

# Christ Church Magazine

March 2026



40p

# PARISH DIRECTORY

## SUNDAY SERVICES

Details of our services are given on page 5/6.

## THE PARISH TEAM

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## CHRIST CHURCH CENTRE

**Booking Secretary** Parish Office 811990

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## CHURCH SCHOOLS

Christ Church C.E.(Controlled) First School, Northesk Street.

Headteacher Mrs A. Graham BA(Hons) NPQH 01785 336545

Christ Church Academy, Old Road

Principal: Mrs Tara Thorn 01785 334900

# Christ Church Magazine March 2026

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**Committed to following  
Jesus. Commissioned to  
make Disciples**



Cover Picture:  
'Up, up and away'  
' by Helen

Please send your  
articles for the April  
magazine to us by the  
15th March



Magazine 40p each  
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Magazine contributions        [magazine@christchurchstone.org](mailto:magazine@christchurchstone.org)

## **From the Editor**

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Hello there,

The mornings and evening are getting lighter – Spring is coming!

I hope you enjoy this March edition of our Church magazine.

We have a new co-ordinator of the mission prayer diary – Carole Stone - so you will see a new format on pages 8 to 12 of this edition. Thanks to Carole for taking this on – an important aspect of our mission work. It is good to know what is happening with the charities we support and of course enables us to pray for their needs and work.

Tales for the Towpath is back this month – it has been a busy time on the waterways, and we have a variety of other articles for you.

Do please let me have your articles to share and any feedback about what you would like from your magazine is welcomed.

Previously we published the magazine using Microsoft Publisher which is going out of use this year – so I have tried this time to set it up on Microsoft Word instead. I hope and pray that between myself and Jacqueline in the office nothing goes wrong!!!

Enjoy and God bless,

Helen

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## **From the Vicarage.....**

### **Making an entry**

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First impressions count. More importantly lasting impressions also count. The job interview, first day at school, joining a new social group or being a guest speaker a tense time. How we look, sound and our actions matter.

Jesus certainly made an entry when he rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. The festival goers chanted and sang, “*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*” (Matthew 21v9). It stirred the town who asked one another could this be the Prophet-Messiah as promised through Moses (see Deuteronomy 18v15-18)? Matthew who records but doesn’t comment either way to make us ask who is this Jesus? It was quite an entry!

The next day Jesus walked into the Temple as if he owned it: this was the headquarters of first century of Judaism. He didn’t like what he saw or heard. He

## From the Vicarage.....

overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves saying: *"It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a den of robbers"* (Mt 21v13 which is two quotes (Isaiah 56v7 and Jeremiah 7v11). God's people were to express their relationship with Him by talking to Him. But the place set aside for prayer was a hindrance to praying. You had to fight their way through the crowds and market stall holders to find a space but certainly not find quiet. His entry to the Temple caused more than a stir, it provoked the religious leaders. They didn't like hearing children shouting out 'Hosanna to the Son of David' either.

The next day Jesus made the point more bluntly. On returning to the city Jesus inspected a roadside fig tree, cursed it and it withered immediately. Why? The fig tree was all leaf and no fruit! It was like an acted parable. The fig tree was an Old Testament image for the nation of Israel (Micah 7v1), so cursing it was a visual act of judgment. The Temple was prayerless. The fig tree was fruitless. The people of God were lifeless.

As we move through Lent (six weeks leading up to Easter) we must ask ourselves the searching question: Am I prayerless? Fruitless? Lifeless? My daily devotions may need a serious overhaul to march to a different drumbeat from the world. Is the church prayerless? Fruitless? Lifeless? We are to draw nearer to the Lord and not treat regular worship as a hobby or our daily devotional Bible reading as a chore, but to engage with such activities to invest in our relationship with Jesus. His spiritual life will then well up within us and overflow into the lives of others.

Join with us on any Sunday service as we learn how to more closely follow the Lord Jesus.

Paul Kingman  
March 2026

### **Sunday services:-**

9.15am Christ Church, Stone  
11.00am St John the Evangelist,  
Oulton  
11.00am All Saints Moddershall



# Christ Church Diary

## March 2026

	Date	Time	Events (Zoom codes in weekly email)
Sun	1st	9.15 am 4.00 pm	Communion; Matthew 18: 23-34 "The unmerciful servant" 'Prayer Course' Lent group study at the Vicarage (2 of 6)
Mon	2nd	9.30 am 7.30 pm	Toddler group Standing Committee meeting in the centre
Tue	3rd	10.30 am 12.30 pm	Communion; Hebrews 2: 5-18 "Author of salvation" Pursuit Club Christ Church Academy
Wed	4th	9.00 am 2.00 pm 7.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Trekks 'Prayer Course' Lent group study in the centre (2 of 6)
Thu	5th	1.10 pm	Christ Church Academy assembly
Fri	6th		
Sat	7th	8.30 am	Prayer meeting followed by breakfast
Sun	8th	9.15 am 4.00 pm	Morning Prayer; Matthew 20: 1-16 "Workers in the vineyard" 'Prayer Course' Lent group study at the Vicarage (3 of 6)
Mon	9th	9.30 am	Toddler group
Tue	10th	10.30 am 12.30 pm 2.00 pm	Communion; Hebrews 3: 1-19 "Superior to Moses" Pursuit Club Christ Church Academy Autumn House — Church at Home service
Wed	11th	9.00 am 2.30 pm 3.30 pm 7.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Oulton Abbey — Church at Home service Trekks 'Prayer Course' Lent group study in the centre (3 of 6)
Thu	12th	11.00 am 1.10 pm	St. Mary's Home — Church at Home service Christ Church Academy assembly
Fri	13th		
Sat	14th		

# Christ Church Diary

## March 2026

	Date	Time	Events (Zoom codes in weekly email)
Sun	15th	9.15 am 4.00 pm	<b>Mothering Sunday</b> Communion; Matthew 20: 17-28 "A mother's request" 'Prayer Course' Lent group study at the Vicarage (4 of 6)
Mon	16th	9.30 am 7.30 pm	Toddler group PCC meeting in the centre
Tue	17th	10.30 am	Communion; Hebrews 4: 1-13 "Giver of rest"
Wed	18th	9.00 am 2.00 pm 7.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Trekks 'Prayer Course' Lent group study in the centre (4 of 6)
Thu	19th	1.10 pm	Christ Church Academy assembly
Fri	20th		
Sat	21st		
Sun	22nd	9.15 am 4.00 pm	All age; Matthew 20: 29-34 "Believing and seeing" 'Prayer Course' Lent group study at the Vicarage (5 of 6)
Mon	23rd	9.30 am	Toddler group
Tue	24th	10.30 am 1.30 pm	Communion; Hebrews 4: 14-5: 10 "Great High Priest" Christ Church First School Easter service
Wed	25th	7.30 pm	'Prayer Course' Lent group study in the centre (5 of 6)
Thu	26th		
Fri	27th	10.45 am	Christ Church Academy Easter service
Sat	28th		
Sun	29th	9.15 am 4.00 pm	<b>Palm Sunday</b> Morning Prayer with Baptism; Matthew 21: 1-17 "The triumphal entry" 'Prayer Course' Lent group study at the Vicarage (6 of 6)
Mon	30th		<b>Schools Easter Holiday</b>
Tue	31st	10.30 am	Communion; Psalm 118 "Hosanna!"

# Take Time to Pray

## Mission Prayer Diary 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> March

European Christian Mission – Stephen and Tabita Bell

Stephen and Tabita's work is to encourage believers to follow the Great Commission and "to expect great things from God and to attempt great things for God."

They have the wider ministry of encouraging other missionaries and pastors and indeed churches to start other churches.

They are grateful to God for the past year and for all that He has done in establishing two churches in the cities of Novi Marof and Križevci, as He has faithfully guided every step.

- *Pray that God would remove all obstacles and, according to His will, open the way to new gathering spaces or a shared location that both churches can use for His glory.*

In April 2014 they began planting the church of Dugo Selo. This Baptist church in Dugo Selo is the first evangelical church in a town that has 25,000 inhabitants.

- *The blossoming church can now pay for 50% of the rent for the building but need prayers for this to increase.*

“Pokreni se” (In English: “Let's Go!”) is a three day evangelistic campaign/festival that takes place in the centre of Varaždin. Street evangelism takes place for over six hours on each of the three days. The campaign involves all of the town's evangelical churches.

- *Thank God for the opportunity to spread His word so widely across the whole town.*

# Take Time to Pray

## Mission Prayer Diary 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> March

### The Leprosy Mission

The Leprosy Mission Great Britain is a global Christian organisation leading the fight against leprosy.

Following Jesus Christ, they seek to bring about transformation; breaking the chains of leprosy and empowering people to attain healing, dignity and life in all its fullness. They work with people of all faiths and none to defeat leprosy and transform the lives of people affected.

Leprosy is curable. But across the world, a diagnosis still sparks fear for children and their families.

- *Please pray that each child with leprosy will get the cure, care, and compassion they need to heal and thrive.*

At the start of the year Mozambique faced torrential rain and flash floods. Roads are hard to navigate, or even completely inaccessible. This makes it hard to reach rural communities affected by leprosy.

- *Please pray for the team in Mozambique, as they faithfully serve communities affected by leprosy. As climate disasters increasingly impact their work, ask for wisdom and resilience to tackle the challenges ahead.*

Jackie Mackley took over the running of Lamplighters 60 years ago when she was just 14 years old. Lamplighters was founded shortly after the Second World War to raise funds for The Leprosy Mission.

- *Give thanks to God to celebrate Jackie for lighting the lamp of love for people with leprosy.*

# Take Time to Pray

## Mission Prayer Diary 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> March

UCCF The Christian Unions

Christian Unions are mission teams that operate at the heart of university and college campuses. They are led by students, resourced by UCCF Staff Workers and supported by local churches.

The regional forum took place in the Midlands last week. It was held at a different venue this year.

- Give thanks for the new space and good relationships with the school where it was held.

The events week season in February and March poses the greatest opportunity of the year for most Christian Unions to proclaim the gospel on their campuses.

- *Pray for God to speak through CU members, staff and guest speakers during these weeks.*

After going through Uncover Luke together as a large group, Keele CU's follow-up is continuing this week with studies in smaller groups.

- *Pray for seeking students to come consistently to these studies, and for CU members to be excited to help them explore who Jesus is.*

Staffordshire CU will be beginning their seekers' course on 25<sup>th</sup> March to help students who had questions from their events week explore Christianity.

- *Pray for seeking students to attend, to be challenged and feel welcomed well. Pray that many will join regular CU Impact Groups after this.*

# Take Time to Pray

## Mission Prayer Diary 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> March

### Open Doors

Every day, millions of Christians risk their lives to follow Jesus. In more than 70 countries, Open Doors supports them by supplying Bibles, providing emergency relief and helping persecuted believers stand strong for the long-term. In the UK and Ireland, Open Doors helps the church to pray, give and speak out for those who share our faith but not our freedom.

In mid-January, 177 Christians were abducted by armed extremists who attacked three churches in Kaduna state, Nigeria during their Sunday gatherings. Of these, 80 Christians fled their captors and sought shelter in neighbouring communities for two weeks before eventually making their way home.

- *Please pray in thanksgiving and praise for the safe escape of 80 Christians and God's mercy on them*
- *That the many believers still in captivity would know God's comforting presence with them and soon be freed*
- *For continued action against injustice and violence perpetrated by extremist groups, that God's righteousness would shine across Nigeria.*

A message has come from a pastor in the Almaty region of Kazakhstan. He leads a church which, in recent months, has been under the onslaught of locals threatening lawsuits for their activities. And yet, the church does not ask for prayers to be freed from such opposition.

- *Pray that through these cases people will hear the good news of Jesus Christ.*

# Take Time to Pray

## Mission Prayer Diary 29<sup>th</sup> March to 4<sup>th</sup> April

### Langham Partnership

Langham Partnership's mission is to strengthen the ministry of the Word of God through:

- Nurturing national movements for training in biblical preaching
- Multiplying the creation and distribution of evangelical literature
- Strengthening the theological training of pastors and leaders by qualified evangelical teachers

Greece is a major gateway into Europe, with 80% of migration flowing through its borders. Where there is migration, traffickers follow. Approximately 40,000 women and children aged 12-25 are trafficked in Greece every year. One Langham Graduate is using her platform as a professor at the Greek Bible College (GBC), Athens, to speak up for vulnerable women. Myrto Theocharous teaches Old Testament and is also the president of Nea Zoi, an anti-trafficking ministry.

➤ *Give thanks to God for Myrto and her work in Greece.*

After more than seven years in the making, the revised edition of the Africa Bible Commentary was officially released last month. It's been produced in partnership with Langham Publishing and HarperCollins Christian Publishing. This edition is a one-volume commentary on the whole Bible, produced by African scholars, now extensively revised and updated to address today's most pressing theological and cultural realities across the continent.

➤ *Please pray that this will support the global need for biblical teaching that is grounded in the Word of God.*

## P.C.C. news

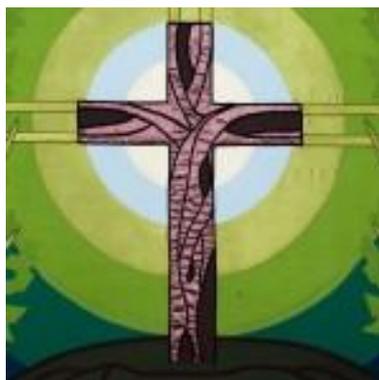
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The P.C.C. held a meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January. During the meeting the following matters were discussed:



- The garden at the front of the church has been completed and opened as a garden accessible for those with mobility issues and dementia. A garden for peace and reflection. It was officially opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> November as the “Hope Garden”.
- We reflected on the success of the Christmas events. The Advent Windows was a great success thanks to the brilliant team., headed by Helen Bowes. The Christingle Service was well attended and again wonderfully supported by helpers running the crafts and starring in the drama. The Carol Service was also a great event with a super choir. Thanks to all those who put time aside to rehearse with particular thanks to Rhiannon Beauchamp and Pete Mason. Special thanks go to all those running the events and taking part. In addition a big vote of thanks to those behind the scenes who spend time decorating the church, not just for Christmas but throughout the year and those who design and produce publicity for all the special events
- It was discussed that many roles in church are reliant on volunteers from teas and coffees after the service, communion helpers, readers, sidespeople, people to help at events and many more. We are always looking for willing helpers.

The next PCC meeting will be held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30



# Tales from the Towpath

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Hello Everyone,

Gosh it has been wet!! After the dryness and low water levels last summer we certainly

cannot complain now about water shortages!! We are fortunate in Stone that we have an excellent towpath from Aston Lock right up to Stoke-on-Trent, (probably because it is a National Cyclepath as well) whereas if you go south at Aston you will see just how slippery and boggy it gets. I know in some parts of the Shropshire Union canal you need waders!



Anyway, this month of February has been busy, so here is a tale you might enjoy and give you a flavour of the life of the chaplain!

It all started with a referral made via the link on the WWC website – which read thus:-

Hello I am contacting you about A who had a stroke in his 20's. They have poor short term memory due to this and I have to help them with their affairs etc. They were living on a boat but now has a bungalow because of their disability. The boat broke down before Christmas and I rang the rescue place, They gave me your details. Would it be possible to get the boat fixed please. I don't know anything about them so I'm hoping you can help. Kind regards M



I contacted the referee – M - and discovered that they were not sure exactly where the boat was and that they were getting communications from Canal and River Trust (CRT) concerning unpaid licence fees and that the boat was not keeping to the terms of the licence (A had a continuous cruiser licence and the boat had not moved for some months). So, the first job was to locate the boat and check it was okay. A thought they knew where they had left it when they broke down but M did not trust A's memory. So, I headed off to where the boat might be. I knew from my local knowledge the possible location, which is a good mile from the nearest access point in the middle of nowhere – good muddy towpath! Anyway, it was found exactly where A had said, just south of a lock and bridge. The reason for that location was that A had been going to go through the lock, had switched the engine off to wait for another boat to go through and then it would not start again. On the way to finding the boat I met a CRT licencing officer so that was useful as we had a

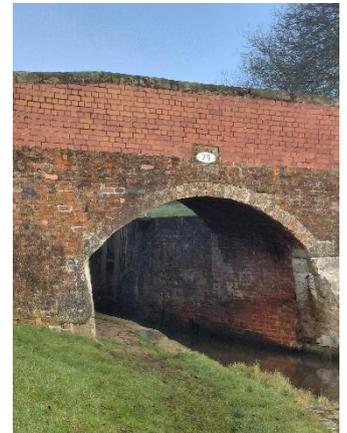
# Tales from the Towpath (Cont)

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conversation about the boat and told him that all was in hand to resolve the issue.

Just as I reached the lock (February, cold and I had not seen any other boats on the move that day) a boater was just getting his boat through the lock. I stopped to talk to him, he does a double take on seeing my gilet identifying me as a Waterways Chaplain, and he exclaims – ‘Waterways Chaplain – I need one of those!’. (He had tried to refer himself on the website but had not been able to do it). So we talked and he needed some help with some benefits issues. So I arranged to go and see him where he was to be moored a few days later. If I had arrived 5 minutes before or after I would have missed him! I know that God makes the appointments!!

Back to A – I reported back to A and M and went to see them to make a plan. We arranged for RCR (River Canal Rescue) to come out to the boat (WWC are members of RCR so in difficult circumstances we can arrange a rescue on their behalf) to see if they could get it started and plan from there whether it could then be moved, would need to be towed to a boatyard or what might need to happen. The appointment was made for last Friday – a very wet and cold day!



Myself, fellow chaplain, Andrew, A and the RCR engineer met at the boat (remember the 25 minute walk from the nearest access point) to have a look. Conclusion – needed new battery. A was able to pay for that but the engineer had to hike back to his van and then carry the new very heavy battery back to the boat. Meanwhile A, Andrew and I were stood in the cold and rain for a good hour waiting! A bit of shelter under the bridge but not much! It was very cold!!! But success!! The engine roared into life with its new battery and the boat was then moved to a better place where it could be accessed easily so A and the referee can now decide what to do next. (I think M wants A to sell it!)

## **Prayers needed**

For M – they are coping with A and their memory loss and health issues, M lost their spouse last summer and has a mother with dementia they are looking after.

For A – to make wise decisions about the boat and their ongoing health issues.

For RCR and the engineers who help boaters in all weathers!

For everyone using the waterways.

*Helen 16/2/26*

# Thy Kingdom Come 2026

## at Christ Church Academy

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Since it began in May 2016, God has grown TKC from a dream of possibility into a movement which unites more than a million Christians in prayer, in nearly 90% of countries worldwide, across 85 different denominations and traditions- so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ.



Every person, household and church are encouraged to pray during the 11 days in their own way.

Specifically, we again invite each and every Christian across the globe to pray that God's Spirit might work in the lives of 5 people who have not responded with their 'Yes' to God's call.

Every year as part of the Thy Kingdom Come initiative Mrs Nicholson-Ward (Assistant Principal and Head of RE) has given every pupil at Christ Church Academy a piece of wool to use. The children then put 5 knots in the piece of wool and use it to spend time reflecting. This may include praying for five friends that they would like to see come to know Jesus, it maybe about their worries or just generally thinking about things more deeply.

In the past Mrs. Nicholson-Ward has cut these pieces of wool herself, over 550! So, this year I thought it would be nice if Christ Church could complete this task for her!

I will put packs in the foyer, with full instructions, all you need is some wool, time and prayer.

If you would like to do this for CCA please take a pack, once you have completed the task just place it back in the box.

Thank you.

*Maryanne*

# 'Made For You' Women's Conference, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026

I first encountered Lou Fellingham at the Keswick Convention many years ago where she was leading worship in the big tent alongside Stuart Townend. Since then we have enjoyed listening to her music, both solo recordings and those made with her previous band Phatfish which included her husband Nathan. During lockdown Lou and Nathan began streaming live worship sessions from their home on a Wednesday morning, and Worship Wednesday has now become a regular fixture in many people's diaries. It often airs in our house too. So, when Helen invited me to accompany her and a couple of others to one of Lou's 'Made For You' conferences for women, I didn't hesitate to sign up.



The conference was held at LifeCentral Church in Halesowen, a large warehouse-style church with plenty of room for the several hundred women who attended. We started with an extended time of worship led, not by Lou, but by Donna Akodu, ably supported by Nathan Fellingham on keyboard and other band members. It was very contemporary and more Pentecostal in style than we are used to so most of the songs were unfamiliar and we were left feeling rather acutely Anglican at times. I don't think we were alone because the volume of singing increased significantly when the odd familiar song came into the mix! The morning progressed with some readily accessible teaching from Lou and from Kemi Koleoso from Jubilee Church in London on the theme of Philippians 1: 21 "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" – getting a more eternal perspective on our current situations.

After our picnic lunches we had some interesting and uncomfortable input from Emma Worrall from Open Doors, an organisation that supports Christians in areas around the world where they suffer persecution for their faith. We heard a heartwarming account of a North Korean couple who, whilst fleeing across the border into China, were intercepted by a worker from Open Doors, cared for, and introduced to Jesus. Over time this couple became Christians and eventually God called them back into North Korea where they have been able to

## 'Made For You' (cont)

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establish a small, secret house church. We also learnt about the current persecution of Christians in Northern Nigeria, and Open Doors' AriseAfrica project which aims to raise awareness of this terrible situation in the political sphere. We signed a petition related to this, and each received a small card bearing the name of one Christian woman from Nigeria to hold in our prayers. The tone lightened a bit after that as Lou interviewed Donna, Kemi and Emma about themselves and their life situations, and the day concluded with a further time of worship. It was encouraging to share the day with so many women of faith and to be able to see ourselves in a more global context. For more information visit [www.madeforyou.events](http://www.madeforyou.events) and [opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica](http://opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica).

*Sue Kingman*

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### **A note from my cruise**

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My Saga cruise to the Canary Islands had an official chaplain and he held interdenominational services on Sundays, followed by Holy Communion for those wishing to partake. He used this summoning -



*This is the table, not of the Church, but of the Lord.*

*It is made ready for those who love him and those who want to love him more.*

*So, come you who have much faith and you who have little.*

*Come you who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time.*

*Come you who have tried to follow and you who have failed.*

*Come, not because I invite you: it is the Lord who invites you.*

*It is his will that those who want him should come, and meet him here.*

*So come.....*

No need to say more.    Monica Darlington

## What is it to be rich and what is it to be generous?

Ten million pound coins on a desert island would be as useless as a tissue paper canoe. Less useful, because burning the canoe would at least keep you warm. Physical money on its own has no value – you can't eat it, you can't build a shelter out of it, you can't easily use it to keep warm or dry, yet it has a peculiar hold over us.

Why? Probably because of what it represents. Bankers say that money serves three basic functions: it is a medium of exchange, a unit of account and a store of value. It makes buying and selling things easy, we can use it as a way of keeping count of our wealth and it is a way of holding onto wealth.

For example, if I tie up my wealth in cabbages, it wouldn't last very long. Two or three weeks after cutting the cabbages, they'd have no value because they'd be mushy and revolting. But if I sell them when they are fresh and green, I can get £100 to put in the bank to use whenever and wherever I want.

These very useful things about money are also at the core of some of our worst temptations. If I use money to buy and sell, I am distancing myself from the thing that I am buying and it makes it easier to do things that I wouldn't do if I was close up.

Once, if I wanted to swap my cabbages for your wheat, I'd have to meet you to do that. Today if I want to buy some cheap clothes, I don't have to take my vegetables all the way to a sweat shop in the far east and see the conditions of the children there. I can use my £100 in the bank to pay for clothes in a shop without worrying where they came from. Or if I send my struggling widowed sister £100 every month to help with living costs but never visit her, I never see that she needs company as much as she needs food.

If we have stored up our wealth, we don't rely on God meeting our daily needs. In the desert, when the Israelites tried to store the manna they were given every day by God, it went off. In the wilderness, the Israelites learnt how to trust God for their daily bread – money helps us not to have to trust.

Counting my wealth leads me quickly into the sin of pride – I'm somehow better than you because I have more money in the bank. Pride leads to anxiety – worrying about what will happen if we lose our wealth and our status. In a number of places in the Gospels Jesus talks about the anxiety that accompanies money and things. He knows that pride and anxiety are the enemy of hope -

# Gratitude, Opp. and Hope (Cont)

they lead use into ungenerous lives, holding on to the things we have instead of opening our hands, letting go, and living simply so that others may simply live. "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money," he said.

As you think about your life, do you control your money or does your money control you? Do we hold onto more than we could ever spend in our lifetime when others in the world have so little? Can we be more generous with our money and our time? How can we use our money to bring hope to the hopeless and renew our own faith in the God who is always faithful?

*Sam Rushton is the Chief Executive Officer and Diocesan Secretary of Lichfield Diocese.*

*This is the second in a series of three articles encouraging the whole diocese - parishes, clergy, lay leaders... everyone - to explore attitudes to money together, looking at 'Gratitude, Opportunity and Hope'.*



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**Springtime!** Your message of hope  
to a world tiring of winter's starkness,  
longing for that first crocus  
to push through snow's icy blanket  
and spread its leaves, like arms outstretched,  
to its creator.

Springtime! Our yearly reminder,  
if we needed one,

that to a world that was dark and cold,  
a world devoid of love's sweet warmth,  
you sent your Son  
to break through sin's icy blanket,  
and, arms outstretched  
on a cross, he brought us hope.

Thank you



## **Interesting trivia!!!**

**Snake Handlers** *Mark !6:18* states, ' They will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.'

Although not an invitation to grab the nearest snake, George Went Hensley, also known as 'Little George' took this verse literally. From 1910 for over a decade, Little George carried a live rattlesnake wherever he preached. He went on to start the Church of Jesus With Signs Following. Travelling across the hills of grasshopper Valley in Tennessee, he would challenge congregations to grab the snake as an affirmation of their faith. All went well, until, inevitably, one of the faithful died of a snake bite.

However, Little George's antics spread throughout the hills of Kentucky. By the early 1940s, around 2,500 snake handlers were imitating him across the states of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, north and South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio and Texas. The movement would have grown even more if State legislatures, alarmed at the rising number of deaths from snakebites in churches, had not passed laws forbidding snakes in church.

'Also put the **Urim and the Thummim** in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord, Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord.' *Exodus 28.30*

It is not definitively known what Urim and Thummim were, but they were used by the high priest Aaron, and his successors to 'enquire of the mind of the Lord'. Urim means something like 'lights' in Hebrew and Thummim means something like 'perfections'. Thus it could be argued that the use of these devices gave light and revealed the perfect will of God. Urim and Thummim were part of Aaron's attire, worn as 'the breastpiece of judgement' close to the heart. The Roman historian Josephus adds that they were two sardonyx buttons worn on the shoulders that emitted luminous rays to indicate a favourable response. The precise mode of operation is lost in antiquity.

***(Taken from Summons Christian Miscellany by Parminder Summon)***

## More Holy Land Musings

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No trip to the Holy Land would be complete without a visit to Jerusalem. When we visited in 1978, security was fairly light, although there were a number of UN troops about. What it is like now, I don't know. A few fascinating facts:-

- a. the city is quite high in altitude - over 2,000 ft. – and houses approx. 1 million people.
- b. it has been totally destroyed at least twice, besieged 23 times, captured and recaptured 44 times and attacked 52 times. It is therefore hardly surprising to hear of current tensions.
- c. it is defined as a 'holy city' by Jews, Christians, Muslims and the Greek Orthodox religion. The city is divided into four quarters – Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim
- d. the current walls of the city were built in 1538 by Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire.
- e. Muslims regard it as their third most holy city behind Mecca and Medina.

We were taken on a tour of various interesting sites – the Via Delorosa, various gateways into the city, the bazaar, the Western Wall, the Dome of the Rock, and an area containing various empty rock tombs. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was particularly crowded enclosing what is believed to be Golgotha and Jesus's empty tomb. Management of the church is shared between the Roman Catholics, the Copts, the Armenians, the Ethiopians and the Greek Orthodox. Rather bizarrely, the keys of the church are held by Muslims – who knows why?

All in all, a fascinating visit, although it is difficult to envisage the city having a more peaceful existence than its past. **John Bowes**

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# Safeguarding

The United Benefice is committed to Safeguarding and has adopted the National and Diocesan Safeguarding Policies for the welfare of everyone in our congregations. Anyone requiring any further information or raising concerns should contact the Safeguarding Coordinators: **Christ Church, Stone**: Andrew Stone on

[Safeguarding2@christchurchstone.org](mailto:Safeguarding2@christchurchstone.org)

**Oulton with Moddershall**; Mary Gale on [Office@christchurchstone.org](mailto:Office@christchurchstone.org)

Or contact the church office [01785 811990] to leave your details, and Andrew or Mary will ring you back.

The Vicar, Rev Paul Kingman can also be contacted on 01785 812669.

If the matter is more urgent, or you feel uncomfortable contacting someone in our Benefice, you may contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team at Lichfield

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/safeguarding/>

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Archbishops Sarah Mullally & Stephen Cottrell



# Groups and Rotas

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**Deanery Synod Reps**  
**P.C.C. Members**

Helen Bowes, Sue Kingman  
Lynne Collier, Maxine Garrington-Miller,  
Marylyn Hillman, George Holden, Pete  
Kelly, Liz Mason, Shelagh Sanders, Andy  
Stone, Gary Williams, Shirley Hallam,  
Shelagh Sanders  
Pete Kelly  
Lynda Marenghi

**Secretary**

**Treasurer**

**Envelopes, Gift Aid**

FLOWER ROTA		WELCOMER	
1 <sup>st</sup> March	Flower Guild	1 <sup>st</sup> March	Jacqueline Abrahams
8 <sup>th</sup> March	Flower Guild	8 <sup>th</sup> March	Mandy Dudd
15 <sup>th</sup> March	Flower Guild	15 <sup>th</sup> March	Marilyn Overall
22 <sup>nd</sup> March	Flower Guild	22 <sup>nd</sup> March	Pete Kelly
29 <sup>th</sup> March	Flower Guild	29 <sup>th</sup> March	Pam Roberts
<b>CHURCH REGISTERS</b>	BAPTISMS		
	WEDDINGS		
	FUNERALS		

### Roads for Prayer

<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> March</b> Margaret Street Meadowside Meaford Avenue Millenium Way</p>	<p><b>9<sup>th</sup> March</b> Millers Gate Mount Avenue Mount Crescent Mount Road</p>	<p><b>16<sup>th</sup> March</b> Mount Street Navigation Loop Newcastle Road Newcastle Street</p>
<p><b>23<sup>rd</sup> March</b> Nicolls Lane Northesk Street Old Road Old Road Close</p>	<p><b>30<sup>th</sup> March</b> Oulton Close Oulton Cross Oulton Mews Oulton Road</p>	

