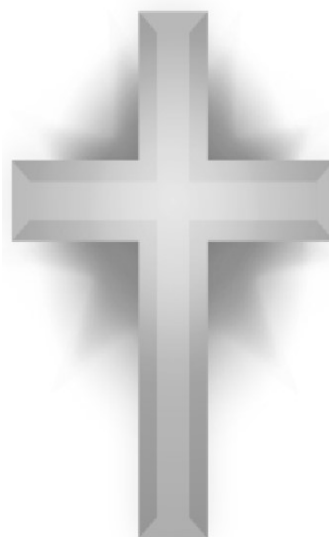
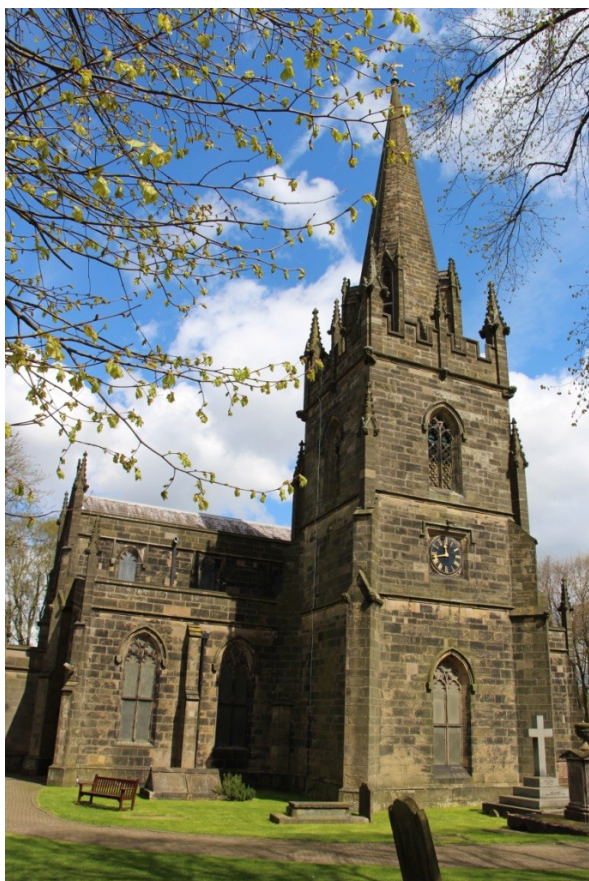


THE BEACON

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS, SEDGLEY
ST. ANDREW'S THE STRAITS & ST. PETERS UPPER GORNAL

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Kingdom People
love • compassion • justice • freedom

50p

October 2020

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Parish Safeguarding Officer	Barbara Baker	01902 882847
Pastoral Care	Tracey Bate	01902 880727
	Jackie Hewlett	01902 295164
	Sarah Parker	01902 885570
Worship Leader	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
Youth Leader and Youth Group	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
Singing Angels	Claire Cox	07812 010108
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PCC Treasurer	Sheila Moss	01902 893570
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St Peters

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Parish Warden	Edward Grist	01902 682786
Treasurer	Sheila Moss	01902 893570
Children's Advocate	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
DCC Secretary	John Powell	
Uniformed Organisations	Please Contact David Moss	01902 893570

St Andrew's

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Children's Advocate	Carol Haynes	
Treasurer	Alan Turner	01902 670938
DCC Secretary	Rosemary Reed	01902 679007
Little Angels Baby & Toddler Group	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Singing Angels	Claire Cox	07812 010108

Who's Who

Who's Who

All Saints Who's Who

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Parish Wardens	Keith Tomlinson	01902 673366
	John Anderson	01902 677666
Treasurer	John Anderson	01902 677666
DCC Secretary	John Anderson	01902 677666
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Bell Ringer	Keith Williams	01902 672585
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Server/Verger	Len Millard	01902 676339
	Steve Castle	07971 899072
Noah's Ark		
Parent &		
Toddler Group	Linda Edwards	01902 672556

Funerals

Brenda Mary Griffiths 17 September
Lilian Maisie Glover 18 September
Josephine Doreen Hood 28 September

High Days & Holy Days for October

- 1 Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury – the Poor Man's Earl
- 1 Remigius
- 1 Theresa of Lisieux
- 2 Your Guardian Angel
- 3 Hewald the Black and Hewald the White
- 4 St Francis – and the Life of Simplicity
- 4 St Francis of Assisi
- 6 William Tyndale, Bible translator and Reformation martyr
- 8 Demetrius of Sirmium
- 9 Luis Bertran (1526-81)
- 9 Denys of Paris
- 10 Francis Borgia
- 10 Thomas Traherne, poet and lover of nature
- NEW* 12 Edith Cavell, nurse**
- 13 Edward the Confessor
- 14 Donation
- 18 Thank you, Dr Luke!
- 18 St Luke the Evangelist
- 22 Donatus
- 24 Felix of Thibiuca
- 26 Alfred the Great, King of the West Saxons, scholar, 899
- 27 Odran of Iona
- 28 Simon and Jude
- 30 Alphonsus Rodriguez
- 31 All Hallows' Eve

THE BEACON

If you are interested in having the magazine delivered to your home on a regular basis please contact:

Karen Evans: 01902 678056

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admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

by

Friday 23rd October

and needs to be in Arial typeface, size 18.

Do not send files in pdf format

WEBSITE: **www.gornalandsedgley.org.uk**

To Magazine Deliverers

Could you please get email addresses for all the people that you deliver to and please and let either Gail Griffiths or Karen Evans know .

St Peter's District Church magazine

St Peter's also publishes a magazine which is more particular to Upper Gornal. If you would like to receive that magazine (which is not available electronically), in the first instance please contact a St Peter's Church warden details on page 2 of this magazine.

You will have seen in the Press that all our churches are closed for services for the foreseeable future. This means there will be no Vestry Hour at All Saints' to deal with wedding and baptism enquiries. We are having to re-arrange those weddings and baptisms disrupted by the current situation so, regretfully, cannot consider any enquiries for baptisms until further notice, nor can we consider any requests for weddings for 2020.

If you wish to enquire about a wedding for 2021 or 2022, please contact

Chris Williams chriswilliams550@btinternet.com.

Vicars Ponderings October 2020

I don't know about you, but for me, this year has flown by, I can't believe we are now in October! Where has this year gone? It seems like a lifetime ago since we were all in lockdown, trying to work out how we did church in this new on-line world; how to do pastoral care; how to help those in need. I have been delighted and encouraged to hear of all the stories how individuals have been living out their Christian faith, being helping hands to those who were isolating, those who were sick, those who were lonely, and a whole spectrum in between.

As the country unlocked, we have been working through how to live in this "new normal", balancing our own, and our loved one's safety with the virus still being with us; learning to live with social distancing and wearing masks; opening our churches, and resuming some services within the restrictions and guidelines.

As we now move into the Autumn and the winter it seems that the virus is taking hold of life again, and new local lock downs are being imposed to try and keep the infection rate under control.

In these past months we have had to re-envision how we do things in our churches, to enable people to connect in the best way they can, on-line, in person, and through regular communications.

We have all learned a lot over the last 8 months!

I'm sure that many people would prefer to get back to where we were before Covid-19 arrived, longing to get back to our "old normal".

In many respects that is what I yearn too, these past 8 months have been a real challenge in ministry, there's a lot of things we've had to do recently that they don't teach you how to do in theological college or curacy!

I wonder how much our ancient brothers and sisters felt when Jesus came and turned their "normal" up-side down?

Their eyes being opened to God acting in a real and tangible way in their lives and in the world.

When we encounter God in our lives, we are changed, the “old normal” is transformed into a “new normal”. We see life, the world, creation in a new way in the light of Christ.

However, sometimes, when we have a real and tangible encounter with Christ that changes us, and we are transformed to a new and the exciting “new normal”.

Sadly, this “new normal” can soon become “normal”.

After the first flourishes of excitement, we can soon become comfortable and safe and not long, the “new normal” becomes the “normal” and any potential challenge to that “normal” becomes uncomfortable, and we reject what comes to us, and we try to hold tight to the “normal” that we have become accustomed to.

Coronavirus has challenged and changed us in all sorts of ways, we have had to embrace change, maybe reluctantly, in our lives and the life of the church.

As we enter into the next few months, we are entering another period of change, and having to adapt again, another new “new normal”. In all this change and challenge there is one thing that doesn’t change, that is, the grace and goodness of God, and the good news of Jesus Christ. As the people of God in this generation, as in previous generations, we need to have confidence in and embrace this truth.

Blessings **Catherine**

Mothers' Union

It was with sadness that we heard of the death of Maisie Glover, at the end of August, at the age of 103 years. Maisie was a dedicated member of Mothers' Union for over 30 years, in latter years becoming an Indoor Member. I remember visiting her on her 100th Birthday, along with our IMPC Diocesan representative, Susan Price, and spending a wonderful afternoon chatting, laughing and reminiscing. Maisie was a faithful Christian, kind and caring and full of fun. She will be sadly missed by us all in Mothers' Union and by her church family at St Andrew's. In these unprecedented times we were unable to pay our respects at her funeral but we hold Maisie and her family in our prayers at this time.

~~~~~

### Collection for the Women's Refuge

Children's colouring books, dot-to-dot books  
Adult quiz books and colouring books  
Felt pens & crayons

If you are able to help with this appeal, I am happy to collect the items, and I will get them to the Refuge.

~~~~~

Congratulations to Pam and Stan Hunt who celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary in September. Chris and I took a card and gift on behalf of Mothers' Union and spent a lovely morning with them.

~~~~~

The impact of the Covid pandemic has affected every part of our lives. We pray for the lonely and the bereaved; for those affected by domestic violence which has increased during the lockdown; for our children as they return to school and for our young people going off to university; for our NHS and key workers.



Mary Sumner House has been severely affected and has been closed since March. Sheran Harper reports that 'with a heavy heart we have concluded that we need to take the unavoidable step of reducing the overall staff headcount at MSH by one third. This is very difficult but we are doing all we can to support them and ask that our members keep them in their prayers.'

Dates

6<sup>th</sup> October 2.30pm MU Communion Service, in the Church Hall

Please ring me to book your place the week before  
This will only take place if it is safe to do so at the time

Take care and God Bless  
Liz Williams

Stan and Pam Hunt would like to thank all who sent us cards and best wishes for our Diamond wedding on 17 September. We celebrated quietly with our family and had a really lovely day.

## Thoughts for the month of October 2020

**I have been reading some lovely thoughts for the day out of  
my friendship book.**

**I thought I would share them with you.**

**Gail**

Mary Ann Evans knew how other peoples opinions could hurt,  
She adopted the pen name of George Eliot because she knew  
People would not take her work seriously if they thought it  
Was composed by a woman.

She also wrote, while we are coldly discussing a mans career,  
Sneering at his mistakes, blaming his rashness, and labelling his  
Opinions, that man, in his solitude, is perhaps shedding hot  
Tears because his sacrifice is a hard one, because strength  
And patience are failing him to speak the difficult word, and do  
The difficult deed.

Until we know everything about a person—which arguably we  
Never will—we should err on the side of kindness when we speak  
To them.

You never know.

Patricia St John was a writer, house mother and WW1 nurse. She knew a thing or two about deserts, having served as a Christian missionary in north Africa.

She once wrote of God, When he plans to plant a garden, he starts In the desert.

In other words, for God to create a new thing, he starts with the Absence of that thing and builds anew.

In the same vein, we might ask where the deserts of friendship And love are in our own lives and our relationships. And then set About making those place flower.

A writer sent a copy of his newly published first novel to an old Friend.

Shortly afterwards he received the message:

Good to hear from you, hope you are well, thanks for the book. There's a spelling mistake on the fourth line of the thirty seventh page. Best Wishes.

Doubtless, the friend thought he was being helpful. But, perhaps Subconsciously , he was more concerned with showing how smart He was than with actually helping.

Faults may need pointing out so they can be corrected. But, would it have taken away from that to add, the other 59,999 words were spelled perfectly and beautifully arranged?

A basket ball in my hands is worth about £19.

A basket ball in Michael Jordan's hands is worth about £33 million.

It depends whose hands it's in.

A tennis racket is useless in my hands.

A tennis racket in Pete Sampras's hands is a Wimbledon Champion.

It depends whose hands it's in.

A rod in my hands will keep away a wild animal.

A rod in Moses' hands will part a mighty sea.

It depends whose hands it's in.

A sling shot in my hands is a kid's toy.

A sling shot in David's hands is a mighty weapon.

It depends whose hands it's in.

Two fish and five loaves of bread in my hands is a couple of fish sandwiches.

Two fish and five loaves of bread in Jesus' hands will feed thousands.

It depends whose hands it's in.

Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse.

Nails in Jesus Christ's hands will produce salvation for the entire world.

It depends whose hands it's in.

As you see now it depends whose hands it's in. So put your concerns, worries, your fears, your hopes, dreams, your family and your relationships in

God's hands, because.....it depends whose hands it's in.

With His hands, you're in safe hands.

# Understanding the Bible

As we acknowledge Bible Sunday this month, it's a good opportunity to ask the question: ***why should I read the Bible?***

The Bible is the world's best-selling book of all time. However, it isn't one book, but a library of 66 books, composed by some 44 writers over a period of 1500 years in a range of literature including history, poetry, prophecy, letters and apocalyptic (end times). Despite having a number of different writers, the Bible claims one author: God himself!

This is the basis of the unity of its message and authoritative claim to be the primary way by which God speaks to us: *'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work'* (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is inspired (*'the word of God in the words of men'*) and presents itself as a ***manual for life***, equipping us to live for God in every aspect of our lives. We also have the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide us in applying the words to our lives: *'the Spirit will guide you into all truth'* (John 16:13).

However, the Bible could also be described as a ***love letter*** from God, as He uses it to deepen our relationship with him. As Jesus said: *'You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me'* (John 5:39,40). Christians follow a person not a book, and the Scriptures are intended to help us to know Jesus better.

At her coronation the Queen was given a Bible with the words ***'the most precious thing this world affords'***. Does this reflect our own attitude to the Bible?

## Moral questions from the pandemic

You may have missed it at the time. The movie 'Contagion' didn't make much of an impact when it was released for public viewing in 2011. Perhaps it was thought to be unrealistic. It was about a highly contagious, unknown virus, transmitted by an infected bat to a pig in a Chinese marketplace. From there it spread like wildfire round the world. It was fiction then of course, but not so far-fetched as to be distant from reality, as we now know. Deadly viruses, and the plagues they cause, have been part of world history since time began. In the early days, when travel between continents was infrequent, their spread was slower and usually confined to local regions.

The way the film's imaginary plot develops bears an uncanny resemblance to what we have experienced this year. Panic buying empties supermarkets, whole populations adopt social distancing, scientists work flat out to identify the virus and then search for a means to combat it. Meanwhile, millions are infected, and quarantines are imposed.

The story progresses far beyond the reality which is familiar to us. The irresponsible use of social media and false rumours of a cure lead to the looting of pharmacies. Emergency food supplies are ransacked, law and order break down. Troops police the streets. Then there's a breakthrough: a vaccine is discovered. But that raises a new moral problem: who will get it first and what would be a fair distribution system? The movie is still available via Netflix, or you can buy a DVD online. Despite the inevitable carnage of the pandemic and the suffering it portrays, it contrives to have a relatively happy ending.

In real life, we haven't got that far yet. But, please God, we will. After all, most deadly diseases are now under control and both vaccination and immunisation are part and parcel of everyday life; old 'uns take it for granted that their GP will summon them for an anti-flu jab each winter. But we may face an ethical dilemma when it comes to a vaccine for Covid-19. If there's an initial shortage, who should get it first? Should money come into it? Are Christian principles applicable?

# Who authorised the Bible, anyway?

*Question: If it was the Church that finally decided which books should be included in the Bible, then isn't the Church the top authority?*

*Answer:* No; the Bible produced the Church, not the Church the Bible. This is the real issue: what caused a book to be accepted within the 'Canon' of Scripture? (Greek: *kanon*, 'standard' or 'rule').

*As far as the Old Testament was concerned:*

Books that were recognised by Jesus Christ as infallible 'Scripture' could not be broken (Matthew 5:18). In John 10:35 Jesus didn't have to explain what He meant by 'Scripture', though elsewhere He did refer to its different categories (law, prophets, psalms) as pointing to Himself (Luke 24:44; Matthew 24:37). All was to be believed and obeyed.

Books that were recognised by God's people because of their impact. God's people will always recognise His voice (John 10:27). Jesus clashed with the Pharisees for adding their traditions to the Scripture; yet all were agreed that the Old Testament Scriptures were God's word.

Books that were recognised by the New Testament. It is significant that the New Testament features hundreds of Old Testament allusions. Only two are from the body of books known as the Apocrypha (Jude 9, 14) – seemingly in similar style to Paul's quotation from a Greek poet (Acts 17:28). The Apocryphal books were perceived to be on a lower level.

*Next, what determined inclusion in the New Testament Canon?*

Books that are Christ-centred in their emphasis. It was inconceivable to the early Church that the Gospels, for example, which focused so much upon the life and death of Jesus, could have any lower place than that given to the Old Testament Scriptures.

Books that are apostolic in their teaching. It was to the apostles exclusively that Jesus promised guidance 'into all truth' through the Holy Spirit's inspiration (John 16:13). The result of this was the New Testament (1 Corinthians 2:12,13). Significantly, Peter brackets Paul's writings with what he calls 'the other scriptures' (2 Peter 3:15,16).

Books that are faith-building in their effect, and thus, to be read in the congregations (John 20:30,31; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16; 1 Peter 2:2; Revelation 1:3). When the Christian scriptures take hold of the thinking of masses of people, they have the effect of 'stabilising society, without sterilising it' (historian T. R. Glover).

The books of the Old Testament were becoming largely accepted by AD 70; those of the New Testament by the end of the second century. The drawing of a line around them discouraged forgers and religious peddlers.

So no one really 'put' the books into the Bible; they put themselves in, because of their innate quality. No council by itself could have conferred authority upon the books; this, they possessed already. It is an authority that is inherent, not imposed. If art lovers say of a Renoir painting, 'This is a genuine Renoir', their acclaim in no way invests the painting with authority; it was already authentic. It is the same with the Scriptures; we can only recognise them as such.... and live by them.

---

## **A spirit guest?**

When new neighbours moved in next door, they held a House Warming party and invited the entire road. My husband and I were glad to go along, as our daughters were both five years old. But next morning I was taken aback when my daughter told me that the mother had taken her into the kitchen and given her 'a spirit guest', which my daughter had really enjoyed. Now she wanted me to get her 'a spirit guest.' I was wondering how to contact the local vicar for exorcism when I realised that my daughter meant 'asparagus'.



## **Honey, honey!**

If your grannie gave you honey when you had a cold, she was right. Research published in *The British Medical Journal* has found that honey is especially good for treating upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs) such as the common cold.

Honey has anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory properties. These do better at soothing your cough and sniffles than any of the over-the-counter remedies. In fact, URTI sufferers who were given honey suffered their symptoms for up to two days **LESS** than those who did not use honey.

All good news, especially as honey is cheap, readily available, and has virtually no side effects.

---

### **Is your face mask making your skin break out?**

Face masks are giving us skin complaints. In fact, so many of us are now suffering that the complaint has been given its own name: 'maskne'. The causes are obvious. Our breath is warm and moist, and every time we exhale into our masks this humid air gets trapped. Masks move, and so we have friction. Added to that is the unpleasant fact that our saliva is actually teeming with bacteria (with more bugs per square inch than even a loo seat!).

*Acne mechanica* is the medical term for 'maskne'. With all that bacteria being trapped and rubbed against our nose and chin, no wonder 'mask breakouts' are rising dramatically.

Stress is another cause for skin complaints, and the pandemic has given many of us huge stress this year. We may face crippling anxiety over job security, finances, the health of loved ones, social isolation, or even being trapped in an abusive household. No wonder our faces are breaking out in a rash!

# **Mothers' Union and the UK prison system**

Crime hurts many people – including the families of prisoners who have ended up in the UK prison system. They are often the forgotten victims, but not by the Mothers' Union (MU).

Instead, the MU's prison work across Britain is extensive, with the aim of keeping hurting families together. It is not simple work, for as prison governors are replaced and new directives come into force, those who work with prisoners and their families must adapt their approach. MU members provide support to prison visitors by holding short courses so that visitors can get the most out of their time with the prison residents. MU also holds workshops to introduce many of the services that work with prisoners' families.

MU helps support the Family Days held at one prison, and also provides presents for children of prisoners at Christmas time. MU provides tea and a chat with the inmates of one women's prison, as well going-home packs of essential items for when they leave.

MU also supports prison officers, who as key workers have found the last few months particularly challenging. MU's Thank You Key Workers appeal wants to raise funds to provide families of key workers with short breaks or experience days. If you would like to help, please go to: <https://www.mothersunion.org/thank-you-keyworker-appeal>

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## **Sorry**

Our minister, an avid golfer, was once taking part in a local tournament. As he was preparing to tee off, the organiser of the tournament approached him and pointed to the dark, threatening storm clouds which were gathering. "Sir," the organiser said, "I trust you'll see to it that the weather won't turn bad on us."

Our minister shook his head. "Sorry," he replied. "I'm in sales, not management!"

## **One in five of us suffer depression**

The pandemic has doubled our rates of depression. Now one in five adults are struggling with the symptoms. And yet the peak of the Covid-19 mental health crisis is 'yet to come', according to NHS bosses. In June the Office for National Statistics released data showing that 19.2 percent of adults were experiencing some form of depression. This figure had almost doubled, from around one in 10 (9.7 per cent), before the pandemic. But NHS bosses warn that up to half a million more patients are expected to enter the system in coming months.

Those most vulnerable to depression are women aged 16 to 29 who are unable to afford an unexpected expense, or who are disabled.

A spokeswoman for Mind, the mental health charity, says, "It's crucial that mental health is put at the centre of the government's ongoing recovery plans."

A report from the NHS Confederation echoes this, saying that mental health bodies will need "intensive support and investment."

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## **Average debt fell by £2,000 during lockdown**

Covid-19 has brought one good thing to some of us: the average amount of personal debt has reduced by nearly £2,000, according to a recent study by Experian. It recently stood at £9,681 (without mortgage), as opposed to £11,615 (without mortgage) in March.

As a spokesman for the credit-checking agency explained: "For some people, a reduction in spending on living costs and commuting have enabled the repayment of existing borrowing." And he urged that as the UK returns to something like normal, people should try and continue with the good financial habits picked up during lockdown.

But Dame Gillian Guy, chief executive of Citizen's Advice, said that while some people have been able to pay off some of their debts in the pandemic, many others have not. Instead, they "are behind on essential bills, building up arrears they may struggle to ever pay back."

## **Do the Bible and Science contradict each other?**

For the Christian, the Bible is God's word to us; it tells us about His character and creative purposes, how He has related to people in the past, and His promises for the future. Science is a specific way of studying the world, exploring the physical properties of things – a wonderful way to explore God's creation. So, the question to ask if the Bible and Science seem to be contradicting each other is, have we made a mistake in interpreting one or the other?

Science is very good at answering certain types of questions: 'What size is it?', 'How fast does it travel?', 'What is it made of?', and so on. Questions like 'What's it for?', 'What should I do with it?', and 'What's it worth?' can't be answered using scientific methods. Some of the misunderstanding in discussions of science and religion come from not recognising the limits of science. It's also important to recognise what the Bible is, and what sorts of questions it can answer. The Bible was written well before people began to investigate the world in ways we would recognise as scientific. Of course, people in the Ancient Near East were studying the world around them, observing the movements of the stars, the processes of life and death that happened all around them, the seasons, the behaviour of physical objects, and so on. But they did not study the mechanisms underlying these things systematically using the tools of science, and they did not see or describe the world in scientific terms – not because they weren't intelligent, but because science as we know it wasn't happening at that time. Instead, the biblical writers used words that were commonly used in their own cultures to record events, share truth and wisdom, and tell stories that convey deep truth about God's character. If we want to understand God's intention in inspiring these words, we need to do some careful work to connect with those ancient writers and find out what they meant, before we can discover what those words mean to us today.

These principles can help us have far more fruitful conversations about science and Christian faith. If we allow any apparent conflict between Science and the Bible to fuel our search for understanding, not only will we learn as individuals, but we will be able to draw others into a conversation that is relevant to wider society today.

## **Remembering Elizabeth Fry, prison reformer**

The prison reformer and philanthropist Elizabeth Fry died 175 years ago, on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1845. She was widely admired during her lifetime and after, and was depicted on the British £5 note between 2001 and 2016.

She was born into the family of a wealthy Quaker banker, John Gurney, in Norwich in 1770. She rededicated her life to Christ at the age of 18 and devoted herself to helping the downtrodden. This she continued to do after her marriage to London merchant Joseph Fry, and while giving birth to 11 children.

She was a minister of the Society of Friends from 1811 and travelled in England and Europe inspecting prisons and writing reports that were highly influential, transforming gaols from “pits of indecency and brutality” to more orderly places with a new interest in reform. She was admired by both Queen Victoria and Florence Nightingale. Early on she made frequent visits to Newgate Prison in London, suggesting radical improvements that were adopted both there and in other prisons. She read the Bible to inmates and gave Bibles away, combining social work with proclamation of the Gospel in a way that inspired future generations. Her insights also led to the Prison Reform Act of 1823.

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## **Moses revisited**

Nine-year-old Joseph was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday school.

“Well, Mum, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his engineers build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then he radioed headquarters for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved.”

“Now, Joseph, is that really what your teacher taught you?” his mother asked, somewhat alarmed.

“Well, no, Mum. But if I told it the way the teacher did, you’d never believe it!”



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The Rectory  
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

I am unsurprised that the cleaning lady took exception to you dismantling your motorbike in the church vestry. Clergy vestries are the final repositories of rotting hymn books, ancient cassocks with a certain aroma, buckets with holes in, which are kept “just in case” and dead animals in various states of decomposition; but they are no place for bike chains, disc brakes and inner tubes.



I will concede that vestries seem to attract all those objects no one quite knows what to do with, but which parishioners can't bear to throw away. Flower arrangers creep into my vestry, looking for space for boxes of twine. Decorators arrive with cribs and Easter gardens they are hoping to store. And even the choirmaster occasionally sidles in, trying to slip some anthems past me. I repel them all with vigour, and a firm broom. One thing I can't keep out of the vestry are the portraits of all my predecessors, who stare down at me reproachfully. The most recent, in colour, stare smugly, knowing that I am still being compared to them, and falling short. Earlier incumbents, in black and white, look mildly reproachful, reminding me that *they* all held doctorates from Oxford. The hand-drawn portraits from pre-1870 are the worst – they all look as if they drank vinegar for breakfast and argued Pelagianism over lunch, just for fun. I am already rehearsing my own look of pained forgiveness for my leaving photo that will stare down on my own successor, and perpetually irritate him

It also seems to be a tradition that retiring clergy donate their robes for their successors, probably because it spares them a walk to the dustbin. So, a five-foot, 18 stone incumbent will leave a cassock for his six-foot, ten stone successor. There will also be a spare 1960s nylon surplice hanging on the back of the vestry door, to remind you that should you ever forget your own, then this is the horror you will be obliged to wear

Notices on the walls will tell you that marriage fees in the 1920s were seven shillings and sixpence, that Communion wine can be obtained from a shop that closed down a generation ago and there will be a copy of the prayer of thanksgiving to be used on the Relief of Mafeking.

My only advice is to remove your bike before it gets bundled up with the Scouts' tents – and lost forever in the churchwarden's shed.

Your loving uncle,

**Eustace**

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## **Shops dreaming of an early Christmas this year**

Christmas should start with October's half-term this year, rather than in November. Christmas lights could be switched on, and shoppers (hopefully) enticed back to the shops.

So say many retailers, as they struggle to recover from the pandemic. An executive with the New West End Company in London explains: "If we can bring the start of Christmas early, it will make it easier for people to spread their spending."

Making 'Christmas come early' may have another advantage. Traders argue that having more weeks of Christmas shopping will ensure a more steady flow of visitors, which will make social distancing easier. Meanwhile, shopping remains in the doldrums. In some parts of the country, numbers of shoppers are still 63 per cent down on last year. Shopping in the West End has been at only 37 per cent of the normal level.

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## **Discovering the vital route from Atlantic to Pacific**

It was 500 years ago, on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1520, that Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan's Spanish expedition to the East Indies discovered the Strait of Magellan at the southern tip of Chile.

His ships, backed by King Charles I of Spain (soon to become Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire) were seeking shelter in a bay after a foiled mutiny when they unexpectedly found that they could continue sailing west – though the route among many islands and channels was tortuous, with mainland South America to the north and Tierra del Fuego to the south.

Until the creation of the Panama Canal in 1914, this was a vital passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, though it has a cold, foggy climate and is prone to fierce storms. Wrecks of ships can be seen along its banks.

Magellan and his men took over a month to get through the strait (or straits). During that time the master of one of the remaining ships mutinied and sailed home.

The surviving ships continued on what became the first circumnavigation of the globe, though Magellan himself was killed in a fight with natives in the Philippines, and Spaniard Juan Sabastian Elcano took command

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## ***The Upper Room* writing competition 2020**

Calling all aspiring Christian writers! The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is offering aspiring writers the opportunity to see their work in print in *The Upper Room*.

Published in 35 languages, *The Upper Room* is unique in that its readers are its writers. After the success of the 2017 competition, this is another chance to write for the publication.

Go to [brfonline.org.uk/urwritingcompetition](http://brfonline.org.uk/urwritingcompetition) for full details on how to enter and tips to get your started. *More details from:* [eley.mcainsh@brf.org.uk](mailto:eley.mcainsh@brf.org.uk) or [iris.jenkins@brf.org.uk](mailto:iris.jenkins@brf.org.uk)

## SHARED WORSHIP THIS MONTH

### Holy Communion

**IMPORTANT!!** As we go forward please contact Gail if you intend to come to All Saints, St Andrews or St Peters for any of the services which are advertised because places are currently limited due to social distancing.

You can ring Gail on 01902 540289 or email on:

**admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk**

If you are not able to contact Gail during the week, please contact one of the ministry team, including over the weekend of the service, to ensure there is space for you to come.

### Sunday

**9.30am – 1030am St Andrew’s Church** open for morning worship. – Please contact Gail for next week and the ministry team after Friday 1230pm if you intend to come places are currently limited.

**9:30am Holy Communion** – this will be ‘live’ on Zoom. **(1030am live from All Saints Church and on Zoom. If you wish to attend in person please book as usual if you want to attend on Zoom please ensure you are joined by 1020am for a 1030am start).**

**10:30am prayer/worship** - praying through the Sunday liturgy individually but hopefully at the same time! – This is available through the email News Groups and includes links to hymns and a printed sermon and is usually emailed out on the Saturday.

**11:45am Zoom virtual coffee fellowship** – Please note the slightly later time. Bring your own coffee to your computer and see and hear some of your church friends; for about 30 minutes.

**6:30pm Compline** on Zoom, about 20 minutes. A quiet and reflective service.

### Wednesday

**10am – In St Peters – Holy Communion** – Please contact Gail if you intend to come as places are currently limited.

### Thursday

**8pm Fellowship Group on Zoom** – everyone is welcome.

**Weekday morning prayers.** Please note **there will not be parish prayers on Wednesday morning.**

### Tuesday and Thursday

**9:15am Parish Prayer on Zoom** – an informal time of prayer where we share the Gospel reading for the day and pray for about 15 minutes.

**St Peters Sunday Service To Resume 11th October at 10.30am. Places will be limited so please book in with Gail In The Parish Office Up To Friday at 12.30, Or After That The Ministry Team. Thank You.**

**On the 11th October we will celebrate harvest in all our churches, any donations will be for the Black Country Foodbank.**