

# 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 2026

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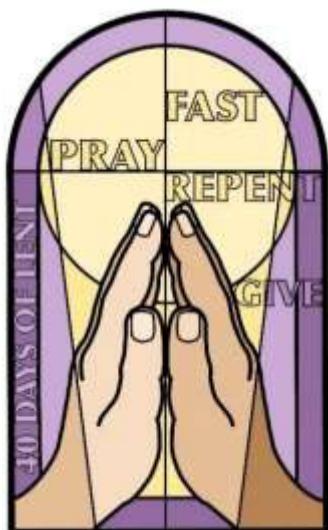
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This is the first edition of the magazine for 2026, and, as at this time last year, I hoped it would be a good year. However, a year has passed by and the scenario is much worse especially Russia and the Ukraine, in Israel and Palestine, in Yemen and 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

February brings us the beginning of Lent, & I now turn to some of this month's contents: Tony Houghton writes about the book of Psalms; Elaine Kinchin gives us the Harvest Festival; Lesley Barter gives us the un-committed Christian, 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:

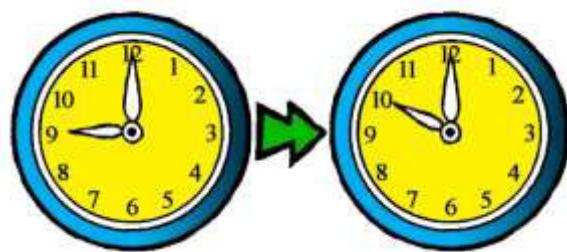
E-mail: [terrypowlesland@uwclub.net](mailto:terrypowlesland@uwclub.net)

[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 5<sup>th</sup> April**

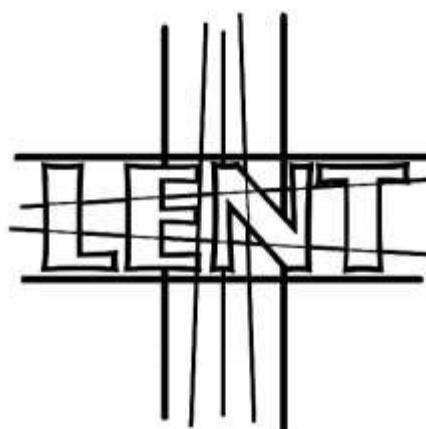
Your Editor



**BST starts on 29<sup>th</sup> March**

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# February & March 2026

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

## Feb

1 <sup>st</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	
	pm	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Communion
7 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
8 <sup>th</sup>	am	Nanna Blackman	
15 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Communion
22 <sup>nd</sup>	am	tbc	

## March

1 <sup>st</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
	pm	Nanna Blackman	Communion
7 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
8 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	
15 <sup>th</sup>	am	Tony Houghton	Communion
22 <sup>nd</sup>	am	David Kinchin	Mothering Sunday
29 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Palm Sunday
	3.00pm	Madely Park Residential Home	

## April

2 <sup>nd</sup>	6.00pm	Maundy Thursday	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Tony Houghton	Good Friday
4 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
5 <sup>th</sup>	am	tbc	Easter Sunday
	pm	No Service	

The following events are given for your particular attention:

## Feb

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Chair-based Exercise Group & repeated on 10 <sup>th</sup>	10.45 – 11.45
	Explore the Bible & Prayer Time & repeated on 24 <sup>th</sup>	12.30 – 1.30
5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Games Taster	6.00 – 8.00pm
28 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30 – 11.15

## March

5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Fish & Chips Supper	6.00 – 8.00pm
10 <sup>th</sup>	Explore the Bible & Prayer Time & repeated on 17 <sup>th</sup> ; 24 <sup>th</sup> & 31 <sup>st</sup>	12.30 – 1.30
28 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30 – 11.15

## Rotas

### WELCOMING TEAM

Feb	01	Jacqui Powlesland
	08	Jean Hodgson
	15	Janet Hayes
	22	Pat Smith
March	01	Jacqui Powlesland
	08	Jean Hodgson
	15	Janet Hayes
	22	Pat Smith
	29	Lesley Barter
April	05	Jacqui Powlesland
	12	Jean Hodgson



**FLOWERS**

<b>Feb</b>	01	Rita Hayes
	08	Judi Holloway
	15	Janet Hayes
	22	Jacqui Powlesland
<b>March</b>	01	Rita Hayes
	08	Judi Holloway
	15	Mothering Sunday
	22	Janet Hayes
	29	Jacqui Powlesland
<b>April</b>	05	Easter flowers
	12	Rita Hayes

**SUNDAY COFFEE**

<b>Feb</b>	01	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes
	08	Jacqui Powlesland & Claire Woodward
	15	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	22	Elaine Kinchin
<b>March</b>	01	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	08	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes
	15	Elaine Kinchin
	22	Jacqui Powlesland & Claire Woodward
	29	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
<b>April</b>	05	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	12	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes

**THURSDAY COFFEE (10 – 12)**

<b>Feb</b>	05	Ann Clack
	12	Jean Hodgson
	19	Elaine Kinchin
	26	Pat Smith
<b>March</b>	05	Judi Holloway
	12	David Kinchin
	19	Ann Clack
	26	Jean Hodgson
<b>April</b>	02	Elaine Kinchin
	09	Pat Smith

**SOUND SYSTEM**

<b>Feb</b>	01	Terry Powlesland
	08	Tony Houghton
	15	Nanna Blackman
	22	Terry Powlesland
<b>March</b>	01	Terry Powlesland
	08	Tony Houghton
	15	Nanna Blackman
	22	Terry Powlesland
	29	Tony Houghton
<b>April</b>	05	Terry Powlesland
	12	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
- 12 Ann White
- 16 Luke Tyrrell
- 17 Willow Birdseye-Hartshorn
- 22 Peter Sellman
- 28 Wendell La Fortune
- 30 Sue de Fraine

## Time to Remember – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Rev Kathy Shaw – Induction at Stalybridge



## Can you get across the pedestrian crossing in time?

Have you ever had to hurry to make it to safely across the street because the pedestrian crossing light is about to turn red again?

If so, you are not alone. A recent study has found that pedestrian crossing timings are simply too brief for many elderly people and especially those with mobility problems.

The length of time given at crossing points usually assumes a walking speed of 1.2m per second. But the study found that the average speed of adults aged over 65 is only 0.77m per second.

So more than half of older people need to increase their normal walking speed by about 50 per cent, just to reach the other curb safely.

One of the researchers said: "This isn't just a safety issue – it's potentially a barrier to independence, physical activity, and social connection, all of which often decline in later life."

Another said: "Allowing enough time to cross the road can boost confidence, support independence, and help them remain engaged in their communities, all key to a better quality of life."

The study was published in the journal Age and Ageing.



## PRAYER LETTER

### No 221

In the last couple of issues of Cornerstone, I have talked about Thora Hird and Roy Castle - 'celebrities' who were Christian. But what of the ordinary man (or woman) in the pew (or more comfortable chair)? In other words us?

It takes guts and a strong spiritual connection to go public with your faith. Many of us were brought up that we needed to evangelise at the same time as keeping our faith private! Not many years ago, people who knelt at the altar rail in a parish church would say they were 'making my communion'. Today we know that, even in churches which do not allow an open communion table, communion is a sharing, not only with other church members but with people around the world, with an emphasis on sharing with the poor.

Some might take exception to me using the word 'guts' at the beginning of the previous paragraph, but many of us, although we feel God's presence strongly, cannot follow the Scriptural instruction to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:19) Are we feeble or faint-hearted? Or worse still betraying God?

I think not. As the apostle Paul wrote: "But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers..." (Ephesians 4:7,11) By the way, is it time we faced up to the fact that NO minister we call can be a Master of Everything.

It seems as if we are not expected to be a Jack/Jill of all trades but instead to nourish the gift that God has chosen for us as individuals. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12, together we are a body but we are not all hands or ears or mouths – my interpretation of that: we are not all good at baking (thanks Jacqui) good at listening (thanks David) or good at evangelising (thanks Tony). I am highlighting these people deliberately: believe it or not, our church has welcomed new members and adherents because these three people have used their gifts wisely.

That last word is the key. We need to know and understand what gift(s) we have and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, use those gifts to bring the Kingdom of God here on earth. And let's pray about it!

Every Blessing, Elaine

*Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Elaine 07534 879449)*

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

## Finding our voice in the psalms



The Book of Psalms is one of the most beloved portions of Scripture, cherished by believers across centuries and cultures. With 150 individual psalms, it is the longest book in the Bible and one of the most personal. Unlike historical narratives or doctrinal letters, the Psalms give us prayers and songs that express the full range of human experience before God. They teach us not only what to believe, but how to pray, worship, and live faithfully in the midst of real life.

The Psalms were written over many centuries by different authors, most famously King David, but also Asaph, the sons of Korah, Solomon, Moses, and others. They include hymns of praise, laments of sorrow, cries for help, songs of thanksgiving, royal psalms about God's anointed king, and wisdom psalms that guide godly living. Together, they form a spiritual songbook for God's people, shaped by joy and grief, confidence and doubt, repentance and hope.

One of the greatest benefits of studying the Psalms is that they give us permission to be honest with God. The psalmists do not hide their fear, anger, confusion, or pain. They cry out, "How long, O Lord?" and ask hard questions when God seems distant. At the same time, they

consistently return to trust in God's faithfulness. As we read these prayers, we learn that God welcomes our honest hearts. The Psalms remind us that faith is not the absence of struggle, but the decision to bring every struggle before the Lord.

The Psalms also shape our understanding of who God is. They proclaim His holiness, power, mercy, justice, and steadfast love. When our circumstances tempt us to see God as distant or indifferent, the Psalms reorient our vision. They lift our eyes from our problems to the character of God, helping us anchor our lives in truth rather than emotion alone.

Applying the Psalms to daily life begins with reading them prayerfully, not just for information. A psalm can become our own prayer when we read it slowly, reflect on its words, and speak them back to God. When we are anxious, we can pray psalms of trust. When we are grateful, psalms of thanksgiving help us give voice to our praise. When we sin, penitential psalms guide us in repentance and restoration.

The Psalms also encourage us to cultivate a rhythm of worship. Many psalms were meant to be sung together, reminding us that faith is both personal and communal. Reading or singing the Psalms in worship, family devotions, or personal prayer connects us to generations of believers who have trusted the same faithful God.

In a world filled with noise and uncertainty, the Psalms teach us how to listen, pray, and rest in God. They invite us to bring our whole selves before Him and to live each day grounded in trust, hope, and praise.

On most Tuesdays from 12.30-1.30pm in the Garden Room we have a one hour time of **Exploring the Bible and Prayer** under the title of Praise Him. We are exploring a selection of the 150 psalms.

The following article has been written & submitted by Elaine Kinchin, and is entitled:

## Harvest Festival

Church meeting decided last year that we would move our Harvest Festival to the early summer as the charity which we regularly support - Witney Foodbank – needs food before the school holidays. Obviously they need food in winter too but many people and organisations remember the Foodbank at Harvest Festival time and Christmas.

In Biblical times three harvest festivals were celebrated:

- The barley harvest linked to Passover – late spring
- The wheat harvest linked to Pentecost - May
- The harvest of fruit, including grapes linked to Tabernacles, also known as Sukkot.

So, there is a tradition of believers giving collective thanks and celebrating the bounty of God.

But our modern Harvest Festival only dates back to 1843!! Rev Robert Hawker instituted the service we recognise with hymns and home-grown produce.

There had, obviously, been Christian thanksgiving to God between the early first century and 1843 but Hawker formalised the ritual and it spread around the country. He picked autumn to coincide with many harvests in England but curiously Sukkot also takes place in late September/early October.

As Witney Congregational Church has given tinned or packaged produce for many years, this bounty can be given to

the Foodbank at any time of year, we are not constrained by tradition.

I remember Harvest Festivals when my children were younger. Parents would send in produce on a Thursday. This would be packed into cardboard boxes which were left open to view on the Friday. The school would go to the Parish Church to have its own Harvest Festival. Then on Sunday more food would be added by the congregation and thanks would again be given to God.

From the Monday various volunteers would donate the boxes to the elderly or needy in the parish. Two problems occurred: the fresh produce was definitely past its best and I overheard one elderly woman saying over the fence to her neighbour: "I got a tin of tuna in my harvest box – do you want it for your cat?"

Let us go for 'best practice'. Food with a longish storage date that is suitable for modern families, who may not have adequate kitchens full of gadgets or equipment. They might have opted to use only the microwave and not the expensive -to-run oven...

Our generosity needs wisdom – thanks be to God. Let's imagine a family saying "For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful".



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

## **The Un-committed Christian**

Are you a committed Christian? I sometimes am.....and sometimes not very committed at all. And the reason is that it is so Difficult. God asks a great deal from us and He provided a perfect role model. How can we ever measure up? We take our cues from the Bible, where the prophets make no bones about human imperfection and the failure of God's Chosen to live up to His standards. The Disciples (with the help of the Holy Spirit) become martyrs and Saints. Are these unrealistic aspirations?

We do spend a lot of time apologising to God – for the ways in which we have fallen short or even actively done wrong. I often wonder what reception our requests for forgiveness get. If it were me, I would think 'O No. Not this again....' Do we just go through the motions? The spirit may be willing but the flesh is sadly weak. Are we doomed to failure? We are told that we must forgive others innumerable times, so clearly God does the same. Is this then a free pass to Paradise?

And there is the question of expediency. When faced with two evils should we be comfortable about choosing the lesser? I am drawn to political dramas where unpleasant decisions have to be made for the greater good. People have to be sacrificed in order to divert evil. How do our leaders sleep at night? Those who take the hit so that we don't have to think about it. We don't want to think about withdrawing overseas aid so that there is more money for defence. We don't want to think about doing business with countries which have poor human rights reputations in order to boost our economy and raise the standard of living for those in poverty.

Would Christ have turned away from these questions? He certainly didn't rebel against the Romans, much to the disappointment of

the Jewish people. What if he had been the kind of Messiah that people had hoped for? He could have driven out the Romans and ruled over a God-fearing people, using his rules, and the world could have been a better place? Or would it just have meant history repeating itself and people eventually forgetting about God just as they had done under the Kings of the Old Testament?

Which brings me back to commitment. I guess that we are doomed to failure as the imperfect human beings that we are, but God doesn't want us to stop trying, even if he has to listen to our endless apologies. If we choose to believe that our God is real and faithful to all his promises there will be days when we haven't the strength to do it anymore. And that is where Grace and The Holy Spirit come in.

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## **Peaceful mind**

The Bible tells the story of Jesus and His stressed disciples in a boat in a storm. Like them, we also get hit by storms in life. And like them, we can know that Jesus is also with us. Why not take a moment to ponder these promises:

Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken. (Psalm 55:22)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4: 6-8)

The following article asks: How much do your readers know about the new Archbishop, and has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **Introducing Dame Sarah Mullally: the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury**

The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE officially became Archbishop of Canterbury on 28th January 2026, when she was legally confirmed at St Paul's Cathedral.

Most people know that she had been Bishop of London for several years, and that she is the first woman to ever become Archbishop of Canterbury. But what else do you know about her?

1. She was born in Woking in 1962, and is one of four children, with two sisters and one brother.

2. She attended Winston Churchill Comprehensive School and Woking Sixth Form College. She went on to South Bank Polytechnic and Heythrop College, University of London

3. She worked as a nurse in the National Health Service, which she has described as "an opportunity to reflect the love of God". She specialised as a cancer nurse and became a ward sister at Westminster Hospital, before being made Director of Nursing at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

4. In 1999, at the age of 37, she was appointed the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England in the Department of Health. She was the youngest person ever to be appointed to the post. Bishop Sarah was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 2005 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing.

5. She had become a Christian at the age of 16. While working as the Chief Nursing Officer for England, she discerned a call to ordination and entered training ministry at the South East Institute for Theological Education.

6. She was ordained in 2001 and served her curacy in St Saviour's Battersea Fields, initially as a self-supporting minister, before leaving her government post in 2004, which she has described at the time as "the biggest decision I have ever made".

7. In 2012 she was installed as Canon Treasurer at Salisbury Cathedral and three years later took the role as Suffragan Bishop of Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter, the fourth woman to become a Bishop in the Church of England.

8. On 12th May 2018, Bishop Sarah was installed as the 133rd Bishop of London at St Paul's Cathedral, the first woman to hold the role.

9. Bishop Sarah sits in the House of Lords as one of the Lords Spirituals, having been introduced on 24th May 2018. Her maiden speech paid tribute to the NHS on its 70th anniversary, telling the Lords: "I am the Bishop I am today because of that first vocation to nursing, and compassion and healing are constants at the heart of who I am."

10. She was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council in March 2018 and became Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal in July 2019.

11. As Bishop of London, she led the Church of England's Living in Love and Faith process from 2020 to 2023. This included the formative stages of discernment and decision making which saw the introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith for same-sex couples.

12. She has served on the Church's National Safeguarding Steering Group and is also Lead Bishop for Health and Social Care issues.

13. As a Lord Spiritual, she has drawn from both her pastoral experience and her background in nursing and healthcare and has played a key role in the ongoing debates on assisted dying.

14. This year, she chaired the Triennium Funding Working Group that developed the Church of England's three-year spending plan that led to significant investments in local churches and parish clergy.

15. Archbishop Sarah is married to Eamonn, an Irish-born IT and Enterprise Architect who enjoys beekeeping and volunteering as a London tourist guide.

16. The couple have two grown-up children, Liam and Grace.

17. Archbishop Sarah has continued her interest in the health service having been a non-executive director at the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust then at Salisbury NHS Foundation Hospital.

18. She is Chair of Christian Aid.

19. She has spoken openly about her dyslexia, describing her difficulties with writing and reading.

20. In her spare time, she loves cooking, walking and pottery.

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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:

## **Fearfully and Wonderfully Made**

Every person who ever lived was once a sperm and an egg. Those two cells fused together, and in nine months they turned into a living, breathing, human being. Each of us emerged from this same embryonic development process, which is highly complex and organised, but variable enough to turn out a unique individual every time.

If you like order – such as neat piles of stationery, or tidy colour-coded files – you will enjoy this story. One of the most important stages of an embryo's development is when each section of the body, from head to rump, takes on its identity. Each part is told what shape to take, and which limbs or internal organs to grow: legs or arms, lungs or kidneys, and so on.

The most beautiful part of this body-patterning process is that it brings the dimensions of time and space together in such a neat way. The DNA instructions for the procedure, known as genes, are organised in the order in which they are needed during development which is also the order in which they appear on the body. No other sets of genes are known to be arranged in such a tidy pattern.

So, as the embryo develops, the tissues near the head end activate the first sets of genes. Those active genes then make all the proteins needed for that part of the body to grow and develop in the right way. The tissues just below the head then switch on the second set of genes, and so on. A wave of activation passes down the embryo, specifying each section of the trunk in turn.

The Wisconsin-based developmental biologist Jeff Hardin often quotes Psalm 139 to express the wonder of embryonic development. The Psalmist did not understand how this process happened, but he knew that it was a marvellous thing. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth."

The story of the tidy genes brings out the hidden beauty in the very early stages of embryonic development. The more biologists get to find out about how we came to be born, the more we can say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made"!

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The following article written by Canon Paul Hardingham, considers the temptations of Christ, and has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## How to Handle Temptation

*'I can resist everything but temptation'* (Oscar Wilde). During Lent we remember Jesus' experience in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), when *'He was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.'* (1). Temptation is a test of whether we do things our way or God's way. After 40 days of fasting Jesus was tired, hungry and vulnerable. Like Him, the Devil will attack us at our most vulnerable moments, especially when we are stressed.

***The first temptation was to turn stones into bread:*** Jesus' ministry was not about putting His own needs first, but being nourished by God's word. *'We do not live*

*by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'* (Deuteronomy 8:3). Like Jesus, we need to make God our priority and trust Him completely.

***The second temptation was to put God to the test:*** Jumping off the Temple pinnacle would have been a dramatic way for Jesus to gain popularity, but this was not God's way! *'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'* (Deuteronomy 6:16). We too need to learn this lesson!

### ***The third temptation was to worship***

***Satan:*** The devil took Jesus up a mountain to offer Him worldly power. In contrast, His calling as Messiah was to be marked by suffering and honouring God. *'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'* (Deuteronomy 6:13). This is to be our experience of living for God.

Jesus stands with us in our temptations. As we claim the promises of Scripture, like Him, we will find strength in the Spirit's power and the victory of the Cross.

*Consider these verses:*

*'Watch and pray, so that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'* (Matthew 26:41)

*'Since Jesus Himself has endured being tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.'* (Hebrews 2:18)

*'Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tested, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.'* (James 1:12)

*'If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you'll be at rest!'* (Corrie Ten Boom).

The following article has been written by the Revd Roy Shaw, a retired but active priest in the diocese of York, where he is a spiritual director, and has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

### **Winnie the Pooh and Lent 2026**

Remember the Winnie the Pooh stories? And Kanga's insistence on Baby Roo's taking his Strengthening Medicine? It's 'really quite a nice taste when you get used to it', she explained, although I'm not convinced Baby Roo always agreed.

It can be helpful to think of Lent as a sort of medicine; an opportunity to strengthen us in the things that are good, rein in other facets of our personality, and reset the compass to the true North of following Jesus. A Spring-clean of the soul, if you like.

Baby Roo (and Piglet on the one occasion he was subject to it) found Strengthening Medicine not to their liking, and we may groan inwardly at the thought of 'giving up something for Lent'. Think of what lies behind this 'giving up'. It's so that we may be strengthened, our character refined, our prejudices examined, our junk thrown overboard, and we may come to Passontide and Easter more fit to walk the way of the Cross, and rise in new life with Jesus at His Resurrection.

Nor is Lent just a case of giving up chocolate. One year I gave up Facebook for Lent, having spent far too much time scrolling through it each day. It freed me to do other, more constructive things. And instead of giving up, why not take up something you've been meaning to do but never got round to; something life-affirming, something good for God.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which this year falls on 18<sup>th</sup> February. Many Christians go public with their intention to keep a good Lent by being 'ashed' - the sign of the Cross made on the forehead in

a mixture of ash and holy oil at a special service that day. The ash is usually the burnt remains of the palm crosses from last year. Having been ashed, the intention of the 40 days of Lent is to maintain a steady course closer to God, symbolised by the giving up of something - like chocolate - which has a hold on us. We walk with Jesus on the way to the Cross, mindful of the 'riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience' as St Paul has it, and mindful too of Jesus' choice of the Cross as a way for us to enter those riches more fully.

And to face the immensity of that sacrifice, and the immensity of God's riches made available to us in Jesus, we need all the Strengthening Medicine we can get!

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The following article, written by Jane Grayshon, has been submitted by Elaine Kinchin, and is entitled:

### **Psalm 23**

In her book *Modern Day Psalms for all whose Faith is Tested* by Jane Grayshon, Jane has NOT written a paraphrase of the psalms instead she has meditated on them from a point of hurt, pain or bereavement. Here is her pondering on Psalm 23:



The corridor of my life  
unfolds steadily ahead  
and I venture

from one pool of light  
to the next  
each time I take a pace

Tantalised by hope  
disappointed by sameness

And so I learn  
the importance of this moment

And I sit awhile  
on rough stone ledge  
(who has sat here before me  
in need of a break from their  
walk?)

basking in the sun's rays  
looking out  
to where birds sing in freedom  
to where the sun shines strongly  
warming my back

Until I am ready  
to face once more  
the shadows

It's the pillars which cast the  
shadows  
undergirding, supporting pillars  
essential to strength

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The following article, written by Canon Paul Hardingham, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## An Introduction to the Old Testament: Isaiah

Isaiah is often regarded as the greatest of the prophets. His name means '*The Lord saves*' and he began his 50-year ministry in 740 BC when King Uzziah died (6:1). Many scholars challenge the claim that Isaiah wrote the entire book, however there are striking verbal parallels between chapters 1–39 and 40–66.

Isaiah spoke during the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian

empire and the decline of Israel. The Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom in 721. Judah was left to decide whether they would make alliances with other kingdoms or rely on God to protect them. Isaiah warns Judah that her sin would bring captivity in Babylon, which eventually took place in 586.

Isaiah sees the Messiah coming from the line of David. He speaks of a new temple being established (ch2); a child born with a new kingdom (ch9) and judging differently to other kings (ch11) as well as the nature of His suffering (ch53). The '*suffering servant*' (chapters 42–53) also applies to Israel as a nation, who are called to be a '*light for the Gentiles*' (42:6). Not surprisingly Jesus applies Isaiah's words to His own life and ministry. eg Is 61:1 quoted in Luke 4:18. Throughout his book Isaiah presents the full dimensions of God's judgment and salvation as '*the Holy One of Israel*' (6:1), as well as the '*Sovereign Lord*' far above all nations (40:15–24).

Isaiah looks forward to the promise of a new city of Zion (chs 60–66), in which the people offer praise to the Holy One of Israel. '*Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.*' (65:17).

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## Hymns for Professionals

Dentist - Crown Him with many crowns  
Contractors - The Church's one foundation  
Obstetricians - Come labour on  
Golfers - There is a green hill far away  
Politicians - Standing on the promises  
Librarians - Let all mortal flesh keep silent

The following article written by Tim Lenton, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **The funeral of Queen Victoria**

Exactly 125 years ago, on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1901, the funeral of Queen Victoria took place.

She had died at the age of 81 on 22 January, having ruled for nearly 64 years, and her death took her family, courtiers and subjects by surprise in difficult times. The Boer war was still in progress, and the previous year the Prince of Wales had been shot at in Belgium, by a boy who was protesting against the war.

Her third adult child – Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh – had just died, another was near death, and she herself had been confined to a wheelchair, almost blind and often confused. She died at the remote Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, and when it happened there was no-one alive who could remember how to bury a monarch.

Victoria had asked for a full military state funeral, and there were secret instructions concerning mementoes of her personal servant, John Brown. The official service in St George's Chapel was chaotic because of timing errors, but it was followed by an emotional ceremony for the family on 4<sup>th</sup> February, in the mausoleum the queen had built for her husband at Frogmore, adjoining Windsor Castle, where the Queen was laid to rest beside her much-loved Prince Albert.

The total cost was £35,500 (£4.5 million). Victoria had outlived all the members of her Privy Council alive in 1837; all the members who had sat in the House of Commons at that time; and all nine of her bridesmaids.

What has been described as the godly domesticity of the Victorian era appealed to a mainly Protestant public, centring more on morals than on radical evangelicalism and effective prayer. One historian noted the transformation in the general British attitude from “aggressive, brutal, rowdy, outspoken, riotous, cruel and bloodthirsty” to “inhibited, polite, orderly, tender-minded, prudish and hypocritical”.

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## **How people fast during Lent**

Many of us fast during Lent. It seems that the kind of fast you undertake may be connected to your denomination. A recent survey found the following:

94% Black Majority Churchgoers give up all food for a set time.

85% of Orthodox churchgoers cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

83% of Pentecostal churches give up all food for a set time.

79% of Roman Catholics cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

76% of New Churches give up all food for a set time.

57% of C of E cut out specific foods and/or drinks

30% or less of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

*The survey was done by the charity Green Christian*

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

## All in the month of February

300 years ago, on 20th Feb 1726 that William Prescott, an American colonel in American Revolutionary War was born. Famous for giving the order: "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."

200 years ago, on 4th Feb 1826 that James Fenimore Cooper's historical romance novel The Last of the Mohicans was published.

175 years ago, on 1st Feb 1851 that novelist Mary Shelley died, aged 53. Best known for her Gothic novel Frankenstein.

125 years ago, on 2nd Feb 1901 that the funeral of Queen Victoria took place.

80 years ago, on 11th Feb 1946, that the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published. It was the first major English-language update of the Bible since the King James version was published in 1611.

Also 80 years ago, on 14th Feb 1946 that the Bank of England was nationalised.

Also 80 years ago, on 19th Feb 1946 that mathematician and cryptanalyst Alan Turing presented a detailed paper for the national Physical Laboratory that gave the first reasonably complete design of a stored-programme computer.

70 years ago, on 11th Feb 1956 that two members of the Cambridge spy ring, British diplomats Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, announced that they had defected to the Soviet Union. They had both vanished in mysterious circumstances in 1951.

65 years ago, on 9th Feb 1961 that the Beatles played at the Cavern Club in Liverpool for the first time.

50 years ago, on 11th Feb 1976 that John Curry won Britain's first-ever Olympic gold medal in figure skating.

Also 50 years ago, on 23rd Feb 1976 that artist the L S Lowry died. Known for his bleak industrial landscapes of north-west England, populated with matchstick men.

40 years ago, on 12th Feb 1986 that the Treaty of Canterbury was signed by Britain and France. It was the agreement to construct the Channel Tunnel linking the two countries. The tunnel opened in 1994.

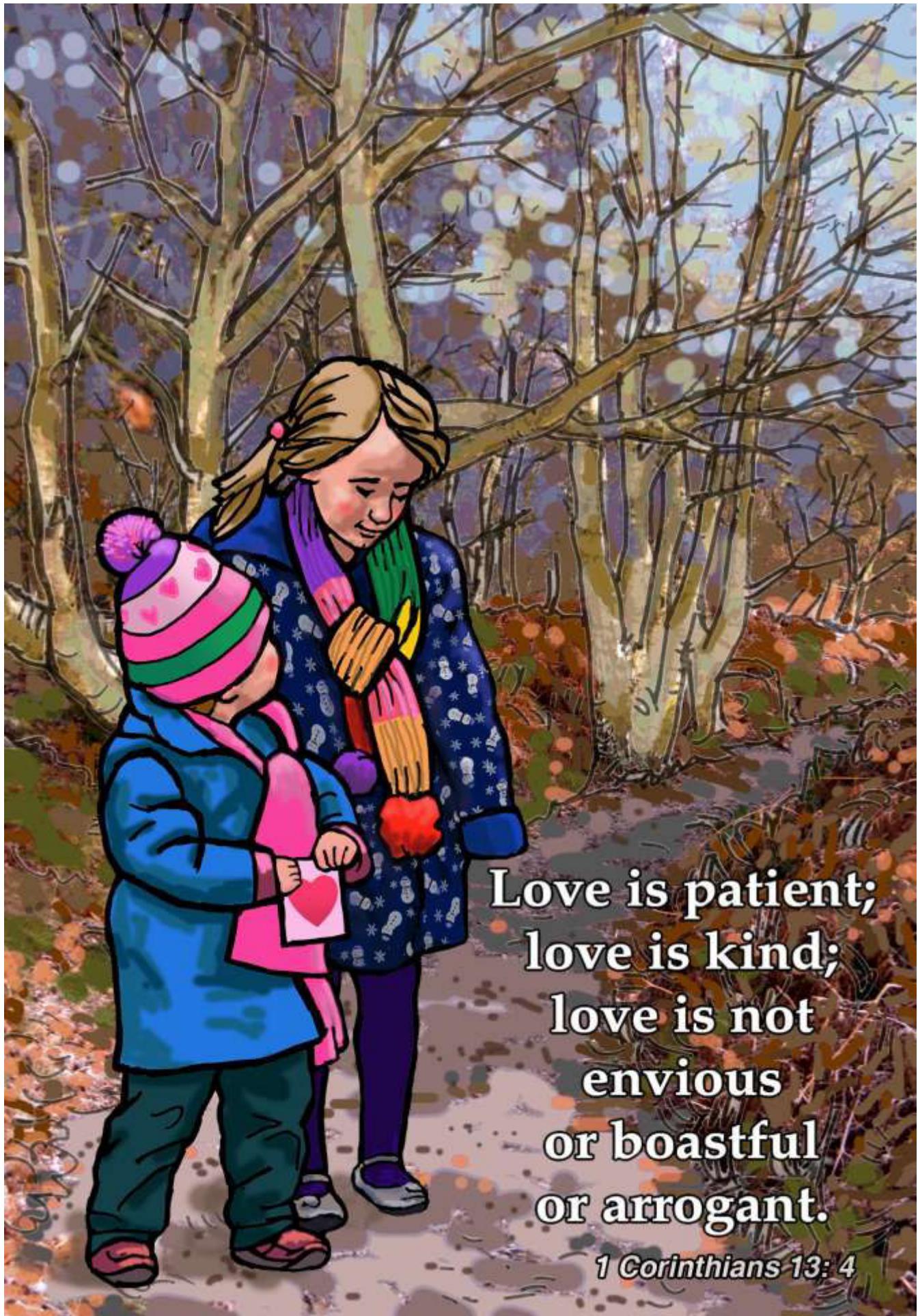
30 years ago, on 1st Feb 1996 that US President Bill Clinton met Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams at the White House, to discuss the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

Also 30 years ago, on 15th Feb 1996 that the oil tanker Sea Empress ran aground near Milford Haven in Wales, causing a major oil spill along the coastlines of Wales and Ireland.

25 years ago, on 12th Feb 2001 that the Human Genome Project announced the publication of the first complete working draft of the human genome.

Also 25 years ago, on 19th Feb 2001 that the first case of foot-and-mouth disease in the 2001 UK outbreak was detected at an abattoir in Essex.

20 years ago, on 18th Feb 2006 that the Rolling Stones played the world's largest free rock concert on Copacabana beach, Rio de Janeiro. An estimated 2 million people attended.



**Love is patient;  
love is kind;  
love is not  
envious  
or boastful  
or arrogant.**

*1 Corinthians 13: 4*