

PORTREE PARISH
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

THE HOLLY



& THE IVY

CHRISTMAS 2024

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THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

I see him, but not now;

I behold him, but not near.

A STAR will come out of Jacob;

a sceptre will rise out of Izrael.

(Book of Numbers 24: 17)

This first biblical prophecy of a STAR takes us back to the time when the people of Israel was wondering in the wilderness towards God's Promised Land. As they came to camp in the Plains of Moab (modern Jordan), Balak, the King of Moab, sent a message to Balaam son of Beor, a prophet from the banks of Euphrates (Babylon, Iraq), to come over to Moab, and curse the Hebrews. But Balaam already recognized The Almighty as his own God (Numbers 22: 18), and instead of cursing he began to bless the Israelites and delivered the above prophecy about their future. God chose a non-Hebrew prophet to reveal the first message about the time and circumstances of the birth of God's Messiah. Balaam's prophecy contains three key words. First, the prophet speaks of a STAR emerging from Jacob, which in ancient Near East was used to designate a GOD. Second, Balaam mentions a SCEPTRE which commonly signified the royal authority of a KING (Genesis 49: 10). Third, he emphasized that both the STAR and SCEPTRE, or GOD and KING, will come as a HUMAN agent. This means that the one who is both a DIVINE and ROYAL will also be HUMAN.

According to the Gospel of Matthew (2: 11), the Magi from East already had to know about Balaam's prophecy, as they brought the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh to Jesus, guided by the STAR of Bethlehem: - " GOLD to a KING, FRANKINCENSE to GOD, and MYRRH to a HUMAN who would die". A clear reference to the triple facet of Jesus' personality as God, King and Mortal Being.

The *Star of Bethlehem* reminds us that the Gospel (Godly Good News) is for everyone. The Father Almighty announced His Son's birth to the most unlikely people from the cursed land of Babylon, to tell us that His Love is for all humanity. The STAR, as guiding light leading to Jesus symbolizes *THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD* as PEACE and HOPE to all mankind. Biblically represents the Divine Guidance and the Revelation of Christ to the Gentiles, to all those *who believe in Him to not perish, but have eternal life*.

The *Star of Bethlehem* always is represented in form of an *eight-pointed-star*, which can also be found on maps. It is a compass which shows the orientation of four cardinal and ordinal directions, and called as *Windrose*, or *Compass Rose*.

Across the centuries many people have tried to find *That Star*. Several naïve and scientific identification theories appeared from Persian and Chinese astrologers to the most modern astronomical research institutes, concerning the *Star of Bethlehem*, like: Meteors (or Shooting Stars), Comets (Stars that can "point"), a Helical rising Star, Supernovas (exploding Stars), and the most recently revealed Planet Conjunction theory called "Dancing Planets".

As a Christian I believe that God, the Creator of all, could have move a star towards Bethlehem to show the place where Jesus was born, and this is my *FAITH*, rather than a theory about something sensationally interesting ...

A large, ornate, star-shaped pendant with a green gemstone at the top, resting on a map of the Middle East. The pendant is made of a dark, possibly black, material with a silver-colored metal outline and a central silver-colored metal piece. The green gemstone is a small, round, faceted stone. The map in the background shows various countries, cities, and roads, with a red line indicating a specific route. The pendant is positioned over the Jordanian desert region, near the border with Iraq and Syria. The map includes labels for cities like Amman, Baghdad, and Damascus, and countries like Jordan, Iraq, and Syria. A red line, likely a pilgrimage route, is drawn across the map, passing through the Jordanian desert and ending near the Red Sea. The pendant is placed on this red line, symbolizing the journey of the Holy Family to Bethlehem.

Nollaig Chridheil agus Bliadhna Mhath Úr,
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You All.
Sandor, your Minister.



May God's blessing be yours,
And good be it sent;
May Christ's blessing be yours,
And good be it meant;
Spirit's blessing be yours,
For life's good intent,
Day arising indoors,
Night lying down spent.

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Session Clerk's Report

Kirk Session has had two meetings since my last report which appeared in the Summer edition of our magazine.

Our agenda for meetings always contains certain "standing items", one of which is Safeguarding. As you will probably be aware Mhairi MacDonald offered to take on the role of Safeguarding Coordinator for the church following the death of Fiona. Mhairi is extremely well qualified for this role as she is a safeguarding coordinator for her position in Highland Council Education Department. Nevertheless, Mhairi was required to complete two Church of Scotland training courses and go through the necessary Disclosure checks.

All these requirements were satisfactorily fulfilled, and Mhairi has now officially taken up the post. As part of the post she will report to every meeting of Kirk Session and keep the Elders up to date with all new developments. She will also serve alongside Sandor and Bill on the Safeguarding Committee for our church.

We are extremely grateful to Mhairi for accepting this responsibility.

Another item which has been on our agenda for some considerable time is the vacancy which will arise when Portree and Kilmuir & Stenscholl parishes unite in 2027.

Following the decision of the person previously nominated as our Sole Nominee for the post to withdraw the Nominating Committee is again seeking applicants for the post.

During Sandor's recent period of annual leave, the Sunday Services as well as the Tuesday evening Bible Study & Prayer Fellowship Services were covered by members of the congregation. We are very fortunate to have so many people in our church who are willing to spend a considerable amount of time and effort in the preparation of the sermons and prayers for these services.

The decision of Session to reintroduce the Summer Opening of the church to visitors was a great success and very much appreciated by those 4,448 people from all over the world who came into our church to pray, meditate, or simply admire the interior of the building.

The Compassion initiative was launched in September aiming at finding sponsors for children born into poverty. These sponsors help the children to receive education, nutritional support, health checks, and most importantly, through their local church to learn that God loves them. Through the special sermons on compassion that were delivered on three Sundays, Portree Church has to date sponsored 10 children, mainly from Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Columbia, Guatemala and Uganda.

All in the Session and Congregational Board would wish to thank the congregation for all the support that they offer throughout the year. That is what makes Portree Church so special.

God bless you all

Bill

Treasurer's Report

It's not just at this time of year that we are warned not to fall for "too good to be true" offers which turn out to be scams.

A few weeks ago in church, I spoke about an offer that sounds "too good to be true" and certainly is. And even more surprisingly it is an offer from an organisation that we do not expect to make such deals - His Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

My talk was about your weekly or monthly givings to the church. You will all be aware that over recent years a number of our congregation have passed away and another group, and others because of illness or other reasons are unable to attend church.

This obviously has an impact on the income for the church.

Let me demonstrate how we can help the situation.

The Open Plate method collects cash offerings donated on Sundays.

The Freewill Offering scheme also collects cash offerings, but joining the scheme indicates your willingness to contribute weekly to the church whether or not you are present on any Sunday. The envelopes are dated, so if you do not attend on a particular Sunday you can hand in two envelopes the following week.

The Freewill Offering + Gift Aid scheme is explained below.



Open Plate



Freewill Offering



Freewill Offering + Gift Aid

With Open Plate offerings £20 in gives £20 to the church.

With Freewill Offering envelopes £20 in gives £20 to the church.

With Freewill offering envelopes linked to Gift Aid £20 in gives **£25** to the church.

How you may ask, and what's the catch ? The answer is **None !**

If you pay Income Tax, (even on pensions), and complete a Gift Aid declaration form, I can claim back from HMRC one quarter of all the donations you make to the church.

Apart from completing the declaration which only requires your Name, Address and Signature, there is no further action you need to take - I complete all the necessary forms for HMRC and the church bank account receives the cheque !

While we are truly grateful for all the donations we receive, we would encourage you to consider linking your contributions to the church with Gift Aid. If you decide to do this, see me for the simple Declaration Form.

Believe me, this **is** an offer too good to be true.

Bill

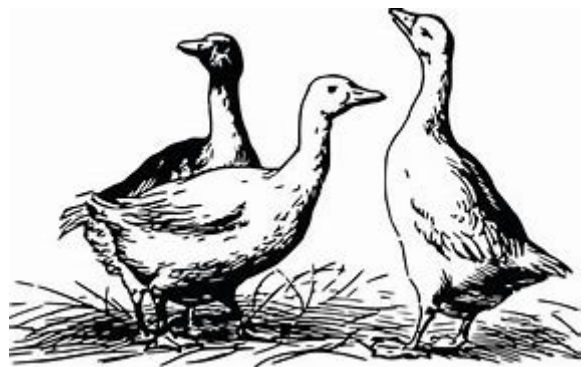
Canon Paul Hardingham gives thanks to the God who comes among us...

CHRISTMAS GEESE

The story is told of a farmer who didn't believe in Jesus. One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife was taking their children to a service at their local church. He refused to come saying: *'Why would God lower Himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!'* So, they left him at home.

During the evening, the winds grew stronger, and the snow turned to a blizzard. He heard a series of loud thumps on the window. In the field near his house, he saw a flock of wild geese. They had been migrating south when they became caught in the snowstorm. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter.

The man wanted to help the geese and so he opened the doors of the barn, hoping they would go inside for shelter. But the geese didn't do anything, despite the man's efforts to move them. He made a breadcrumb trail leading to the barn and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered.



Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn: *'Why don't they follow me?!'* Then he realised: *'If only I were a goose and become one of them, then I could save them.'* Finally, he understood the heart of the Christmas message. God has become one of us in Jesus. The eternal creator God has entered time and space as a baby, to show us who God is and how we can know Him.

This Christmas, let's celebrate again this amazing truth that we have a God who knows and can meet our needs in Jesus. *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means 'God with us''*. Matthew 1:23.

Quotable Quotes

The last thing one knows is what to put first. – *Blaise Pascal*

We know not what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. – *Willis J Ray*

Hope means expectancy when things are otherwise hopeless. – *G K Chesterton*

The noblest revenge is to forgive. – *Thomas Fuller*

Christians may not see eye to eye, but they can walk arm in arm. – *Anon*

CHRISTMAS EVE 1968

Christmas Eve 1968, 56 years ago. Can anyone remember what they were doing on that day? I'm sure for many it would have probably followed the same pattern as Christmases before and since. Last minute shopping, cooking and tree decorating, perhaps it was the first day of the school holidays with time to play and get excited thinking of what Santa was to bring. Then followed at the end of the evening by the calm and peace of the midnight service before going home to bed to dream of what was to come. An enjoyable but perhaps an unremarkable day. But for three American men Christmas Eve 1968 would be one that they would never forget. Bill Anders, Frank Borman and Jim Lovell were astronauts on board Apollo 8 and on Christmas Eve they saw something that no other human being had ever seen before.

Apollo 8 was a groundbreaking mission. Charles Lindbergh, the famous aviator, later remarked that he thought it was far more important than the first manned moon landing which took place less than a year later. For the first time ever, a manned spacecraft had left the earth's gravitational sphere and headed for the moon orbiting it ten times on Christmas Eve before returning safely home three days later. These three men were the first humans to view the far side of the moon with their own eyes and they noted that all the moon was grey, full of craters and devoid of colour. Then as they began their fourth orbit coming round from the back of the moon they saw Earth rise up ahead of them and exclaimed in wonder and amazement "Wow that's pretty". The contrast between the grey, lifeless craters and the beautiful blue Earth couldn't have been greater. Bill Anders took what was to become one of the most iconic photographs in history, a photo which became known as Earthrise. The Earth was the only thing in the universe that had colour and the photo showed both the beauty and the vulnerability of the Earth. This one photo is said to have kickstarted the global environmental movement. Within a few years both Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth were formed.

Later that day the three astronauts broadcast their Christmas message to what was at that time the largest audience in the world. Over a quarter of the world's population heard them speak. Surprisingly the astronauts were given free rein on what to say, the only stipulation being that "it should be something appropriate". They initially thought of speaking about peace on Earth, recalling the Christmas message of the Gospels. But in 1968 America such words would have rung hollow. The Vietnam war was still ongoing, the civil rights movement had been rocked by the assassination of Martin Luther King and of course the Apollo programme itself was part of the Cold War with the USSR.

So it's worth repeating what they actually said.

"We are now approaching lunar sunrise and for all the people back on Earth the crew of Apollo 8 has a message that we would like to send to you. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth".

They took it in turns to read the first ten verses of Genesis 1 and finished with the words

"And from the crew of Apollo 8 we close with good night, good luck, merry Christmas. God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth."

Even today listening to a recording of this message has the power to stop you in your tracks and force you to consider anew those well-known verses. God looked on his creation and saw that it was good and the astronauts, from their lonely tiny capsule saw it too. When they returned to Earth Jim Lovell remarked “We came all the way to the moon and yet the most significant thing we saw was our own planet .” It is sometimes said that to find God we should look up towards the heavens. But perhaps it is by looking down at Earth from above that we can truly appreciate how majestic and awe inspiring He truly is. “Earthrise” can be a powerful image to remind us of God in all His glory and splendour.

*When I consider your heavens,
The work of your fingers,
The moon and stars ,
Which you have set in place,
What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
Human beings that you care for them?*

May you all have a lovely Christmas, knowing that the reason why we can celebrate it is because we know the answer to the psalmist’s question.

“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”



Heather Quaye

GOD IN THE SCIENCES

This article is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Meditation on the Incarnation

*After the bright beam of annunciation
fused heaven with dark earth
His searing sharply-focused light
went out for a while
eclipsed in amniotic gloom:
His cool immensity of splendour
His universal grace
small-folded in a warm dim
female space*

This extract from Luci Shaw's poem *Made Flesh* captures something of the wonder of the moment when the second person of the Trinity became an embryo.

How does a single cell turn into an infant, and what does that process say about us – and God? These are the questions that Professor Jeff Hardin, a developmental biologist, asks himself. Having studied theology as well as science, he has a unique perspective on embryonic development.

A new-born baby is made of around five trillion cells. These cells come in hundreds of different types, each of which must be in the correct place for the child's body to function properly. Every new life is the result of intricate and highly ordered processes. Three things must happen as an embryo develops.

The first important process is for cells to take on their identity as types of muscle, bone, nerves, and so on. The second is when each cell learns which part of the body it belongs to. Third, those cells are moved around to form the different tissues and organs. These three are not discrete stages, but they all happen at around the same time, building up gradually like the different aspects of a picture coming into focus.

All three of these processes are driven forward by the movement of cells, the connections between them, and the signals they pass to each other. Jeff studies a sort of cellular glue which is involved in joining cells together. Making and breaking these adhesions can affect how cells move and signal to each other, their identity in the body, how they are organised as groups, and ultimately their survival. This glue is found on the surface of cells throughout the animal kingdom, including the small worms Jeff's lab studies.



For Jeff, peering down a microscope at tiny worm embryos can be an act of worship. It is also an exercise in art appreciation, as he learns to appreciate the created order. Understanding the complexities of development, while also being aware that God knows that process intimately both as Creator and created, fills Jeff with a profound sense of awe, wonder and worship.

Does the minute scale of our early development, compared to the incomprehensibly vast and ancient universe, give us a sense of insignificance? Psalm 8 says, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

For Jeff and the Psalmist, such feelings can be a positive experience if they serve as a reminder to be humble in the face of a universe that is vastly complicated but also deeply meaningful, made by a God who loves each one of us.



A PRAYER FOR DECEMBER 2024

Father, the days are short; darkness deepens in December and this year it seems to reflect the darkness in so many parts of the world. We think especially of the land You came to, all those years ago, and other nearby lands where so many are suffering.

Father, thank you that Jesus came into the world as Your Light; that He shines today as brightly and powerfully as He did then, and will do forever. Help us to open our hearts and minds to allow His light to fill us with the assurance that, no matter what is going on, we are safe in Him.

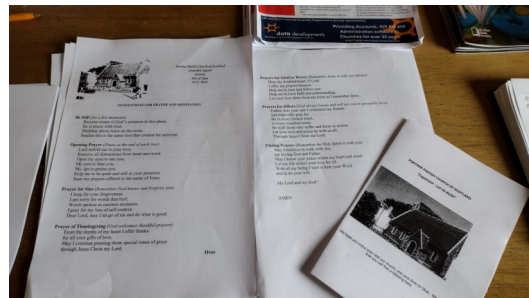
Thank you that, in Jesus, You have conquered death and darkness; that one day, everyone will bow before Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose Kingdom shall never end.

Help us, in thankfulness and love, to share Your Christmas Light and Hope and Joy. Hallelujah! In Jesus' name. Amen.

Daphne Kitching

SUMMER OPENING OF THE CHURCH TO VISITORS

Over July and August, our church was open for visitors every weekday between 11am and 4pm. Over the course of 40 days, we had some 4,448 visitors - an average of 111 per day. Our busiest day was 4th July with 221 visitors. There was always member of the congregation on hand to welcome visitors and answer any questions.



We had prayer cards available on the pews, with paper copies to be taken away if required, along with a leaflet on the history of the parish church. Visitors came from all corners of the world, with cruise ships, bus tours, local tours, individuals, friends, and families - some came in just to look at the church, but many stopped for a quiet time, giving the opportunity for sharing interesting conversations and times of prayer.

We are very grateful to the members of the congregation who gave of their time and energy for this activity which we had undertaken for many years prior to the pandemic, and we were delighted to be able to offer this facility once again.

Donna McEwan



QUOTES : As for giving generously over Christmas:

Let us give according to our incomes lest God make our incomes to match our gifts. - *Anon*

The world provides enough for every man's need but not for every man's greed. - *Gandhi*

It is easier to renounce worldly possessions than it is to renounce the love of them. - *Walter Hilton*

Nothing influences a man so much as that which he calls his own. - *C H Spurgeon*

THE PSALMS

Reasons to Read Psalms	
When you want...	Read...
to find comfort	Psalms 23
to meet God intimately	Psalms 103
to learn a new prayer	Psalms 136
to learn a new song	Psalms 92
to learn more about God	Psalms 24
to understand yourself more clearly	Psalms 8
to know how to come to God each day	Psalms 5
to be forgiven for your sins	Psalms 51
to feel worthwhile	Psalms 139
to understand why you should read the Bible	Psalms 119
to give praise to God	Psalms 145
to know that God is in control	Psalms 146
to give thanks to God	Psalms 136
to please God	Psalms 15
to know why you should worship God	Psalms 104
<p>God's Word was written to be studied, understood, and applied, and the book of Psalms lends itself most directly to application. We understand the psalms best when we "stand under" them and allow them to flow over us like a rain shower. We may turn to Psalms looking for something, but sooner or later we will meet Someone. As we read and memorize the psalms, we will gradually discover how much they are already part of us. They put into words our deepest hurts, longings, thoughts, and prayers. They gently push us toward being what God designed us to be—people loving and living for him.</p>	

Psalms to Learn and Love	
<p>Almost everyone, whether religious or not, has heard Psalm 23 because it is quoted so frequently. Many other psalms are also familiar because they are quoted in music, in literature, or in the words of the worship service.</p> <p>The psalms we know and love are the ones that come into our minds when we need them. They inspire us, comfort us, correct us just when we need a word from the Lord. If you want to begin memorizing psalms, start with some of these favorites. Memorize the whole psalm or just the verses that speak most directly to you. Or read the psalm aloud several times a day until it is part of you.</p>	
Psalms to bring us into God's presence	29; 95:1-7a; 96; 100
Psalms about goodness	1; 19; 24; 133; 136; 139
Psalms of praise	8; 97; 103; 107; 113; 145; 150
Psalms of repentance and forgiveness	32:1-5; 51; 103
Psalms for times of trouble	3; 14; 22; 37:1-11; 42; 46; 53; 116:1-7
Psalms of confidence and trust	23; 40:1-4; 91; 119:11; 121; 127

This beautiful poem is by Gerard Kelly @threadforthejourney, taken from his book 'Spoken Worship'.

Behold, I Stand

When the night is deep
with the sense of Christmas
and expectancy hangs heavy
on every breath,
behold, I stand at the door and knock.

When the floor is knee-deep
in discarded wrapping paper
and the new books are open at page one
and the new toys are already broken,
behold, I stand at the door and knock.

When the family is squashed
elbow to elbow
around the table,
and the furious rush for food is over
and the only word that can describe the feeling
is full,
behold, I stand at the door and knock.

When Christmas is over
and the television is silent
for the first time in two days
and who sent which card to whom
is forgotten until next year,
behold, I stand at the door.



And when the nation has finished celebrating
Christmas without Christ,
a birthday without a birth,
the coming of a kingdom
without a king,
when I am forgotten,
despised,
rejected,
crucified,
behold, I stand.

Submitted by Donna McEwan

EVERYDAY CHRISTMAS

(Based on Malachi 4:2, and Matthew 1:23)

Light a candle,
Look into the light,
Pray.

*Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings*

As the flame rises,
Smooth, bright,
Know the comfort of Christ
In the carol speaking
Afresh.
Bringing Jesus
Into heart and prayer.

Emmanuel, God with us.
Light of the world,
Out of the stable
Into our situations.

Because of Jesus
Christmas is everyday.

The Lord is here.
Hallelujah.



Daphne Kitching

ANDREW - FIRST DISCIPLE OF JESUS

Andrew, whose day in the Christian year is celebrated on 30th November, is probably best known to us as the patron saint of Scotland, though his only connection with the country is that some of his bones were reputedly transported in the 8th century to Fife and preserved at a church in a place now named St Andrews.

In fact, there are so many legends about him all over Europe and the Middle East that it's safest to stick to what the Gospels tell us - though the strong tradition that he was martyred by crucifixion is probably true and is perpetuated in the 'St Andrew's Cross', the 'saltyre' of Scotland.



The Gospels record that he was one of the first disciples of Jesus, and the very first to bring someone else to Christ - his own brother. Like many fervent Jews at the time Andrew and an unnamed companion had been drawn to the desert, to be taught by the charismatic prophet known to us as John the Baptist. Many thought that he was the long-promised Messiah, but John insisted that he was not. 'I am the voice crying in the wilderness,' he told the crowds. 'Prepare the way of the Lord! One comes after me who is greater than I am.' So, when one day John pointed out Jesus to Andrew and his friend and described him as the 'Lamb of God,' the two young men assumed that the next stage of their spiritual search was about to unfold. So as Jesus made off, they followed him.

All the more strange, then (though, on reflection, very true to human nature) that when Jesus turned and asked them what they were 'seeking,' all they could come up with was a lame enquiry about his current place of residence: 'where are you staying?' Or, perhaps, they were hinting that what they were seeking could not be dealt with in a brief conversation. If they could come to his lodgings, perhaps their burning questions might be answered.

The reply of Jesus was the most straight-forward invitation anyone can receive: 'Come and see.' Come and see what I'm like, what I do, the sort of person I am. What an invitation!

The results of their response were in this case life-changing - for themselves, and for many other people. Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus. The next day Jesus met Philip and called him to 'follow'. Philip then brought Nathaniel. The little apostolic band who would carry the message of Jesus to the entire world was being formed. They came, they saw, they were conquered!

And right at the front of the column, as it were, was Andrew, the first disciple of Jesus.

David Winter reflects on the coming of Jesus...

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL STORY

A well-known atheist was being interviewed on Radio 4. When asked how he spent Christmas, he said that he went to Midnight Mass at church. "But you're an atheist," his interviewer protested. "Yes," he replied, "but what they celebrate at Christmas is the most beautiful story ever told."

That 'beautiful story' tells of a Creator who sent His Son to share the life of His creation, to be born as a helpless baby, to grow up as a man of extraordinary wisdom, gentleness, and love, who was executed by the authorities for contradicting the traditions of the time. His followers – who today number about two billion people all over the world – believe that He rose from the dead, and that by His death and resurrection He has made possible forgiveness and eternal life for men and women everywhere.

That is certainly quite a story, perhaps the greatest story ever told, and yes, beautiful. And that is the story that will be rehearsed again this Christmas, in children's Nativities, in hymns and carols, in Bible readings and sermons all over the country. People who stay away from church all year turn up to hear it, and who can blame them? This is a story of hope, of love and of heaven touching earth.

Probably the best-known statue in the world is 'Christ the Redeemer,' towering over the South American city of Rio de Janeiro, His arms outstretched in blessing. Christmas celebrates the birth of that great Redeemer – a tiny baby laid in a feeding trough.

His birth changed history, His life transformed our understanding of what it means to be human, His death was at one and the same time a tragedy and a triumph. Yes, it is 'the most beautiful story ever told.'

Enjoy it again this Christmas.

Smile Lines

Labels

I have my own system for labelling homemade freezer meals. I no longer bother with labels like 'chicken casserole' or 'lasagne' or 'steak and ale pie'. Instead, I use 'Whatever', 'Anything', or 'I Don't Know.' That way when I ask my family what they want for dinner, I always have it to hand.**

Good idea

A young theologian, fresh out of university, thought it would help him better understand the world if he served as a policeman before going on for ordination. At the police interview he was asked: "What would you do to disperse a frenzied crowd?"

He promptly responded, "I would pass around an offering plate." He got the job.

WAR AND PEACE

John Lennon wrote:

*'Imagine there's no countries,
It isn't hard to do,
Nothing to kill or die for,
And no religion too.
Imagine all the people living life in peace.'*

But each year at Remembrance Sunday, we should reflect on war past and present and consider the *real* way to peace.

The way of war:

'What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill.' (James 4:1-2).

James reminds us that war has its basis in our own hearts, with the selfish desires that exploit, bully, and kill others to get our own way. Sadly, when nations allow these inner selfish attitudes to determine their policy the result is war. Only God can establish true peace.

The way of peace:

Isaiah, 2,700 years before John Lennon, also imagined a future of peace without any war: *'They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.'* (Isaiah 2:4).

Only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can bring true peace to our lives and world. Jesus did not experience the horror of battle, but He did die an horrific death at the hand of the Romans. He gave His life sacrificially, as He took God's anger at our sin on Himself and went on to conquer death in His resurrection. He did this out of love for us and calls us to love others in the same way: *'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.'* (John 15:13).

How can we demonstrate such love ourselves? We can be confident in God's plan to bring an end to all wars when Jesus returns.

Paul Hardingham



Peace

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged sentry
All skilful in the wars:

There, above noise and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles,
And one born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files,

He is thy gracious Friend,
And – O my soul, awake! –
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.

If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress and thy ease.

Leave then thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure
But one who never changes –
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.

Henry Vaughan 1623-95

Looking back on the year...

War loves to seek its victims in the young. – *Sophocles*

My political ideal is democracy. Everyone should be respected as an individual, but no one idolized. – *Albert Einstein*

Any event, once it has occurred, can be made to appear inevitable by a competent historian. – *Lee Simonson*

Any event, once it has occurred, can be made to appear inevitable by a competent historian. – *Lee Simonson*

Any event, once it has occurred, can be made to appear inevitable by a competent historian. – *Lee Simonson*

History repeats itself, that's one of the things that's wrong with history. – *Clarence Darrow*

Compassion update

Following our Compassion Sunday on 8 September, when we were also treated to an excellent soup and pudding lunch in the church hall, children from a number of countries have been sponsored by our congregation. The church, through the Sunday School, is sponsoring a boy from Burkina Faso, and Compassion UK encouraged us to sponsor other children who would be supported by the same programme. So, we now have a number of children from a community in the north west of the country, in the Tougan-Gassan region.

Background information on Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso, known as Upper Volta until 1984, is a former French colony that gained independence in 1960. French is the main language of instruction in schools, and the language for correspondence with our sponsored children. Those of us sponsoring these children are in the early stages of finding out how this will work given most of us are not fluent in French! Neighbouring countries are Mali, Niger, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana. It's a hot dry country where 90% of the population live by subsistence agriculture and livestock raising. Average life expectancy is 60 years, and the state of health is 'generally poor'. School enrolment is one of the lowest in Africa. It's a Muslim majority country, with around 27% of the country being Christian, 20% Roman Catholic and 7% Protestant.

Our sponsored children

The children we are sponsoring are receiving support from a programme connected with the Christian Alliance Church of Tougan. This provides access to child protection, home support, access to healthcare and schooling. Some churches are also helping families with income generation such as cooperative rice production.

What to pray for

We haven't been given any specific information about the situation in the area our sponsored children live in, but organisations such as Open Doors and Release International, which focus on supporting Christians at risk of persecution, detail concerns about the safety and security of Christians in parts of Burkina Faso, which is affected by political instability and jihadist militant activity.

As partners with Compassion UK let's pray that Christians will be able to live in peace, and that the churches will be able to continue to support our sponsored children.

People in our congregation are also sponsoring children from Bolivia, Bangladesh, Columbia, Guatemala, and Uganda. We hope to provide information on these countries to help us pray for the children and their families in future editions.



More information on Compassion UK and how to help support children in poorer countries can be found at <https://www.compassionuk.org/>

Information to help us pray for Christians in countries where they do not enjoy the freedoms we have can be found at

<https://releaseinternational.org/> and <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/>

Catriona MacDonald

TALK TO JESUS

When all hope is disappearing
And your spirit is so low
When your days are full of fearing
And you suffer blow on blow
There's a tried and trusted method
Which will ease all sense of loss
Just kneel and talk to Jesus
The one who died upon the cross



When deep shadows overcome you
And your heart's full of despair
When your life seems torn and tattered
And appears beyond repair
When you suffer great misfortune
And need lifting from a fall
Just kneel and talk to Jesus
Who died to save us all
For when you talk to Jesus
You'll not even have to ask
Because He knows your every need
And gives courage for each task
With Him life's long hard journey
Becomes easier every day
For He's the sturdy footwear
That helps you travel life's
highway.

Colin Hammacott

Smile Lines 2

Our mothers taught us TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE: "If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning."

Our fathers taught us RELIGION: "You better pray that that will come out of the carpet."

Our mothers taught us LOGIC: "If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you're not going to the shops with me."

Our fathers taught us MORE LOGIC: "Because I said so, that's why."

Our mothers taught us about CONTORTIONISM: "Just you look at that dirt on the back of your neck!"

Our fathers taught us about the science of OSMOSIS: "Shut your mouth and eat your supper."

Our mothers taught us about BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION: "Stop acting like your father!"

And finally, our fathers taught us about JUSTICE: "One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!"

SAINT MARGARET OF SCOTLAND

Some women have power, and some women are good. When a woman with power is also good, she can achieve an astonishing amount.

Margaret of Scotland has been called 'The Pearl of Scotland,' but she began life in Hungary about 1045. She was born to the expatriate English prince Edward the Exile, and so was an English princess. The family returned to Wessex in 1057, when she was thirteen, and following the death of King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, her brother Edgar Aetheling should have been King of England, but he was never crowned. Instead, the family fled north, to Scotland, where she was married to Malcolm III of Scotland by 1070.

As a Scottish queen she went on to become mother of three kings of Scotland, and of a queen consort of England.

Margaret was a Christian, and became a good friend of Lanfranc, a future archbishop of Canterbury. Her biographer tells of how she read narratives from the Bible to her husband, thus helping to 'civilise' him. He was illiterate, but so admired her reading, that he had her books decorated with gold and silver. She was also credited with helping her youngest son, the future King David I of Scotland, towards becoming a just and holy ruler.

Margaret introduced the worship and practise of the Church of Rome into Scotland. She also wanted to help the many pilgrims travelling in Scotland, and so she established a ferry across the Firth of Forth, which is where the towns South Queensferry and North Queensferry got their names.

Margaret performed many charitable works for the poor, and she interceded for the release of English exiles who had been forced into serfdom following the Norman conquest. She also began the restoration of Iona Abbey.

In private life, Margaret spent much of her time in prayer, using a cave on the banks of the Tower Burn in Dunfermline as a place of devotion and prayers. St Margaret's Cave is still there today, covered beneath a municipal car park.

Margaret died in 1093, and in 1250 Pope Innocent IV canonised her. Her relics were dispersed after the Scottish Reformation, but at one time Mary, Queen of Scots, owned her head.



Some in the church might like to join a new Christian holiday club. It is on my list of things to do. The link to the site is <https://sonaschristianholidays.com/membershipform>

It says Visit our members page of light-minded Christians on an incredible Journey of faith and worship.

Mairi Nicolson

Nigel Beeton writes: It can be a bit gloomy after Christmas, so maybe we all need a bit of January Jollity! When I was younger, I got my jollity in spades from those old hand-drawn cartoons that were a staple of television back then! I'm not sure that anything has made me laugh quite so much since then!

The Cartoons of Old

Didn't we love those cartoons of old?
The faintly ridiculous stories they told!
Of cats chasing mice, and dogs chasing cats
Wile E Coyote and his Road Runner traps
That never succeeded, or trapped him instead
We laughed at disaster 'cos no one was dead!

Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, or dear old Bugs Bunny
There's nothing today that is nearly so funny!
Dastardly, Muttley, in those great Wacky Races,
Whose schemes always left them both sunk without traces;

Or Fred of the Flintstones, and Wilma, and Barney
We laughed at their tales of prehistory blarney!
The unending feuding of Tom and of Jerry
Which always succeeded in making us merry!

Those hand-drawn cartoons made us rock like a jelly
Who needed computers to bring us good telly?

Nigel Beeton

A Prayer for Humility

God I pray You'll grant me
A fair share of humility,
Let me live my life to be
With diffidence and modesty.

Be gracious Lord and teach to me
The meaning of servility,
Open my eyes and let me see
The world does not revolve round me.

Let me serve You in all I do
My faith and love of You renew
Let me recall what is so true
That I am nothing, without You

Colin Hammacott

ALL IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

It was:

1750 years ago, on 25 Dec 274 that the Roman Emperor Aurelian founded the cult of Sol Invictus as an official religion. In 336, after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, 25th December began to be celebrated by the church in Rome as the birthday of God's Son.

200 years ago, on 21st Dec 1824 that James Parkinson, British surgeon and politician, died. He was the first person to describe Parkinson's disease, in 1817.

125 years ago, on 5th Dec 1899 that Henry Tate, British sugar merchant and philanthropist, died. He established the Tate Gallery in London.

Also 125 years ago, on 16th Dec 1899 that Noel Coward, British playwright, composer, director, actor and singer, was born. His plays include *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives*, and *Blithe Spirit*.

Also 125 years ago, on 22nd Dec 1899 that Dwight L Moody, famous American evangelist, died.

80 years ago, from 16th Dec 1944 to 16th Jan 1945 that the Battle of the Bulge (Belgium) took place. German forces launched a surprise assault on the Allies in the Ardennes Forest – their last major counter-offensive operation of the war.

80 years ago, from 16th Dec 1944 to 16th Jan 1945 that the Battle of the Bulge (Belgium) took place. German forces launched a surprise assault on the Allies in the Ardennes Forest – their last major counter-offensive operation of the war.

60 years ago, on 19th Dec 1964 that the first coordinated nationwide protests against the war in Vietnam were held in the USA.

60 years ago, on 31st Dec 1964 that Donald Campbell broke the world water speed record, and became the only person to break both the land speed record and the water speed record in the same year.

50 years ago, on 24th Dec 1974 that British politician John Stonehouse was arrested in Australia (on suspicion of being Lord Lucan.) He had faked his death on 20th November by leaving a pile of clothing on a beach in Miami Florida.

40 years ago, on 19th Dec 1984 that the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed by Britain and China. Britain agreed to return Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty on 1st July 1997.

Also 40 years ago, on 31st Dec 1984 that the Bank of England stopped producing one pound notes. They remained legal tender until 1988.

30 years ago, on 9th Dec 1994 that Sinn Féin held its first formal talks with the British government. This eventually led to the IRA ceasefire, the Good Friday Agreement, and the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998.



Nigel Beeton writes:

We've got very used to the Christmas story; we enjoy its comfortable message of peace and joy. But if you look at it as you might have experienced it in the first century, it would have been terrifying! Angels, strange men from foreign lands, murderous kings, a night flight to Egypt - it's more like a horror story than a festive tale of comfort. But yes, the bottom line - the punchline - is about Good News:

Nolite Timere (Do not be afraid)

Do not be afraid
Of angels in the sky
Nor of the Babe in manger laid
Or of the death He'd die.

Do not be afraid
Of magi bearing gold
Their clothes of velvet and rich braid
As mysteries unfold.

Do not be afraid
Of Herod's fatal rage
Or soldiers on a killing raid
On those of tender age.

Fear not, instead rejoice!
For joy the angels bring!
Good news is in the angel's voice
Of Christ, our Saviour King!

By Nigel Beeton



CHRISTMAS TREES

Norway sent a Christmas tree
It marks the Saviour's birth,
The incarnation manifest
As God came down to earth

A babe born to a virgin
Would grow up as a man,
Yet still divine, such mystery,
To implement God's plan.

Another tree was put in place
A sacrifice was made,
As on that cross He gave His life
That all men could be saved.

So celebrate that wondrous day
When Jesus left His home,
To bring salvation down to man,
And claim us as His own.



Megan Carter

THE STORY BEHIND 'TO GOD BE THE GLORY!'

Fanny Crosby (1820 – 1915), the American singer and musician, was blind from the age of six weeks. She married her music teacher, Alexander Van Alstyne, who was also blind. She was a prolific songwriter, and once signed a contract with a publisher to write three songs every week throughout the year. But in fact, she wrote thousands during her lifetime.

Although American evangelists Moody and Sankey used this hymn on their missions, it did not become an immediate favourite. But after Billy Graham featured it in his Haringay crusade in 1954, Londoners were soon singing it on their way home, in streets and busy queues and underground trains.

When Dr Graham took it back to the United States and introduced it at his crusade in Nashville, Tennessee, it soon took its place in the group of top favourites hymns.

To God Be the Glory

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life our redemption to win,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice;
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.*

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport when Jesus we see.

By Fanny Crosby (1820 – 1915)

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. This year was a Leap Year. Were 1900 and 2000 Leap Years?
2. What is Whamaggedon?
3. Alan Bates hit the headlines in January. He shares his name with a famous actor, but why is he well known?
4. HRH Duke of Edinburgh met a special resident at St Helena in January 1957 who had also met his grandparents. Who is he?
5. A young actor, fresh out of drama school, was told by Arthur Lowe, “don’t worry if there’s not a lot of lines. They’ll come. In the meantime get yourself a funny costume and stand near me”. Who was the actor who passed away this year and starred in this classic sitcom?
6. Why did a family photo taken for Mothering Sunday lead to a lot of media speculation?
7. Why did North Korean television object to Alan Titchmarsh and his trousers?
8. Where was the Carnation Revolution fifty years ago?
9. What product manufacturer (a byword in usefulness) announced in 2024 they would introduce the first bladeless version?
10. What is Election purdah?
11. What was Gamblegate?
12. 17th July was National Emoji Day. One of the most popular is known as ROTFL. What does that mean?
13. In this year’s Olympics the Philippines gold medallist Carlos Yulo got an unusual reward as well as the medal. What was it?
14. In August a north Italian city advertised for people to learn an ancient skill. The job requirements include being 18 or over, having a high school-level education, knowing how to swim, and possessing a medical certificate that proves “a healthy and robust constitution”. What job was this for?
15. What music celebrated its 200th anniversary? Liked by many, and Karl Marx thought it “a solemn mass of earthly joy”?

The answers to the quiz can be found on Page 36

The Christmas Kitchen

The kitchen is, at Christmas
A very busy room!
Lots of work in such a rush
Or Christmas Day will loom.



First there is the cake to bake
And many pastries too,
Mince pies and biscuits, festive fare
There is so much to do!

Then comes the day, the kitchen fills
With wondrous cooking smells,
As turkey roasts and parsnip toasts
The cooks must work their spells.



The dinner's on the table
We gather round and eat,
But someone has to wash the pots
And make the kitchen neat.

So have a happy Christmas,
Enjoy the festive fare,
But grab a towel and help the cook,
And show them that you care!



By Nigel Beeton

Quotes :

Thoughts on the Incarnation

The Son came out from the Father to help us to come out from the world; He descended to us to enable us to ascend to Him. - *Anthony of Padua*

Christ became what we are that He might make us what He is. - *Athanasius*

I hope your Christmas has had a little touch of Eternity in among the rush and pitter and all. It always seems such a mixture of this world and the next – but that after all is the idea! - *Evelyn Underhill*

God became man to turn creatures into sons; not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. - *CS Lewis*

The hinge of history is on the door of a Bethlehem stable. - *Ralph Sockman*

A Very Special Baby

JESUS WAS BORN ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NEAR JERUSALEM.



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE A VERY SPECIAL BABY.



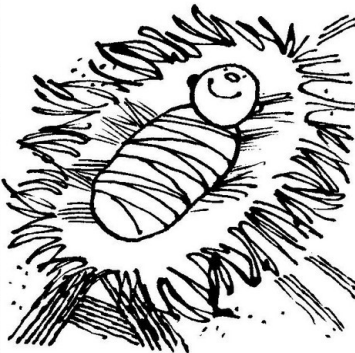
MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE LONG JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED THERE FOR THE CENSUS.

BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL



THE ONLY SHELTER THEY COULD FIND WAS A STABLE...

...WHICH IS WHERE JESUS WAS BORN.



SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAD BEEN BORN.

WISE MEN CAME FROM THE EAST. THEY TOO WANTED TO SEE JESUS. THEY HAD BEEN GUIDED BY A STAR.



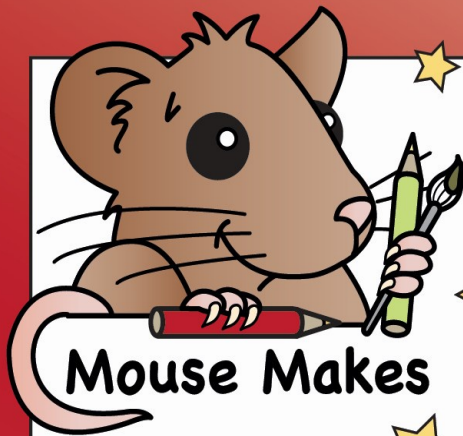
THEY BROUGHT GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.

BUT MARY, JOSEPH AND BABY JESUS SOON HAD TO ESCAPE TO EGYPT...



...AS KING HEROD WANTED JESUS DEAD!!

When you have read the story why not colour it in.



Mouse Makes

"Jesus said,
I am the ____ Y
and the ____ U ____
and the ____ I ____.
No one comes to the Father
except through me."
John 14:6

"The child to be born
will be called
H ____ , the
____ of ____ "
Luke 1:35

"For unto you is born
this day a
S ____ who is
____ R ____
the ____ R ____"
Luke 2:11

THE GREATEST GIFT

"She will bear a son,
and shall call his name

for he will save his
people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21

"Jesus said,
I am the

and the life."
John 11:25

B L I G H T L O
R A Y W O J J R
E M M A N U E L
A B Y J E S O
D S A V I O U R
S A V R J S D

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

JESUS
—
THE
GREATEST
GIFT
OF ALL!

P R O P H E T I
R E D E E M E R
I E M I L I G
E M E S S I A H
S R M E G F T
T E A C H E R E

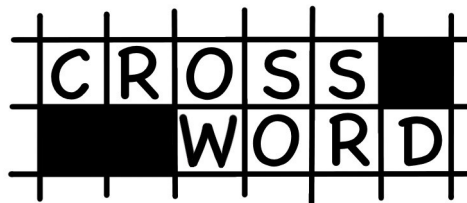
E V E R L A S T I N G
K I N G O F K I N G S
I N K I G W F D O U
S E S O N O F G O D D
S E W O C O U W O R D
C O U N S E L L O R U

EMMANUEL • MESSIAH • REDEEMER • KING OF KINGS • WORD
SON OF MAN • EVERLASTING • SHEPHERD • PRIEST • PROPHET • TEACHER
LIGHT • BREAD • VINE • DOOR • LAMB • COUNSELLOR • CHRISTMAS • GIFT

Find the words from the Bible verses too!

Dec24 © deborah noble @ parishpump.co.uk

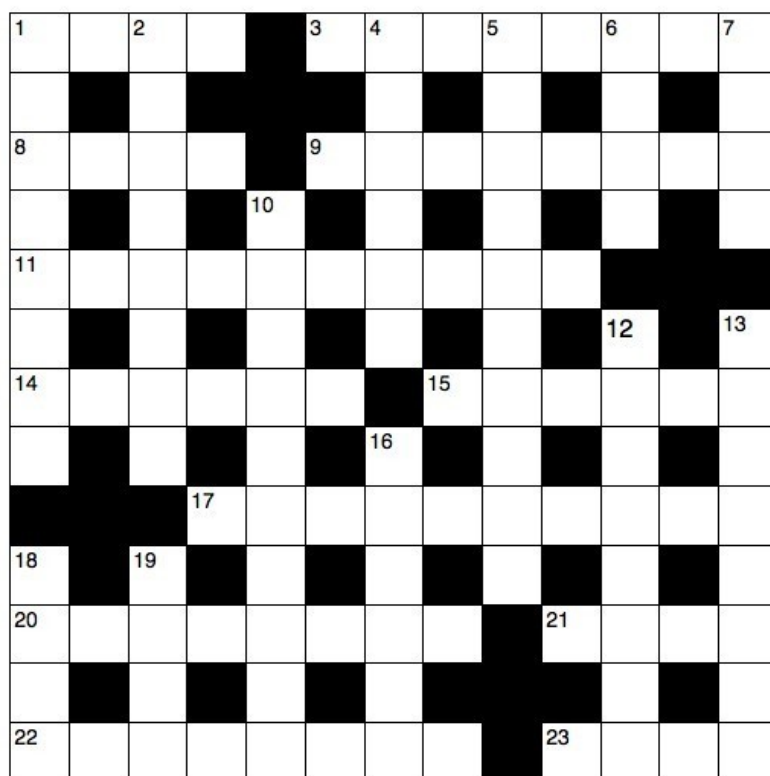
Across



- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
- 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
- 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
- 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
- 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
- 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)
- 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
- 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
- 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
- 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "I don't need you"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)

Down

1. 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17)
- 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
- 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner (Luke 18:13) (6)
- 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
- 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
- 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
- 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
- 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
- 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
- 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
- 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
- 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)



SUDOKU

		1		7				3
			8				7	
		5				6		
1				4			3	
9			7		6			5
	8			3				1
		6				5		
	9				4			
4				8		7		

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The solutions to the Crossword and Sudoku puzzles can be found on Page 36

COMPASSION

The word compassion originates from the Latin verb *compati* and means to see the sufferings of others and to take action to stop it.” A perfect example of compassion in the Bible is the parable of the Good Samaritan

With Christmas approaching the word “compassion,” along with “peace and Joy” is everywhere. Yet, in a world of wars, refugee misery, and climate emergency, it is hard to find peace and joy.

Compassion is when you relate to someone’s situation, and you want to help them. A simple example would be if someone drops their shopping basket, and you help them to pick up their groceries. Compassion is often considered to be a form of love in and of itself, a love of mankind.

Compassion is a social feeling that motivates people to go out of their way to relieve the physical, mental, and emotional pains of others.

Research has shown that in December we are more compassionate than at other times of the year. - think of Christmas boxes, appeals, the Salvation Army etc.

As followers of Jesus, we should have a generous, compassionate spirit all year round.

God’s love came down at Christmas when he gave us his son, Jesus. - a life changing, life saving and life-giving event.

To many, Christmas is a season to shop, eat and overindulge.

What is the best gift we can give ?

We can give Jesus our hearts, our trust, our lives.

Whilst it is to most a joyous time of the year, the festive season can bring intense feelings of pressure and expectation.

What does Christmas mean to us? A holiday, time off work, family gatherings, food ? We should remember the people who are living on the streets or are facing the choice of paying for heating or for food. Many references to compassion can be found in the Bible.

“be kind ad compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” - Ephesians 4 : 32

Jesus showed compassion in that he gave his life in exchange for ours.

Clearly compassion was a quality of Jesus’ earthly life.

The best gift you can give this Christmas is compassion, love, and kindness.

Kay MacKinnon

The Ladies Bible Study has been studying the book of James – where faith is evidenced by works. We found that throughout James there is the parallel with the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

James 1:2	When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy	Matthew 5:10-12
James 1:4	When your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.	Matthew 5:48
James 1:5, 5:15	Ask God and He will answer.	Matthew 7: 7-12
James 1:9	Believers who are poor (who don't amount to much by the world's standards) should be glad, for God has honoured them.	Matthew 5:3
James 1: 19-20	Watch out for your anger...it can be dangerous.	Matthew 5:22
James 2:13	Be merciful to others as God is merciful to you.	Matthew 5:7, 6:14
James 2:14-16	Your faith must express itself in your actions.	Matthew 7:21-23
James 3:17-18	Blessed are the peacemakers; they plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.	Matthew 5:9
James 4:4	Friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God	Matthew 6:24
James 4:10	When you humble yourself and realise your dependence on God, He will lift you up	Matthew 5:3-4
James 4:11	Don't speak evil against each other. If you do, you will be criticising and judging God's law.	Matthew 7:1-2
James 5:2-3	Treasures on earth will only rot away and be eaten by moths. Store up eternal treasures in heaven.	Matthew 6:19
James 5:10	Be patient in suffering, as God's prophets were patient.	Matthew 5:12
James 5:12	Be honest in your speech; just say a simple yes or no so that you will not sin	Matthew 5:33-37

Christmas Quiz Solutions

1. The year 2000 was a leap year. But 1900 was not. Every 4 years is a leap year.
2. Whamageddon is a game played during the 24 days before Christmas in which players try to go from 1 December to the end of Christmas Eve (24 December) without hearing "Last Christmas" by Wham!.
3. Sir Alan Bates has been very active in trying to address the Post Office scandal.
4. A giant tortoise.
5. Ian Lavender, who played Pike.
6. The photo taken by HRH Princess of Wales had been not very successfully altered.
7. He was wearing American style jeans.
8. Portugal.
9. Swiss Army knife.
10. The rule that civil servants and others will normally observe discretion about making new announcements or decisions that could influence voters.
11. The allegations that some politicians took bets on when the general election would be when they had insider information.
12. Roll on the floor laughing.
13. A lifetime of free colonoscopies.
14. Gondolier.
15. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Crossword and Sudoku Solutions

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

6	2	1	4	7	9	8	5	3
3	4	9	8	6	5	1	7	2
8	7	5	1	2	3	6	9	4
1	6	2	5	4	8	9	3	7
9	3	4	7	1	6	2	8	5
5	8	7	9	3	2	4	6	1
2	1	6	3	9	7	5	4	8
7	9	8	2	5	4	3	1	6
4	5	3	6	8	1	7	2	9

And finally

New Year 2025

If we put our hand in God's hand
As we enter this New Year
Not knowing what the future holds
But that our Friend is near,
We shall not fear what lies ahead
If He is by our side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If He will be our guide.

The Sinless One from heaven came
To dwell with us on earth,
He sought and bought us with His blood
And offered us new birth.

Now as we travel through this year
He knows the things He's planned,
O let us trust and know just this –
Our times are in His hands.

Megan Carter



**The Minister and Kirk Session
of Portree Church
wish everyone a happy and
peaceful Christmas**



Luke 2:14