

The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

We are so keen to widen our knowledge and so little concerned to widen our capacity to love. It is because knowledge translates directly into power. Love translates directly into service and self-giving. Paul's words remain true, ' Knowledge puffs up, love builds up.'

What we see in the birth in Bethlehem is the love of God, who so loved the world that he gave his son. He is generous not grudging and gives himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the life and death and resurrection of Christ, God publishes and brings into effect his plan for the spiritual evolution of the whole human race and for building a civilisation of love.

He is born as a vulnerable child; he empties himself taking the form of a servant.

He teaches us that the first step in becoming a human being is to refuse to be a little God and then go beyond ourselves, following Christ on his way of love.

Christian faith is not first and foremost a matter of ideas, some theory about God, It is first a willingness to follow and to love. The opposite to faith is an ungenerous life turned in upon itself and, in a calculating way looking after number one.

For God, love is not so much an emotion that comes and goes. Love for God is self-giving and that is why, as Christians, we can be commanded to love and to find the centre of our lives in the other, in God and in our neighbour.

The mystery is, that the more we go beyond ourselves, the more we find our truest and deepest selves, the more our spiritual beauty is revealed.

With all good wishes
Andrew

Shrove Tuesday: Who's for pancakes?

Why do we have pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Day, as we call it today? And what is Shrove Tuesday? And why do thousands of people feel it rewarding to race along a street somewhere tossing pancakes from their frying pans as they go?

Well, the answer to the first question is that it is the day before Lent begins and for well over a thousand years that has meant it was the last chance to enjoy meat, fat and other tasty dishes until Easter Day. The 'Lent Fast' was widely and strictly observed. The food in the larder wouldn't keep for six weeks so it had to be eaten. With all these rich foods no wonder the French call it 'Fatty Tuesday' – Mardi Gras.



So, what have pancake races got to do with all this solemnity? 'Shrove' is an old word for 'forgiven' and in

those days to prepare for the rigours of Lent people would want to confess and seek forgiveness – not quite what you want at a party. The answer is quite simply enjoying yourself while you can! So, on Shrove Tuesday this year let's have some fun and make it last as long as possible.

The most convincing (and amusing) of the explanations of pancake races is of outwitting the Sexton who rang the curfew bell that marked the start of Lent. He was reluctant to do it while the race was unfinished. So, the revelry caused by dropped pancakes, postponed the inevitable. Since the Reformation it has not been so rigorously observed in Britain, but still people will resolve to 'give up something for Lent'. Six weeks is about right as a duration and Sunday has always been exempt but make the most of those pancakes. They may well not reappear until April 12th!

David Winter

How to handle temptation

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

The first temptation was to turn stones into bread:

Jesus' ministry was not about meeting His own needs, but being nourished by God's Word. *'We do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'* (Deuteronomy 8:3). Like Jesus, we are called to make God our priority and trust Him completely.

The second temptation was to put God to the test:

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

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

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

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

Canon Paul Hardingham

The Rectory
St James the Least of All



My dear Nephew Darren

I appreciated your recent concern when you heard one of our parishioners had slipped on a gravestone. Your desire to help was entirely commendable, and I do know that sending your own church's health and safety officer to give us some advice was kindly meant. But the 200-page report was not welcome. If we implemented even half of your officer's suggestions, life would become unbearably safe.

St James the Least of All has survived perfectly well for the last 600 years without gutter cleaning inspections, path degreasing and electrical safety certificates, so I think we may survive a little longer without them. As far as I am aware, the only disaster to hit us was when Cromwell's soldiers stabled their horses in the nave – which I suspect a few of our oldest members still clearly remember.

The shock the sidesmen sometimes get when switching on the lights occurs only occasionally, is relatively mild and soon over – and if it happens when preparing for the 8am Service, helps to wake them up. The weight of the Duke of Clumber's marble sarcophagus *is* slowly detaching the south aisle from the rest of the church, but it is very slow – and the pews in that area are used only once a year when his relations visit from America to commemorate his death at

Agincourt – which is probably just beyond remembrance of the oldest of our congregation.

Leaks from the ceiling in the north aisle are solved with a row of buckets – and even you must concede that the fungi on the oak beams look really rather attractive when the sun catches them. The sapling growing out of the spire is certainly an issue – although it looks so attractive in Spring when in blossom. As for our fire extinguishers, they were serviced when my predecessor-but-two was in office, and I have the certificate to prove it.

So, do thank your health and safety officer for all his work and tell him we will bear his recommendations in mind. Also tell him I was so sorry he slipped and broke his leg in our choir stalls while he was with us. But that bit of floor has been out of alignment since 1748, and it seems a shame to disturb it now. If only he had arrived encased in bubble wrap, it would never have happened. Perhaps you could put that on the agenda of your next health and safety meeting.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

HOPE FOR 2021

I find that watching buds swelling on trees and plants during the winter months gives me a tremendous sense of hope. We may all need some need extra hope for 2021, after the events of 2020. By the time you read this a number of us may have been fortunate enough to receive a COVID vaccine, but all of us will probably still be under

various kinds of restrictions. After creation's winter shut-down, the sight of tiny flowers poking out of brown earth may be more important than ever.

Getting outdoors during daylight hours, enjoying green spaces and getting some fresh air and exercise are great ways to keep ourselves healthy at any time of year. A psychologist colleague wrote, "Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood and increased life satisfaction." I expect it is this sense of awe that makes it easier for many of us to connect with God outdoors.

Helping ourselves and others to thrive is a good start to 2021, but it is also vital to have hope for the future. The COVID-19 pandemic was caused by an animal virus jumping into the human population. Diseases like this are not 'natural disasters', but are almost certainly caused by environmental destruction and poor farming practices – either from greed or the desperation born of poverty. Part of the answer to the current crisis is for us to care for all of Creation, both human and everything else, with God's help.

Our ultimate hope is in God's promise that He will bring about a new heavens and new earth. We can look forward to the day when Creation will be fully redeemed and liberated from evil. The Greek word used to describe the new creation is the same as that used to describe someone who becomes a Christian, whose humanity is restored and renewed. There will be continuity between the old and new earth as it is cleansed and purified, surpassing and perfecting what has gone before. There will also be some discontinuity, as there will be no more suffering or death.

So, one source of hope for 2021 is that we can enjoy both caring for and meeting God in Creation. But the parts of Creation that we find most beautiful, giving us a sense of

awe and helping us to worship, are also a reminder that there is something much better to come.

By Ruth Bancewicz, Church Engagement Director, The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge.

THOMAS BRAY - FOUNDER OF SPCK

(15th February)

Thomas Bray was once called a 'Great Small Man', with good reason. This diminutive 18th century English clergyman (1658 – 1730) not only helped to establish the Church of England in Maryland, but he was also founder of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1698 and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (USPG) in 1701.

Those are long names for societies whose aim was to get Christian books and resources into the hands of those who desperately needed them. For the early 18th century was not an easy time for poor clergymen: books were expensive, and many of them had few, or none to guide them in their ministry. And so, Thomas Bray, who had been educated at Oxford, joined with some other clergy friends to help them.

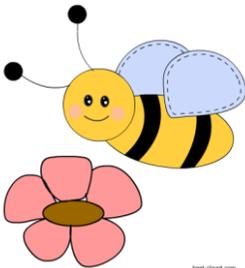
After a trip to assess the needs of the young Episcopal Church in Maryland (he was sent by the Bishop of London), Bray became rector of St Botolph's, Aldgate in London in 1708. From here he served his parish, and through SPCK eventually established 80 parish libraries in England and a further 39 in the Colonies. SPCK and USPG worked by asking learned authors to donate copies of their books. They also appealed to merchants to the foreign plantations for financial help in establishing the libraries.

Thomas Bray's life has affected hundreds of thousands of people over three centuries. Not only was his work in America the first major coordinated effort to establish libraries in the New World, but SPCK is still one of our leading UK Christian publishing houses today.

As if that was not enough, Bray also worked to help poor debtors emigrate to better lives, and homeless children to get care in England. He helped feed prisoners at Newgate prison in London and joined in the political fight against slavery. He also supported outreaches to Africans and Native Americans in their home countries. When he died on 15th February 1730, thousands mourned him. A great small man indeed!

BIRDS AND BEES

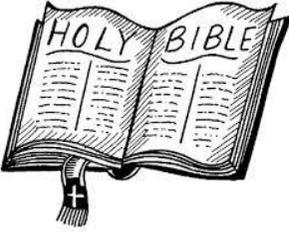
Here is some good news: all new major roads will have wildflower-friendly verges that could boost our numbers of birds and bees.



Highway England has said that vibrant road verges will be created as standard on new roads over 300 miles in England, using low nutrient soils which will be seeded with wildflowers or left to grow naturally.

A staggering 97 per cent of our meadows have been destroyed since the Thirties, due to modern agriculture. This means that the 238,000 hectares of road verges across the UK could become a vital habitat for pollinators.

The Government has pledged to build 4,000 miles of new road by 2025.



SUNDAY READINGS **IN FEBRUARY**

Sunday 7th February - Second Sunday before Lent

OLD TESTAMENT: Proverbs 8.1, 22-31

Solomon is wise. He rejoices in the presence of the Lord and the world he has made.

NEW TESTAMENT: Colossians 1.15-20

The supremacy of Christ. Christ is the image of the invisible God and is above all things.

GOSPEL: John 1.1-14

John is sent by God as a witness to His coming. He comes to use as the Word made flesh, the Word in whom we see glory, grace and truth.

Sunday 14th February - Sunday next before Lent

OLD TESTAMENT: 2 Kings 2.1-12

Elisha witnesses his father, Elijah's ascent into heaven and is empowered to carry on his ministry.

NEW TESTAMENT: Mark 9.2-9

Peter, James and John witness the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain.

Sunday 21st February - Lent 1

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 9.8-17

God makes a covenant with Noah, his descendants and all living creatures that never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.

NEW TESTAMENT: 1 Peter 3.18-end

We are saved by the water of baptism realised in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL: Mark 1.9-15

After being baptised by John Jesus goes into the desert for forty days and is tempted by Satan. He then proclaims the good news of God.

Sunday 28th February - Lent 2

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 17.1-7, 15-16

God tells Abraham that he will be the father of all nations and that Sarah, his wife, will be the mother of all nations and that she will bear a son.

NEW TESTAMENT: Mark 8.31-end

Jesus predicts his own death and resurrection. He tells both his disciples and the people that they will be saved if they follow him.

Seen on a birthday card:

Forget about the past,

You can't change it.

Forget about the future,

You can't predict it.

Forget about the present,

I didn't buy you one.

DO YOUR DAYS RUSH BY AT A HECTIC PACE?

Have you ever stopped to think that your mobile phone and emails have not given you *more* time? Just *more things to do* in the same amount of time.

We leave our messages in one place while we take our bodies elsewhere. Instead of doing one thing after another, we shoot out a variety of tasks, and then swoop down on them later, needing to deal with them all at once.



In a four-minute clip from a street scene from an old Orson Welles film and a similar clip from a more recent film, you will see an amazing difference. In the early film, the camera records 'real time' – people get out of their cars, walk across streets, wait for lights, speak to other people, enter a bank. In the more recent film, a similar sequence was reduced to a half a dozen quick cuts. Transition time was eliminated.

Modern life teaches us that 'down time' is wasted. Time is money. So mobile phones, emails, etc, enable us to 'waste' less time. The tempo of cultural life picks up, the heartbeat of daily life races, and our own body rhythms respond with adrenaline, cramped muscles and heart attacks.

To take time out for daily prayer, for a quiet walk that is not to the next meeting, for daydreaming or for Bible study becomes a cross-cultural act. Following Christ, waiting on Him, is a countercultural act.

One lovely biblical phrase is 'in the fullness of time, it came to pass'. This suggests four things: that time crests like a wave; that there is a right moment for things to happen; that it's not ours to plan that moment, but to recognise it; and that we are not the primary agents of what happens in the world.

So, feel free to accept God's offer of rest when you are weary; receive each moment of your life as a gift from God's hand; pray to discern what each new encounter you make requires of you, and freely entrust everything else to God's care.

The Revd Dr Herbert McGonigle.

THE 39 ARTICLES - continued

Dear All,

I wanted to begin by thanking the Church of the Transfiguration for your generous gift for Freddie, and the love and understanding everyone has shown. Sarah and I are sorry we can't show him off as much as we'd like, but look forward to sunlit uplands later this year! We are all doing very well, many thanks for your cards and wishes.
Tom and Sarah

VI. OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR SALVATION

HOLY Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or

necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

One of the many impacts of the reformation was the encouragement of vernacular scripture; the bible in your own language, understandable by the lay-people of each country, and the consequent drive to educate as many as possible to read and write – in order to understand scriptures, and to ‘work out your own salvation in fear and trembling’(Philippians 2:12). This article speaks to that personal faith, and encounter in the bible.

I have left out the list of the books of the bible which immediately follows the article, for brevities sake, but there are a couple of interesting tit-bits in the list, which I will address before the meat of the article. Firstly there is no reference to the ‘Apocrypha’, which can be found in many bibles, between the Old and the New Testaments, containing such books as *Maccebees*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *Wisdom* and *Esra*, as well as a few others. These are books which have been hanging around the biblical canon for a while, but whose ‘*authority*’ has been of doubt. The authority referred to in the article is the authority either of the prophets – in the established canon of the Old Testament – or of the apostles – each book in the New Testament has a link of some sort to the apostles. The apocryphal books might contain wisdom, or truth, but they do not contain anything *necessary to salvation*.

The phrase ‘*necessary to salvation*’ is a rather loaded one; steeped in historical argument. One of the main issues that came to light in the reformation was the extra beliefs which the Roman Catholic Church maintained which did not have direct roots in scripture. Some of these continue to this day; the Roman Catholic Church still maintains that it is a

requirement for Christians to believe that the Virgin Mary was conceived without the stain of Original sin, remained perpetually virginal and was assumed bodily into heaven, for example, none of which have strong roots in the scriptures (although they are venerable beliefs). The difference is that, in the Anglican Church, you are free to hold these positions, should you find them helpful, but as they are extra-biblical, they cannot be held to be 'necessary' to attain salvation. There are a number of other doctrines, such as purgatory, indulgences, the infallibility of the papal pronouncements (When made *ex cathedra*, from his throne) and the cult of the saints, all of which remain in this same distinction to this day.

VII. OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.

Sometimes it's tempting to think of the Old Testament and the New Testament as having completely different messages; how much more different could they look? In the Old, God seems somehow much more remote and judgemental, bloodthirsty and violent, especially in comparison with Jesus, meek and mild, self-sacrificing and loving.

But this is not a helpful path to go down; Christianity witnesses that the Old and the New Testaments are concordant, both witnessing to the wonderful work of God, and in his Son, Jesus Christ. Christ certainly quoted from the Old Testament frequently, as did Paul, who, when he wrote *'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness'*, was naturally writing not about the New Testament (for it was not yet formed) but about the Old.

However, not everything in the Old Testament is still up to date; in Christ there is new creation, and a new way of existing. To be one of God's people was no longer about the civil and ceremonial rites of the Jewish people, but to be a new creation in Christ. Therefore we do not any longer follow the laws, for example, which forbid pork or seafood to the Jews; these were designed to set God's people apart and identify them, which is now done by, and in the Spirit.

That said, the moral commandments are still to be followed. We might make a distinction between them and the civil commandments in the same way that we might distinguish between rules of the road, and the rules by which we live our lives – for example, in Europe they drive on the right hand side of the road. In France it would be wrong to drive on the left, although this is obviously correct here in England. But in both England, and France, theft is illegal. Driving on the left or right is a civil ordinance; theft is always immoral. So it would have been wrong for a Jew to eat pork, but it is not wrong for a Christian to do so. But both must live moral lives.

VIII. OF THE THREE CREEDS

THE Three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought

thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.

This article safeguards the Church of England's position as a catholic church (small c), affirming the three catholic creeds. We all know the Nicene and the Apostles Creed well – it is worth popping over and reading the Athanasian. The final clause simply notes that even the Creeds don't stand on their own merits, but by the proof of Scripture.

REMEMBERING JOHN KEATS

It was 200 years ago, on 23rd February 1821, that John Keats, the Romantic poet, died in Rome of tuberculosis, aged 25.

Keats was a generous, likeable and hard-working man who had much experience of suffering in his short life. He also had a love of civil and religious liberty. Most of his best work was done during the year 1819, when he was already sickening after an exhausting walking tour of the Lakes and Scotland the previous summer.

In that same year he had also been nursing his brother Tom through tuberculosis – the disease that killed their mother. But in 1819, after Tom's death, he moved to Hampstead and fell in love with a neighbour, Fanny Brawne, who was 18.

By this time Keats was devoting himself to poetry, having originally trained as a surgeon following his mother's early death. He is most famous for his Odes, all of which (except the one to Autumn) were composed between March and June 1819. All of them ponder the clash between eternal ideals and the transience of the physical world.

His most famous lines: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

FROM THE REGISTERS

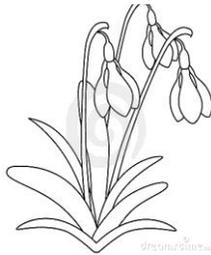
Funerals

19th January
2nd February

John Francis Pannell (76)
Beryl Rundle Thomas (96)

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sunday 7 th February	Jette Fletcher
Sunday 14 th February	Jette Fletcher
Sunday 21 st February	Lent - no flowers
Sunday 28 th February	Lent - no flowers



MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the March issue of the
Church Magazine is
Friday 19th February