo circumnavigation of the globe, gaining international renown.

Also 20 years ago, on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2005 that Charles, Prince of Wales, and Camilla Parker Bowles announced their engagement. They were married on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

Also 20 years ago, on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2005, that North Korea confirmed it had nuclear weapons.

Also 20 years ago, on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2005 that YouTube, the online video-sharing service, was founded. It was purchased by Google in 2006.

Also 20 years ago, on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2005 that the Kyoto Protocol came into effect. The international treaty obliges industrialised nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

15 years ago, on 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2010 that Wikileaks published the first classified documents leaked by US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning. In total, she sent Wikileaks nearly 750,000 sensitive documents. She was arrested and served seven years in prison.

The following article, written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith, and is entitled:

## **God in the Sciences: The Love of Wisdom of Natural Things**

Some time ago a scientist was invited to speak at the Dewsbury Women's Institute. He spoke about his research on polymers, hoping that the women of this Yorkshire mill town would connect with his desire to develop new fibres.

One person in particular, a woman called Betty who had worked in a mill since the age of 15, listened as if her life depended on it, and peppered him with questions afterwards. She had always been interested in how things work, but until that day had not found anyone to answer her questions. Whenever she had asked about the processes that they were using in the mill, she was just told to get on with her job.

From the outside, science can seem a closed specialty, hemmed in by intimidating jargon. When McLeish described science as 'the love of wisdom of natural things', however, he realised he was opening a door. He was moved to see that Betty was not the only person who shed a tear when her questions were finally taken seriously, confirming that her enquiring mind was indeed probing in the right direction – only 50 years too late.

Hearing about people like Betty reminds me that science is a very natural activity for anyone to be involved in. McLeish is convinced that there is a future in 'science therapy'. In his book *Faith and Wisdom in Science*, where this story appears, he asks the question "If a reintroduction to the

activity of representing both inner and outer worlds in paint, music and drama can help to heal minds, what hope might there be for a participation in a gentle and contemplative science in restoring a broken or misunderstood relationship with the physical world?"

This story inspired me to run a number of hands-on science activities with adult audiences in churches. I have extracted DNA from strawberries with a midweek group for older people, organised hands-on exhibits to liven up lecture or discussion events, and even had groups extracting DNA from their own cheek cells.

Every time I lead activities like these, I find that grown-ups are grateful for the opportunity to have a go at science themselves. I love helping church-based groups, in particular, to reconnect with science and celebrate what they find. Science is not just for children and professionals – it is for everyone to enjoy and explore the world God made.

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The following article, written by Tim Lenton, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and looks back on an exceptionally bitter winter, and is entitled:

## **The Big Freeze of 1955**

Seventy years ago, from early February 1955 and well into March, a Big Freeze took place in Britain. Deep snow and freezing temperatures caused havoc, with many places cut off. The RAF dropped food and medical supplies to affected areas, while thousands of sheep died from exposure.

Although the winters of 1947 and 1963 have attracted more publicity, 1955 saw severe weather in most parts of Britain, as well as in other parts of Europe and North America.

Snow fell in many areas of the UK from 11<sup>th</sup> February onwards, with night frosts gradually worsening and blizzards developing over the north of Scotland, where the RAF scrambled to do several rescues: in Caithness the response by emergency services was known as Operation Snowdrop. An exhausting search for a postman from Thurso, who went missing in the deep snow, eventually led to his being found at a remote farm where he had sought refuge.

Several snowploughs were stranded, and the heavy snow spread gradually south, reaching as far as the Scillies and the Channel Islands. In North Norfolk there were 10ft drifts on the coast road, and Lancashire had its worst storm for 14 years. Devon, Cornwall and the Peak District had similar experiences.

More than 70 roads in Britain were blocked by snow, according to the Automobile Association, and hundreds of vehicles were abandoned in snowdrifts. Many parts of the country were cut off from essential supplies, and rail travel was disrupted. Church attendance was also hit, of course.

Temperatures in some places fell below 28F (-3C) – the lowest for 30 years, and February’s record UK minimum was set. That year also experienced the last May snowfall of the century, but despite all that, there was plenty of sunshine, and as a total contrast, there was a drought and a heatwave the following summer.

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The following article, written by Tim Lenton, has been extracted from Parish Pump, looks back on a well-loved writer, and is entitled:

## **The world of P G Wodehouse**

Fifty years ago, on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1975, P G Wodehouse died. The well-loved British-

born comic novelist, short story writer, lyricist and playwright who lived his later life in Long Island, USA is best known as the creator of Jeeves.

He was always a prolific writer, publishing more than 90 books, 450 plays, 200 short stories and much else between 1902 and 1974. He had an unusual first few years, being brought up by relative strangers in England while his parents lived in Hong Kong. He later went to Dulwich College, with which he formed a close attachment.

Wodehouse’s genius was primarily in his writing; in person he was described as “dull,” and was certainly very shy. Baptised an Anglican, he had an agnostic outlook: Evelyn Waugh once said that Christianity didn’t really apply in his work because he – or his characters – had never left the Garden of Eden. He wrote sympathetically about “pious but fallible” curates, vicars and bishops, and his work revealed an unexpectedly deep knowledge of Scripture.

Born in Guildford, he moved to France for tax reasons in 1934 and was later taken prisoner by the advancing Germans in 1940. After his eventual release he made the naïve mistake of making five broadcasts on German radio to the USA, which had not yet entered the war. The broadcasts were humorous and apolitical, but they provoked some anger in Britain, to which he never returned.

Wodehouse took US citizenship in 1955, while retaining his British one. He had always loved America, and his biographers suggested that this “exile” may have benefited his writing, helping him to go on describing an idealised England, rather than the harsher reality of the post-war years.

He died in Southampton, Long Island, New York, a month after he was made a Knight in the Order of the British Empire (KBE).

The following article, written by Canon Paul Hardingham, has been extracted from Parish Pump, continues his series on the books of the Bible, and is entitled:

## **What's the Big Idea? An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Job**

*'Why does God allow suffering?'* This is a frequently asked question of Christians, because we believe in a God who is both good and powerful and it is explored in the book of Job. This book is part of the wisdom literature, along with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Job was both wealthy and righteous, yet he experienced catastrophic suffering, losing all his wealth, children and health. This is portrayed as a result of Satan's challenge to God, testing whether Job's devotion to God was dependent on his circumstances or not.

The main body of the book (3:1-42:6) consists of dialogues between Job, his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) and God. Job and his friends assume that God is almighty and just, and that no human being is wholly innocent. In the three cycles of speeches they wrestle with the reasons for Job's suffering, remembering his morally upright character.

Finally, all are silenced by God, as He speaks Himself (chs 38-42). He points out that Job knows very little about the universe when he reflects on God's power. Job confesses his lack of understanding and weakness, but then goes on to confess his confidence and trust in God. This puts suffering in a right perspective. Job is not condemned, and the book ends with the restoration of his family and possessions.

The importance of this book is that it realistically addresses the painful questions of life, without offering simplistic answers. It focuses on *how* we should respond to

suffering, rather than on *why* God allows suffering: *'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.'* (1:21)

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The following article, written by Tim Lenton, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and looks back on a much-loved Olympic runner, and is entitled:

## **Eric Liddell – from Olympic star to Japanese internment prisoner**

Eighty years ago, on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1945, Scottish athlete Eric Liddell died. An Olympic gold medallist in 1924 at Paris, he had withdrawn from the 100m heat because it was held on a Sunday, and had entered the 400m instead. The story is featured in the film *Chariots of Fire*.

Liddell died in a Japanese internment camp in China, aged 43. He wrote to his wife on the day he died saying he was suffering from a nervous breakdown brought on by overwork, but he was also malnourished and had an undiagnosed brain tumour. Five months after his death, the camp was liberated.

Liddell was born in China to Scottish missionary parents and attended boarding school at Eltham College in South London, where he is remembered as an outstanding all-round athlete "entirely without vanity". He later went to the University of Edinburgh, which awarded him a posthumous degree last year in recognition of his contribution to sport and humanity.

Originally intending to run in the 200m at Paris, Liddell discovered en route that the heats for the event would take place on a Sunday. So, he switched to the 400m – and



won in an Olympic record time of 47.6 seconds.

“God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure,” he said.

He returned to China the following year and stayed there until his death, apart from two furloughs to Scotland, during one of which in 1932 he was ordained a minister of the Congregational Union of Scotland. He then continued his selfless missionary work, largely as a teacher, in China, where he married Florence Mackenzie, a China-born Canadian. Their daughter Heather died in 2023.

When Scotsman Allan Wells won the 100m gold medal in Moscow in 1980, he dedicated his victory to Eric Liddell.

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The following article, from The Word for Today, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **How do you keep your life going in the right direction?**

Any flying instructor will tell you that periodically all aeroplanes need to be ‘trimmed’ or ‘balanced in flight’. After flying through storms and hitting air pockets, the plane’s instruments need to be readjusted. That’s true of our attitudes too. The air currents of life can ‘knock you out of line’ and keep you from reaching your destiny. ‘Unexpected weather’ like sickness, unemployment, divorce, death and disappointment can drive you off course.

In other words, your attitude needs to be constantly checked and adjusted. Have you checked yours lately? What are you encountering that calls for an attitude change? How are you handling it? Are you adjusting or resisting? So long as you live,

you’ll always need to be ‘trimmed and balanced’.

The most important thing that affects your attitude in life is your faith, and that grows only as you live in God’s Word. That’s why God told Joshua to read the Word, speak the Word and obey the Word if he wanted to succeed.

Try the 3 x 5 Technique! Each week, write out one faith building scripture on a 3 x 5 card. Carry it with you wherever you go and memorise it. In one year, you’ll know 52 new scriptures, and more importantly, your attitudes will be in line with God’s Word, your faith will be strengthened, and your life will keep moving in the right direction.

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## **Tearfund in action in the Middle East**

As conflict in the Middle East continues, millions of people across Gaza, Lebanon and the wider region are still in urgent need of food, shelter and medical care.

One British Christian charity in the region is Tearfund, working through a variety of local churches and partners.

In Gaza, Tearfund International Health Partners provide medicine and healthcare. In Lebanon, Tearfund provides food, mattresses and other essentials through local churches. In the West Bank, Tearfund works with the Diocese of Jerusalem in healthcare and education.

But Tearfund says: “This is only possible with your support. Please, join us in prayer and give if you can, to help us respond to the growing need.”

<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/middle-east-emergency-appeal>