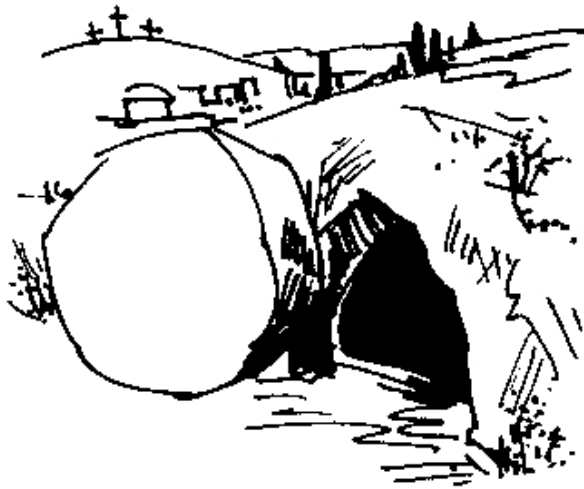
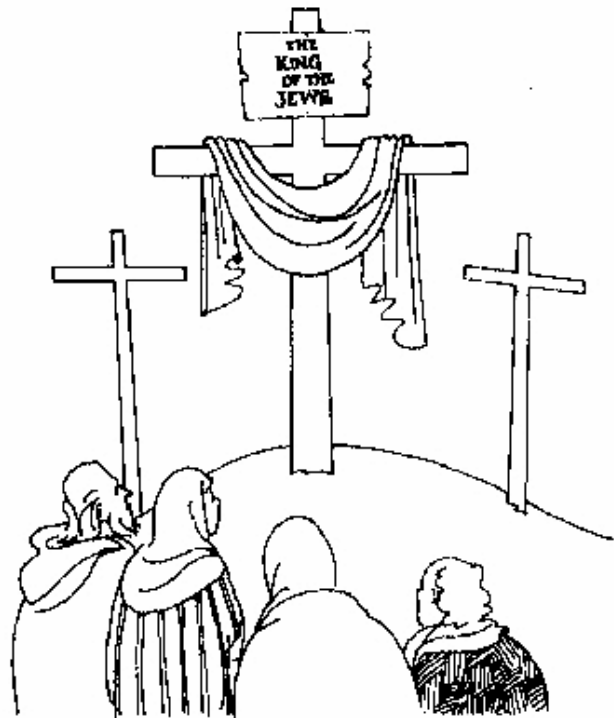
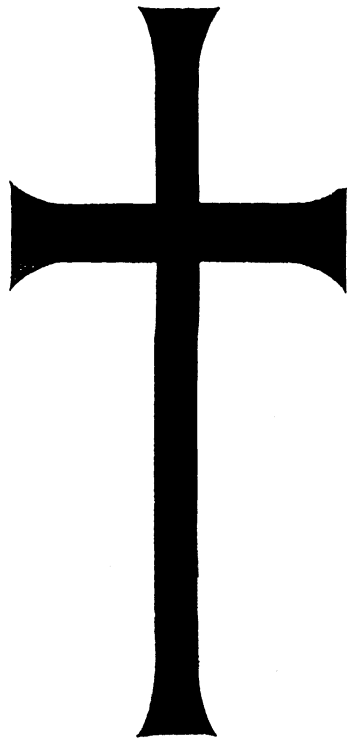


CALDICOT & ROGIET METHODIST CHURCHES'



SPRING 2010

***QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER***

MEDITATION

SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1990

The Daily Telegraph

MOMENT OF VISION

By Bishop George Appleton

AT SOME early point in his ministry Jesus must have confided in his first disciples the spiritual experience of his baptism. As he stood in the Jordan before John the Baptist he received a kind of sight enabling him to see into the spiritual world as clearly as if heaven was opened and to hear a voice assuring him: "You are my beloved son, and in what you are doing I am well pleased." At the same time he felt an inrush of spiritual power and love, as clearly as if a dove had descended upon him in gentleness and strength, urging him to go apart and think out the implication of what was happening.

At the end of the 40 days he was understandably hungry and the white flat stones of the desert seemed like flat loaves of bread. Should he use his power to satisfy his own hunger or, still more attractively, provide nourishment for hungry people. The issue is decided by a text from Deuteronomy: "Man shall not live by bread alone", but his inner life depends more on what God says to the heart.

A few days later the possibility suggests itself of using his power to work some miracle which would compel belief. In

Imagination he pictures himself on a pinnacle of the holy city. If he jumped from the pinnacle trusting God to keep him safe, would not that win people's faith? There was a text of scripture: "He shall give his angels charge over thee lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." But would not credulous people want still further signs of power? More troubling still, would not such a suggestion amount to putting God to the test, instead of putting one's self into the divine hands, trusting Him to guide and protect him whatever happens? The latest possibility is considered and rejected. The issue is becoming clear.

North of Jericho there is a high peak. Perhaps Jesus climbed this hill. From its summit one could look over the whole of the Jordan below. On a clear day it would be possible to see the towers of Jerusalem and picture the lands of the East. All of these have to be brought to God. What will win their hearts and draw them there? St Luke, in his gospel, speaks of Jesus seeing "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (4:5). A new vision seems to be developing unlimited by time and space, governed only by a sense of boundless love.

SATURDAY MARCH 31, 1990

THE DIVINE MAGNET

By Bishop George Appleton

I HAVE often wished that in my devotional life I could have seen earlier and more deeply the importance of the 40 days at the beginning of Christ's ministry, working out the implications of his experience at his baptism for his own future and for the whole of mankind. We have seen his rejection of certain possibilities, but we are not actually told of the conclusion that he came to. We are left to deduce that from what the Gospels tell us about his search to find out the divine plan to bring it about. It would seem that he chose the way of love, of humble service, the way of suffering, if necessary the way of sacrifice and death. In and through it all the Father's love was to shine forth. If men were to ignore him, if men were to reject him, even if they were to kill him, he must not fail in love. Already Jesus could see at the end of the road the shadow of a cross. It has been said that there was a cross in the heart of God before ever there was one on Calvary, symbolising the pain of man's



sinfulness, foolishness and refusal of love. That cross would continue until the last prodigal son and daughter came home to be embraced in the everlasting arms.

This conviction was confirmed a day or two before the crucifixion. Some Greeks had come to Jerusalem for the Passover festival and had expressed a desire to meet Jesus. The meeting had troubled Jesus, who said: "Now is my soul troubled and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name!" The problem is resolved by a simple analogy from nature: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone: but if it dies it bears much fruit."

The triumphant conclusion is: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth [on a cross] will draw all men unto me."

There is something in the spiritual nature of us humans which urges us to respond to the drawing power of the divine magnet of undefeatable love.

When you raise yourself above a servant, you have just ranked yourself above Saviour. **anon**

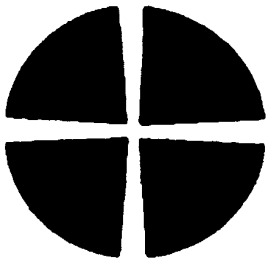
All the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of mankind on this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life. **anon**

He suffered not as God, but he who suffered was God. **John Owen**

The death of Christ was the most dreadful blow ever given to the empire of darkness. **William Plumer**

The empty tomb of Christ has been the cradle of the church. **WR Nicoll**

The Christian church has the resurrection written all over it. **E G Robinson**



From the manse

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Circuit Website: www.newportandlowerwyemethodistchurches.org.uk
Church Website: www.caldicotmethodists.org.uk

*Dear friends,
I hope you like stories. This is one that challenges us about what Easter really means!*

A man was on the side of the road with a large birdcage. A boy noticed that the cage was full of birds of many kinds. "Where did you get those birds?" he asked. "Oh, all over the place," the man replied. "I lure them with crumbs, pretend I'm their friend then when they are close, I net them and shove them into my cage." "And what are you going to do with them now?"

The man grinned, "I'm going to prod them with sticks, and get them really mad so they fight and kill each other. Those that survive, I will kill. None will escape." The boy looked steadily at the man. What made him do such things? He looked into the cruel, hard eyes. Then he looked at the birds, defenceless, without hope. "Can I buy those birds?" the boy asked. The man hid a smile, aware that he could be on to a good thing if he played his cards right. "Well," he said hesitantly, "The cage is pretty expensive, and I spent a lot of time collecting these birds, I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll let you have the lot, birds, cage and all for ten pounds and that jacket you're wearing."

The boy paused, ten pounds was all he had, and the jacket was new and very special, in fact it was his prized possession. Slowly, he took out the ten pounds and handed it over, even more slowly he took off his jacket, gave it one last look, then handed that over as well. The boy picked up the cage and walked away from the man and then (well, you've guessed it) he opened the door and let the birds go free.

If you want a bit more!!
The Enemy of the world, Satan, was on the side of life's road with a very large cage. The man coming towards him noticed that it was crammed full of people of every kind, young, old, from every race and nation. "Where did you get these people?" the man asked. "Oh, from all over the world," Satan replied. "I lure them with drink, drugs, lust, lies, anger, hate, pride, love of money and all manner of things. I pretend I'm their friend, out to give them a good time, then when I've hooked them, into the cage they go."

"And what are you going to do with them now?" asked the man. Satan grinned. "I'm going to prod them, provoke them, get them to hate and destroy each other; I'll stir up racial hatred, encourage breakdown of relationships and caring communities; I'll make people dissatisfied, self-centred, confused and restless. I will give them turmoil and despair. It's easy. People will always listen to what I offer them and (what's better) blame God for the outcome!" "And then what?" the man asked.

"Those who do not destroy themselves, I will destroy. None will escape me." The man stepped forward. "Can I buy these people from you?" he asked. Satan snarled, "Yes, but it will cost you your life."

So Jesus Christ, the Son of God, paid for your release, your freedom from Satan's trap, with His own life, on the cross at Calvary. Anyone, whom Satan has deceived and caged, can be set free.

Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you"
Luke Ch11:9

If you are looking for the freedom Christ can bring, seek it out and you will be surprised at how wonderful His freedom can be!

Every blessing for a wonderful Easter time.

Maree

Maree

Story adapted from a leaflet from Shiloh Church, Landes du Marche

HOLY WEEK

Churches linked in Caldicot - Our approach to Easter




HOLY WEEK - all at 7pm

Mon 29th March
Baptist Church Fellowship
(Nedderm Way)
Led by Pastor John Hall

Tues 30th
Pentecostal Church,
Elm, Longcroft Road
Led by Pastor Kelvin Starr

Weds 31st
Methodist Church
Led By Rev Maree Farrimond

Thurs 1st April
St Mary's Parish Church
shared communion and vigil

GOOD FRIDAY
10.30am procession of witness from St Mary's to Methodist Church
open air service followed by coffee, hot cross buns and fellowship

SERVICE OF REFLECTION 7pm at Methodist Church




EASTER DAY SERVICES
at Methodist Church

8am HOLY COMMUNION
9am - Refreshments and fellowship
10.30am FAMILY HOLY COMMUNION

**Come and join us
as we praise our risen Lord**

ROGIET CHURCH NEWS

We have the opportunity to receive God's forgiveness this Easter time. Renew our faith, release our fears and rebuild friendships. Yet like Scrooge (in A Christmas Carol) we have to choose to change. In fact Jesus alone can give us a new outlook on life as we commemorate the past, concentrate on the present and contemplate the future.

And so to Our News

Christmas 2009:

Instead of giving Christmas cards out, the congregation agreed to give donations to 'Caldicot Young Carers' at the College. It amounted to £115; well done to our small congregation.

Mustard Seed is still forging ahead with different things lined up – Emily and Jason from Caldicot Church with Sally as administrator, are gearing up to start another group called 'Tuesday Club' for 11 – 14 year olds. Best wishes to them all on this venture. (See Beryl's Notes)

Our thoughts and prayers are still with Gerald and Joyce at this anxious time: but pleased to say Gerald is now home and progressing slowly.

Sympathy

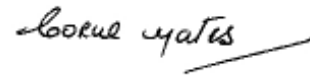
Our prayers and thoughts are with the family of Lucy Godfrey's who died in January. Lucy was a long time member of Rogiet Chapel.

The Tides of Spring

Lovely as the season is the flowering cherry tree.
Like a white sailed galleon upon a restless sea.
A ship adrift before the wind;
A fair and graceful thing.
Riding on the full green waters of the tides of spring.

May God bless you all this Easter time.

Easter Blessings,



Coral Yates

SISTERHOOD



As this Newsletter is the first in 2010. On behalf of Sisterhood we wish you a Happy New Year. Can you imagine it, 10 years into the 21st century! Lots to think about, and look back to some very sad times, and there is also happiness. Our Lord teaches us, to trust him, he will never forsake us, we are never alone.

We have all experienced the snow and cold weather this winter. It's been very difficult getting about, but everyone who could help with getting shopping for those unable to get out, have done so and it has been appreciated. Three families in the church celebrated the birth of a child, this Christmas. On New Years Eve Joan and Laurie Tarr, a great grand daughter, to Olive and David Jeannes, a grand son, on New Years Day, and Gwenan and John Thomas a grand son on 6th Jan 2010. A new baby, that will bring great joy into these families. We send our love and congratulations.

We are also experiencing the tragedy in Haiti, where on 12th Jan suffered a devastating earthquake, our thoughts and prayers go out to them all. Spirit of love, hope of despair, we are overwhelmed by the reports of the catastrophic destruction of lives, homes and everything in the country is destroyed. Please hear our prayer, those of us that have, will give generously, to help our brothers and sisters in their time of need.

There has been no Sisterhood in January and we recommence on 4th Feb 2010. Mrs Marion Edwards will lead us.

11th Feb Mrs Beryl Simcock is our speaker.

18th Feb A visit from our local Fire Service.
25th Feb A Members Afternoon.

The Women's World Day of Prayer committee are holding a Coffee Morning and Bring and Buy Sale, on 24th Feb 2010. From 10.30am, please come along and support this event. The WWDOP services will be held in Caldicot Methodist Church at 10.00am, on 5th March. Please come and enjoy the fellowship.

March and April Meetings, to be arranged.

Our Maundy Thursday service will be at 2.30pm on Monday 1st Apl.

No meeting on 8th Apr. Due to Easter holiday

May meetings to be arranged

Thursday 27th May, Sisterhood Anniversary and tea.

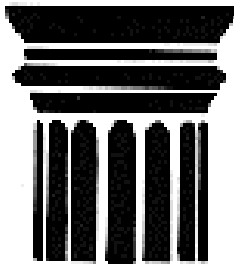
We send our Christian love to all our shut-in ladies, and look forward to seeing new faces on a Thursday afternoon at 2.30pm, when you will feel a warm welcome.

A Prayer from Sisterhood.

Thank you Lord, for being among us. Thank you Lord for being our Saviour, and sharing in all we do. Thank you Lord for our church and all the love we find here. For our families, and friends. Thank you Lord for all your living creatures, the fish, the birds and animals. Thank you Lord for song and music and poetry, for colours that we might paint. We thank you god and praise your Holy Name. Amen.

Yours in his service,

Joyce Tanner



John Mills Column

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? — a question echoed a million times when we men & women have plummeted to the depths and felt abandoned even by the God who loves us.

A bad Friday, when self-seeking and treachery and spinelessness take perfect humanity and crucify it.

And yet the events on that cross remain a cause for rejoicing as well as for shame.

In the middle of his suffering, Jesus was able to pray for all those who cause it. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". That means US, too.

His cross is the symbol of the most evil deed in history— and yet it offers us the greatest hope.

It reveals the lengths to which God is prepared to go in his love for his world; suggests that even the most appalling suffering can be turned to immense good - and it points beyond itself.

It could have meant just one more martyrdom, yet another triumph for oppression and death, for that's how it seemed. Easter morning, an empty tomb, a new-alive Christ, changed all that - and still does, and when we make that great discovery for ourselves we find that the latest tragedy to bruise us, real and harrowing as it might be, need never be allowed the last word.

Even today, Good Friday really is, if we'll keep on trusting till EASTER DAY. A Happy and Blessed Easter. ALLELUIA! The Lord is Risen.

JSM

GOOD FOR YOU!

GOOD FRIDAY; good for whom? we might ask. For garden centres crammed tight with their green-fingered pilgrims, maybe; for ice cream sellers, for makers of hot-cross buns, for those still enjoying a long-awaited lie-in, deprived only of the delights of the A.M.

Not a good Friday for the countless number of people who'll limp through today trying not to wince with the piercing pain, or weep through their inconsolable depression, or just give up in the struggle against a loneliness which no-one else seems to understand.

Not a good day at all, just another burden, a fresh torment.

No more than it was a good Friday for JESUS, Crucifixion and its sadistic preludes tore His body apart, united Him with all those before and since humiliated by physical agony.

There was emotional distress too; His widowed Mother stood helplessly watching him die; neither would have chosen this way of parting, and how anxious he was for her future without him.

The spiritual torment was still greater. For one dreadful moment, conscious that he was in some way bearing guilt for the world, he experienced for the first time the desolation of being separated from his heavenly Father. "

YOUR LIFE, YOUR CHOICE: EVERYDAY RELATIONSHIPS

How do we live with an awareness of Jesus' presence in our everyday relationships ie spouse, children, neighbours or work colleagues? We can express our spirituality through the way we love others: 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another' (John 13:34). As we have already said, different practices will train us in being more like Christ. Using Jesus as our example, how can we be more loving in everyday relationships?

Listening First we need to listen to others, just as Jesus did. He asked questions of people and waited for them to process their answer. According to James, 'everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry' (James 1:19). You can become more loving by listening more to those around you. When someone is talking, try resisting the urge to jump in with a comment, but say, 'tell me more!' Too often we don't listen to others, as we are already thinking of what we want to say before they've finished speaking. Listening takes time; you can't rush it!

Touching Jesus reached out to touch the untouchables in his world, incl. lepers, the sick and children, which was completely out of character for rabbis of his day. In a survey that was conducted it was discovered that we all need at least 8-10 meaningful touches a day to maintain emotional health! A warm handshake, touch on the arm or hug can be of real value. Of course, it should be appropriate touch – helpful for the other person, not just for ourselves.

Speaking Jesus often spoke to those he came into contact with, using words of grace and truth: 'the Word became flesh...full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). In the course of our everyday relationships we all have the opportunity of speaking words of *grace*, incl. offering comfort, giving encouragement or expressing care and concern. However we should also be prepared to speak words of *truth*, incl. asking for forgiveness, seeking reconciliation or addressing conflict. These are the things which we all try to avoid addressing, however Paul encourages us to be: 'speaking the truth in love' (Eph 4:15 – lit. 'truthing in love').

MUSTARD GROUP GROUP

We left you last time with a list of readings to follow with us: "Christmas Praise". We had a lovely time and learnt far more about the characters that are associated with the Christmas Story than we normally have time for; we hope that you did too. During these weeks we prepared for our Christmas Carol Service by creating wooden spoon puppets of angels and shepherds, with the intention of making the main characters for the older young people to manipulate, however, this was not to be, as we discovered too late that the new head mistress at Rogiet school had organized the school's Carol Concert for that very evening. You win some and you lose some! Hopefully we shall be able to create a rapport with the head and make her aware of the Mustard Seed activities that involve some of her pupils.

What we lost with the Christmas Carol Service we managed to recoup with our party. Once again it was a resounding success with 'Arni' in the chair and his most able assistant, 'Gaynor'. The enthusiasm of the children was electric and keeping them in their places, especially the girls, was a full time job. They were so eager to get their hands on the equipment and demonstrate their ability to perform; Arni must have felt that they were going to swamp him. However no damage was done and there was no bad behaviour, just enthusiasm.



New year arrived and the intended return date, 14th January 2010, was foiled by the weather, we managed to get going the following Thursday. Because of the adverse weather conditions the first couple of weeks was hit and miss, but after the false start we, after a planning meeting, managed to get some semblance of organization in place. This means that we are journeying with Paul and Barnabas on the first of many missionary trips around the Mediterranean starting at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13) crossing over by boat to Antioch in Syria and then Cyprus, where they stopped at Salamis, leaving to return to Antioch (P) from Paphos. We had maps so that we could follow their journeys. The children are always telling us of the journeys that they have been on, so it is great that they can learn that travelling is not a twenty-first century phenomena. We had our maps, the next week we made our passports and marked them as we visited each place. Iconium was the starting place this next time calling at Lystra, Derbe and back-tracking to Antioch (P) they then pushed down to Pamphylia where they crossed over to Antioch (S). During this lap of the trip (Acts 14) they were met with opposition from both Jews and Gentiles, men and women; Paul was stoned and caused a stir when having healed a crippled man, the inhabitants of Lystra wanted to fate them the garlands and sacrifices thinking that they were Zeus and Hermes come to earth. Paul puts them right by talking to them of God and his provision for their daily needs. By this time the Jews from Iconium and Antioch(P) had caught up with them and persuaded the crowd that Paul and Barnabas were not bone fide and stoned Paul, leaving him for dead. Rescued by the faithful followers he and Barnabas left for Antioch(S).

Charity 2010: 'Hearing Dogs'

Chloe Knight who joined Mustard Seed right from the beginning, but now comes with sister Bethany and Mum, Emma, as a helper, has taken it upon herself responsibility for organizing the fund raising efforts to support this worthwhile cause. The Mustard Seed Group has offered one of its Thursday evenings for the express purpose of hosting an event; it will take the form of a Coffee Evening with small stalls and Traidcraft goodies.

Thursday 10th June 6.00 – 7.00pm

Please note it in your diaries.

As a valuable member of the 'M Team' Chloe is a great help to all of us and we are delighted that she has taken on this task; we wish her well.

Sadly we say farewell to Nikita Pansegrouw as she leaves us to go to boarding school for the hearing impaired in the near future.

Welcome to 'Tuesday Club'. This had its opening night, 9th February at Rogiet church with 9 young people attending.

Well done!
We wish
t h e m
success with
this new
venture.



As we look
forward to
Easter we
wish you a
thoughtful

and productive Lent and a Happy Easter.

From the 'M Team'

RIDE OF THE KING

(Lk19:28-41, 23:21,34)

We waved palms
And welcomed him.
Even on a donkey
Jesus had majesty.

All our hopes,
The hopes of generations,
All our longings,
And our expectations –
Our expectations –
Poured upon him
Through palms and praises.

Hosanna, Hosanna,
Hosanna to the King
Who wept,
Knowing our weaknesses,
Knowing our frailty and lack of faith,
Knowing already our next cry,
"Crucify."

Father forgive us
For our knowing and not knowing
King Jesus.

Daphne Kitching

PRAYING WITH OBJECTS

Have you ever watched young babies contentedly studying their surroundings? Their eyes are attracted by colour, shape and movement. As babies grow into toddlers and young children, this fascination with their environment continues. Look at the way children's eyes light up with excitement as they discover the veins in a fallen leaf, the sparkling trail of a snail across a pavement, or the colours of a piece of silver paper catching the light. All too quickly this fascination fades as the pressures of life and the need to achieve take over.

This fascination with our world is a gift from God. It is always there for us to take hold of again, if we can only pause amongst the hustle and bustle of our busy lives. When was the last time you looked with wonder, either at a natural object, such as a seashell or a tree, or a manufactured object such as a book or a pen. We take so much for granted, but looking with wonder and gratitude can help to bring calm and a sense of inner peace into the busyness of our world.

The next time you watch a DVD or listen to a CD, take a few moments to look at the disc. Look at the colours reflecting off the surface. Look in wonder as you ask yourself where this glorious rainbow of colours comes from. Think about other times and places where you have seen these rainbow colours. Spend a few moments thanking God for the beauty of the rainbow and feel God's calming presence.

When you pick up a pen, why not spend a few moments thinking about the people who designed the pen, the people who were involved in making it. As you hold the pen allow yourself to marvel at the number of people involved. Thank God for the way in which people work together to help others.

Pausing with an object and allowing your thoughts to turn to God in gratitude can bring a moment of calm and prayerfulness in an otherwise busy day.

Lynn Chambers of Bible Reading Fellowship

HOW WOMEN'S EMAILS ARE DIFFERENT FROM MEN'S EMAILS

Think of the last time you received a long, supportive email that was both personally engaging and emotive. Who wrote it to you? Overwhelming probability is that it was a woman. Messages sent by men tend to be short, to the point, and with precise orders.

The differences in how men and women communicate has been highlighted in a



recent book 'Code Switching: How to Talk So Men Will Listen'. The authors examine other aspects of life at the office, from who plays devil's advocate, and who makes most of the jokes, to who interrupts other people the most. The aim is to help women increase their assertive communication skills, so that men will take them seriously in the workplace.

WHY YOUR BROKEN HEART REALLY HURTS

Has anyone ever broken your heart? If so, you will know that it really does hurt. Now science has caught up with romance, and it agrees – yes, you really are in physical pain.

Here is why: there is a genetic link between physical pain and social rejection. The gene regulates the body's most potent painkillers, mu-opioids. Variations in the gene govern how much social pain a person feels in response to social rejection.

Scientists describe a broken heart as an overlap in the neurobiology of physical and social pain, and say it makes perfect sense. As one professor explains: "Because social connection is so important, feeling literally hurt by not having social connections may be an adaptive way to make sure we keep them." Whatever the cause, anyone who has ever been in love – and lost – knows the pain all too well. The research was carried out at the University of California.

Contributions for the next magazine would be most welcome. Members and friends of Caldicot & Rogiet, we would like to include an article of your choice. Please forward items to:-

**Barbara or Roger Simms,
14 Rockfield Crescent, Undy, NP26 3FH.
Tel: (01633) 880304,
Email roger@barbaraandroger.co.uk
no later than:-**



**FROM THE
EDITOR**

Sunday 16th May

SISTER PERPETUA

Imagine yourself to be Sister Perpetua, sitting at her desk in the parochial school grading these test papers and trying to maintain her composure. The students' spelling and wording have been preserved.

1. In the first book of the Bible, Guinness, God got tired of creating the world so he took the Sabbath off.
2. Adam & Eve were created from an apple tree. Noah's wife was Joan of Ark. Noah built an ark and the animals came on in pears.
3. Lots wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire during the night.
4. The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with unsympathetic genitals.
5. Samson was a strongman who let himself be led astray by a jezebel like Delilah.
6. Samson slayed the Phillistines with the Axe of the Apostles.
7. Moses led the Jews to the Red Sea! Where they made unleavened bread which is bread without ingredients.
8. The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up to Mount Cyanide to get the ten commandments.
9. The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.



10. The seventh commandment is thou shalt not Admit Adultery.
11. Moses did before he ever reached Canada then Joshua led the Hebrews in the Battle of Genitol.
12. The greatest miricle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
13. David was a Hebrew King who was skilled at playing the liar. He fought the Finkelstines, a race of people who lived in Biblical times.
14. Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
15. When Mary heard she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta.
16. When the three wise guys from the east side arrived they found Jesus in the manger.
17. Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.
18. St John the Blacksmith dumped water on his head.
19. Jesus enunciated the Golden Rule, which says to do unto others before they do one to you. He also explained that a man doth not live by sweat alone.
20. It was a miricle when Jesus rose from the dead and managed to get the tombstone off the entrance.
21. The people who followed the Lord were called the 12 decibels.
22. The Epistles were the wives of the Apostles.
23. One of the Opposums was St Matthew who was also a taximan.
24. St Paul cavorted to Christianity, he preached holy acrimony which is another name for marriage.
25. Christians have only one spouse. This is called monotomy

YOUR LIFE, YOUR CHOICE: WORK

How can you be more aware of Jesus' presence in your daily work: your job, running a household, volunteering or caring for children? Whether your work is paid or unpaid, we work because we are made in the image of God. We are called to partner with God in caring for his creation and serving others with our skills and giftedness.

Beginning Your Workday How can you begin our workday in Jesus' name? It could involve arriving on time; greeting our colleagues or family members differently – in a way that makes them glad you are around! Talk to God about your feelings: are you excited, fearful, bored, or stressed? Ask God to help you with your work and to be with you throughout the day.

During Your Workday Make sure that you have reminders of God's presence with you in your workplace setting eg favourite texts or words, palm cross etc.

The way we treat people at work is important, especially if we want to experience God's presence in these relationships. Look for opportunities to serve them; this will have a huge impact on them! Also, be prepared

to learn from difficult people eg a difficult teenager, demanding boss, gossipy colleague or complaining customer! Remember, Jesus told us to love our enemies! Ask yourself: 'what can I learn here about love or myself, Lord?'

We should also try to receive feedback well. This can come in expected ways (eg performance review), as well as unexpectedly from a colleague, client, or our children telling us what they think of our parenting skills! Ask yourself: 'what is the truth I need to learn from this, Lord?'

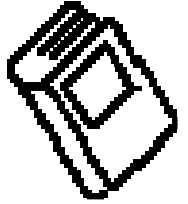
Ending Your Workday We can often end the working day feeling frustrated about what we haven't done or the way things have gone! In Genesis we read how God, at the end of each day of creation, paused and reviewed what he had done and declared it good! Therefore, end the day by taking a few moments to reflect on what you have done and declare it good! Talk to God honestly about the day (especially if you have wasted some of it!) and ask his help to work diligently tomorrow.

God wants our work to be at the heart of our spiritual life; we work for God as well as with him: *'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.'* (Colossians 3:23).

BOOK REVIEW



next three years, Harmony lived a double life as Monique, a dancer in a fully-nude strip club. 'Scars and Stilettos' is Harmony's stark, honest, and ultimately hopeful story of how God found her in that dark, noisy place and led her back out. She has since married, completed an MA in Social Welfare, and now leads Treasures, an organisation helping women in the sex trade discover their true worth.



Quiet Spaces Various authors, BRF, £4.99

Quiet Spaces, the prayer and spirituality journal from BRF, is an ideal resource for all those who wish to enrich their spiritual and prayer life. You will want to dip in to *Quiet Spaces* time and time again to appreciate the articles, poetry and illustrations, a wealth of material for thought and reflection.

Published three times a year in March, July and November, *Quiet Spaces* is available from your local Christian bookshop, or direct from Bible Reading Fellowship – visit www.brfonline.org.uk or call 01865 319700.

Tiny Bear's Bible By Sally Lloyd-Jones, Candle Books £7.99

Bottom of Form
An adorable story Bible for children of all ages. It features a warm, furry jacket that children love to cuddle, with pink accents inside and out, designed especially for little girls. Together with their friend Tiny Bear, children discover 11 Bible stories in a book they can carry with them wherever they go. The closing story echoes the book's message with the reassuring reminder that 'No matter what, no matter where, God is with us, Tiny Bear'.

Pocket Prayers for Troubled Times By Bishop John Pritchard, Church House Publishing, £5.99

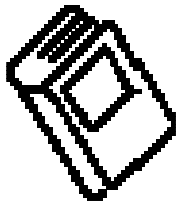
This book includes prayers covering work and financial issues, personal relationships, the environment, illness and bereavement. Among them, the bishop has penned a number of original intercessions which might address issues affecting the mood of households across England today, including the situation in Haiti, money worries and parental pressures.

In words that may resonate with the thoughts of many in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, Bishop John describes how in prayer we "bring to God the awful wounds of the world in order to focus his love and ours on the victims and the situations in which they are caught".

Here is one prayer from the book:

God of every moment,
of times of disaster and times of elation,
you enter our bewilderment and outrage; you stand with
your beautiful, broken people
in their illness and sadness.
Stay with us in our fear and confusion,
sustain us in the bleak hinterland of our loneliness
and promise us, we pray, a life beyond pain
and hope of a new day.

Threshold of Life Daily Readings from the Celtic Tradition by A M Allchin, Darton Longman & Todd, £3.50



This delightful book draws on one of our richest native spiritual traditions, the Celtic heritage, and presents extracts from Irish, Welsh and Scottish sources in a form suitable for daily meditation.

The Celts had an extraordinarily clear spiritual vision, born of close association with nature. They thought in vivid images: making a fire, the wind in the wood, the song of the birds, the white waves of the sea. Yet the sense of light and the sense of incarnation which runs through so much Celtic writing is only possible because of its recognition of the dark of sin and evil, and also its acknowledgement of the power of the cross of the resurrection.

A belief in the sacredness of the earth, a belief that the victory of the cross illumines and transforms the everyday, an awareness that despite the dark, heaven is not far from us, all this shines through these pages and brings us into closer contact with these fascinating people.

Lifted - experiencing the resurrection life By Sam Allberry, IVP, £6.99

For many the resurrection is a nice thing to believe, the 'happy' ending to the gospel, as though after the darkness of the cross Spielberg was brought in to do the finish. But *Lifted* shows that it's far more. The resurrection has overwhelmingly positive implications for our daily lives.

Through it we can have real assurance of forgiveness and salvation. We are raised and empowered to live new, transformed lives. We have hope after death for our bodies and this physical world. We see the urgency of reaching all nations with the message of the risen Jesus. Life is now different: we have been lifted. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just for Easter. It's for all of life.

Scars and Stilettos - the transformation of an exotic dancer By Harmony Dust, Monarch, £7.99



Bottom of Form
Fear of being abandoned kept 19-year-old Harmony Dust trapped in an abusive and cruel relationship. She thought she had hit bottom – tens of thousands of dollars in debt, struggling to get by, and so controlled by her boyfriend that she didn't protest when he began openly sleeping around.

Things could not get worse...until someone told her how much money she could make as an exotic dancer. For the





THE CRUSE OF OIL

In the second book of Kings there is the story of a woman who was threatened by her creditors. The threat was that they would take her two sons as bondsmen, because she had nothing else to offer. She was at her wits end and she came to Elisha bewailing the fact that she had been left a widow, and that she had always paid her way and led an honest life.

Elisha questioned her to see whether there was anything in the home that might be offered to pacify her creditors – but the only thing that the dear soul had left was a small pot of oil. No wonder then, that she was cast down; to be stripped of all her possessions in order to keep out of debt – and now there seemed to be nothing to save, her, or her precious sons.

She answered Elisha, saying this was the case. Well one small pot of oil wouldn't pay many creditors would it? But a pot of oil in the hands of the God of miracles was all that was needed to change the whole situation.

Elisha instructed her to go round all her friends and neighbours and borrow every available container – and he insisted that there should be lots of them.

Well, she and her sons canvassed the neighbourhood and returned laden with pots, jars and vessels of every kind imaginable.

Then Elisha told her to go indoors, with her sons and her pots, to shut themselves in, and to pour the small pot into all those they had collected.

The scripture tells us that the oil poured and poured, and went on pouring until every one of the vessels was absolutely filled. She then asked her sons to get more containers, but they assured her that there was not another pot to be had anywhere – and then we have a short but very important sentence, at the end of verse six.

“And the oil stayed”!!!

There was no overflowing, no spilling, no mess, and most of all, no waste – and what a lesson that is to us, that even in the face of plenty, we should not waste. There should be no extravagance!

And in our reading of the feeding of the multitude, we know that all the left overs were gathered up and kept at the command of Jesus. There was, once again, no waste, even though there had been a plentiful supply. And we also know the story of how God fed Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, and her son, throughout the time of famine.

What struck me most in each of these stories, was the very small amount that God used to create each miracle. In

each case, the basis of the miracle of supply was an almost insignificant item.

A handful of meal and a little oil,
A small pot of oil,
5 barley loaves and 2 fishes.

Those things don't readily strike us as the basis of a miracle – but in God's hands, with God's will, and with God's power, they became miracles that saved the situation each time.

In each case, the miracle took place with very little fuss and in each case there was absolute obedience to God's instructions, and in each case the unbelievable happened and calamity was overcome.

As I said, these miracles came from very small beginnings – and therein is a lesson for us. We don't have to be rich or clever, or good looking to do things for God. We don't need earth-shattering ideas or exceptional equipment. God will use what we have – just what we have and what we are. However small, however insignificant we feel, we must never think that we can't do things for God. We can soon be surprised. God will not only use what we are and have, but will often use some small thing that we didn't realise we had.

Perhaps we have washing up skills for God, or church cleaning things for God. Or maybe we have a lovely smile and can offer a welcome to newcomers. Or maybe we speak just the right word of comfort to someone who is down. God can create a miracle any day, out of all our simple accomplishments. Never think that we are overlooked by God. God knows each one of us intimately and can see what use we can be in his service and in worship.



Cruse

The widow of Zarephath could not have known that the last mouthful for her son and herself would be to feed three people throughout a long famine and hold out for them until there was food growing in the land again. But God used her small offering for just that purpose, and used it with absolute success.

The widow threatened by the creditors had already dismissed the pot of oil as useless, but God knew its use and caused it to save the day, and more, for her and for her sons.

The young lad listening to Jesus could never have dreamed that his lunch pack would feed a multitude with enough and to spare – but God blessed it and all were thoroughly satisfied - and food was left over. God doesn't wave a wand and magic up huge supplies to make miracles. He just looks at what we have in hand and uses it and us for a miracle.

We know that “with God all things are possible” and these lovely Bible stories prove that over and over. But we must not think that all this ended with the days of the Bible stories.

We have the same God today -
With the same power today –

And he is constantly looking at us, as a source for his purposes. Whenever he is ready to do a miracle through us, he will do so, and he will amaze us.

It would seem that we expect fireworks and brass bands to announce a miracle – but that isn't God's way. Oftentimes, we have a small problem and we worry and fret about it, and finally, in desperation, we bring it to God in prayer. And then, in some way we hadn't even thought of, our problem works out, and we wonder what all our worry was for.

Isn't that a miracle? Isn't that something that we had failed at and God has worked it out for us? No fireworks, no brass band, just a simple solution that removes our fears and tears. Don't let us underestimate our God; the God that can feed a multitude, the God that can provide through a famine, the God that can stave off creditors. A wonderful miracle – working God - who is waiting and wanting to do the same for all of us.

First of all, there is a need, and we have a God who specializes in supplying needs. Then we have to be obedient, as all these people were. We know all about the rewards of obedience, from the story of Abraham and his obedience when told to sacrifice his only son. We know of Naaman who didn't want to wash in the Jordan, but obedience brought him healing from leprosy. And we know of Joshua who marched round and round the walls of Jericho, looking ridiculous and being scoffed at – but obedience caused the walls of the city of Jericho to crumble and brought about victory.

Sometimes God asks things of us that we would prefer to ignore, but God has a firm purpose and our obedience can help to deliver a miracle. We can't know what each person needs, but God knows and God gives the answers.

Maybe we can simply give a warm smile and it can be a miracle in someone's day. Sometimes, we can offer a helping hand and it can be a miracle in lightening someone's heavy load. If we just notice those around us to note whether the old or infirm can manage the tasks that we take for granted. Can we carry their bag? Can we do their shopping? Can we offer a lift? It is so little out of our

day and a life saver for them. Small miracles are so wonderful and we can perform them. Several times I have had to ask a neighbour to replace a light bulb for me and there are so many like me.

There maybe times when we could relieve a harassed mother, by taking the child for a short time. Little things like that are miracles when someone is at the end of their tether and feeling desperate.

To have any urgent need fulfilled is a miracle. When the stores began deliveries – it was a miracle for me as I could no longer carry heavy shopping. A lovely lady offered me a regular lift to morning service. I'm not too mean to pay for a taxi – but try and get one on a Sunday morning. Walking had begun to be too much for me – but the Lord knew and I hadn't even prayed about it. Others had offered and the Lord had stand – by lifts for me too – amen.

If God can stretch the oil, the meal, and a lad's lunch – he can do anything we ask of him. We do worry needlessly, and feel out of control – but if we bring it to God, he controls everything. He is the God of the impossible, the God who made the world- and us! He can arrange anything.

Don't forget these stories, don't worry in fear, today's stories are just as real and God is just as able. They are messages of love from a Father who says, "Cast all your care upon me." The people in our stories had given up – their own resources had failed, but God gave compassion and gave victory for each one.

So let us read in faith and believe the reports and trust in God's immeasurable love; let us believe and trust in El Shaddai, the all - supplying God, who loved us so much that he gave his life to save ours.

Amen.

Calamus

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

Bible study. Those two words alone can conjure up images of dour-faced people brooding over large black leather bound books in old English discussing things which have no relevance at all to real life today – not really something most of us want to spend our valuable time on.

Yet it need not be like that. After all, the word 'Bible' itself simply means 'the books' (coming from the Greek, *biblia*). The plural reminds us that it is not a book at all – but more like a library. Most English translations contain 66 books (39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New), written by a wide range of authors from a variety of cultures and social settings in several languages over many centuries. It tells the story of how individuals, tribes, and several nations understood themselves and their relationship to a God who had brought them into being and wanted them to respond to him.

In fact, so important was this last point that people began to see how these human words about God could even become God's word to the human race. Yet eventually of course, what human beings really understand best is

other people – and so the second half, the New Testament, is about how God communicated finally with a word which became flesh, speaking to us in the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

So perhaps it is not surprising if we need a little help to read it properly and fully understand what these books are saying. However, there is no shortage of Bible commentaries! Yet some are very academic, going through these old books word by word, while others simply read off the surface of the text to apply it today with little recognition of the great differences between the ancient world and life today.

That's why the *People's Bible Commentary* from the BRF seeks to combine good scholarship from around the world with a reverent approach to what it means for us today – 'to instruct the head and warm the heart'. You can use it to study the Bible on your own or in a group, on a daily basis or in preparation for a special service or event. The important thing is to get reading – and see what God might have to communicate to you through these extraordinary books!

ST JAMES-THE-LEAST OF ALL by The Rev Dr Gary Bowness

ON HOW TO EDIT A CHURCH MAGAZINE

The Rectory, St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

So, your vicar has appointed you magazine editor; I wonder what you have done to so offend him. Our own magazine editor has only held her post for the last 30 years because she is deaf, has no phone and always spends the fortnight after the publication of each issue on a remote Scottish island.

I think that your hope of now being in charge of an organ that will convert the entire parish to Christianity within a couple of editions may be a little optimistic. Most recipients of the magazine use it for finding the phone number of the local plumber or undertaker – or both if there was a major burst in the pipe.

If you want to keep any piece of information utterly confidential, then publish it in the magazine; that will ensure that everyone will remain wholly ignorant of it. On the other hand, if you accidentally transpose the names of the ladies responsible for the altar pedestal and lectern on the flower rota, it will be spotted within seconds of publication. It is also be helpful so people can consult the staffing rota to find out who took the collection a little too

aggressively at Evensong the previous Sunday. The reports of the meetings of the monthly groups are also useful for reminding those who attended what happened, as they slept blissfully though most of it.

I would suggest you keep the first page which lists all the church officers with their phone numbers – although do omit your own number, so that complaints will have to go to someone else. It also seems to be a tradition that while all the digits of every number will be there, they are generally published in an incorrect order. This gets people to talk to one another as they phone round trying to find out the correct number for the treasurer.

If you submit any articles yourself, then I would suggest that your final paragraph does little other than repeat the penultimate paragraph, since when it is printed, the final few lines of any article are invariably accidentally omitted. My final piece of advice is to omit any deadline for submission for the following month. Such information only ensures that everything will be sent in the week after your requested date.

I wish you many happy hours deciphering illegible script and checking up on tea rotas.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

WHEN GUITARS AND AMPLIFIERS MEET CHORAL MATTINS

The Rectory, St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

It was kind of you to send your music group to us last Sunday morning while our choir had a Sunday off for its celebratory lunch. Miss Timmins' ninety-fourth birthday brought the combined choir's age to 1,000; which is quite a distinction for twelve people. Clearly a Sunday commitment to 'Hymns Ancient and Modern', consumption of industrial quantities of peppermints and pleasant naps during sermons has a positive effect on longevity.

I had rather looked forward – naively in retrospect – to hearing some Bach motets from your group, but now have learned that guitars, drums and choral Mattins is not a marriage made in heaven. All your group lacked was a drum majorette leading the procession up the aisle.

It was quite obvious the music was going to be a little different when I arrived to see that the lectern, Lady Tadcaster's flower arrangement and the verger had all disappeared behind amplifiers. The only person not disconcerted by this was the verger, who realised it presented an excellent opportunity to do the crossword unobserved during Divine Worship. That would not have been too bad if he had not wandered over to me during the Bible reading to ask if I knew the answer to 12 down.

Your display of the hymns on a screen (but did it have to be in front of the pulpit? I had to balance on several kneelers to be seen over it and throughout the sermon could only think of how to look dignified should the whole pile collapse mid-sentence) left the congregation

paralysed in fear. For the first time in their lives they had nothing to hold and hadn't a clue what to do with their hands. You could see them experimentally stuffing them in pockets, holding on to the pew, searching for handkerchiefs, totally at a loss with this unwanted freedom of limbs. Perhaps even worse, they were obliged to look up rather than stare at the floor. I fear some may be traumatised for life.

But the worst moment was when the group gave its 'solo number' – couldn't it have been called an 'anthem'? Half way through, dear Mrs Ffitch, who has always been somewhat excitable, felt called to contribute with a spontaneous religious dance in the aisle. The congregation froze in horror and we all found varying devices for not catching her eye after the Service. But the greatest social problem is how we react when we see her in the village tomorrow morning. I have advised those who asked my opinion that we all stay indoors for a few days.

Perhaps your music group could visit us again when our choir holds its two-thousandth anniversary – when I suspect it will still consist of the same people, as they are all tenacious of note, opinion and age.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Less advice – and more hands. **German proverb**

Man proposes, but God disposes. **Thomas a Kempis**

Money has never yet made anyone rich. **Seneca**

COULD YOU HELP TO SAVE OUR BEES?



There is now world-wide concern about the future of bees, which don't just produce honey but play a vital role in pollinating food plants and other crops. About a third of our human diet depends directly on these little creatures.

As viewers of recent TV programmes (including those fronted by the bee-keeping BBC presenter Martha Kearney) will have seen, many keepers have seen their hives destroyed by the mysterious colony-collapse and other diseases. Here in the UK we are losing our bee population at around 20 per cent a year (up from just six per cent in 2003).

Fortunately, our bees have two powerful allies in the Co-operative Movement and the National Federation of Women's Institutes, which have both launched campaigns on the issue. A new film ('Vanishing of the Bees') had its UK general release in October.

The UK government has promised (but not yet delivered) £10 million over five years for research into the reasons for the decline in pollinating insects and ways to solve the problems. If that sounds a lot of money, remember that in

that period bee pollination would contribute an estimated £1 billion to the national economy.

Without necessarily keeping bees themselves, there are many ways in which individuals can help. Honey bees rely on garden flowers for a diverse diet of nectar and pollen. You can encourage them into your garden by planting single-flowering plants and vegetables. Buy local honey if you can to support local bee-keepers. But don't put unwashed honey jars outside the back door -- imported honey may contain bacteria or spores that can harm honey bees, perhaps infecting a whole colony.

You could invite a bee-keeper to come and give an illustrated talk to a local group. Ask your local authority to plant more flowers that attract bees in gardens, roundabouts and open spaces. Provide water for bees to drink. A shallow-edged dish with pebbles in it (to help bees climb in and out) is ideal. Or welcome bees to your garden with a bee box which helps them shelter from the rain or from a sudden drop in temperature (www.GoneGardening.com).

For information and guidance, contact the British Beekeepers Association at the National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warks, CV8 2LG. The website is at www.britishbee.org.uk

A PROPHET FOR OUR TIME: ISAIAH 61: 1-11

Towards the end of the book, Isaiah looks forward to the coming of God's glory to his people and their restoration from exile. In this chapter he describes the transforming power of the gospel, fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and available to his disciples during 'the year of the Lord's favour' (cf Luke 4:14-21).

Gospel's Preaching God anoints his Servant-Messiah with the Holy Spirit to preach good news to the *poor* in spirit everywhere (1). The gospel offers release from condemnation, not just from exile but through the forgiveness secured by Jesus. By God's grace they can become mighty oaks displaying his splendour (3) and eventual inheritors of his blessings (6).

What are the challenges for us in bringing good news to the poor?

Gospel's Promises The gospel brings the promise a *double portion* of blessing; joy instead of shame and disgrace, and land in place of exile (7). This

represents God's grace at work, binding up the *broken-hearted* and setting the *captives* free (1). However, his grace is also principled; it is balanced by the reality of his justice. The truth is that God hates *robbery and iniquity* (8), as is seen in all he does.

How do we maintain a balance of grace and justice in our dealings with others?

Gospel's Purpose The purpose of the gospel is the establishment of *righteousness*. The Lord who sets his people right ('arrayed in a robe of righteousness, v10), will one day set the whole world right with himself ('righteousness and praise before all nations', v11). For Isaiah, praise is the natural response to what God is doing in our experience; 'I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God' (10).

What is our response to the truth of the gospel?

Paul Hardingham

WHO DO YOU TELL YOUR PROBLEMS TO?

One day a chaplain found a woman crying at the back of the hospital chapel. He suggested they pray together about her problems, but she refused. "It won't do any good," she said hopelessly. "God won't hear me."

The chaplain thought a moment. "Okay, then, let's curse God together, shall we?"

The woman was shocked. "Certainly not," she said. "He'll punish me."

The chaplain replied: "So you believe that God will hear you if you curse him, but not if you pray to him?"

The Bible is full of verses encouraging us to come to God in prayer. "Call upon me and I will answer you," says the Lord (Jeremiah 33.3). The key to having your prayers answered is NOT to go to God for a miracle now and then, but for a relationship all the time. Jesus said that if we come to him, and stick around, then his Father will hear us.

As for right now? "Come to me, all you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Jesus urged. That promise can be yours today. The Psalmist said: 'I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me.' (Psalm 3:4) He will hear you, too.

SERMON NOTEBOOK: People from the Old Testament

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel was one of the Jews who were exiled to Babylon in 597 BC, and helped his people to re-discover their identity in exile. Although a closed book for many Christians today, Ezekiel has vital insights to offer us in our post-Christian society.

The Man Himself

Ezekiel was a priest taken into exile at the age of thirty (1:1). It was at this age that he would have expected to begin ministry in the Temple at Jerusalem. Despite feeling cut off from God's presence (symbolised by the Temple) Ezekiel met with God in a significant way in Babylon.

- In what ways have we experienced times of feeling 'cut-off' from God?

God's Vision

God spoke to Ezekiel through a vision of his glory (see chapter 1). It was a bizarre mixture of wheels, living creatures and a throne; however it spoke powerfully of God's transcendence and sovereignty over the whole

world. It also reminded Ezekiel that God had not abandoned his people; his presence was not limited to the Temple - he was to be found even in exile.

- How should this truth affect our daily choices?

Ezekiel's Call

Ezekiel was told to speak God's word to his fellow Jews, whether they chose to listen or not (see chapters 2&3). As a sign of his commitment to this word, Ezekiel ate a scroll containing the message, which tasted as sweet as honey. God's word had to become central to Ezekiel's life before he could speak it out with authority.

- How can we fully digest God's word so that it becomes part of us?

Ezekiel's name means 'God strengthens', which is exactly what God did in the face of the cynicism and rejection of his fellow Jews. Let's pray that we too might know God's strengthening to live out God's word today.

Rev Paul Hardingham

SERMON NOTEBOOK : 'People Like Us'- in the Book of Acts

PHILIP

Philip's encounter with the Eunuch in Acts 8 is a remarkable one. This man was returning from worshipping in Jerusalem to Ethiopia (what we call the Upper Nile today), where he belonged to the royal court. The man was probably Jewish, either by birth or conversion, although he was open to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Philip found him reading from Isaiah 53 and needing help to understand it: 'How can I unless someone explains it to me' (8:31). Therefore, Philip is a good model for us when it comes to sharing Jesus with other people.

Be Prepared! Philip was obviously sensitive to God's promptings through an angel (26) and the Holy Spirit (29). He was prepared to leave a successful gospel ministry in Samaria, and take a difficult 60 mile journey to Gaza in order to speak with this one man.

- How prepared are we for God's promptings in our own lives?

Be Alert! It is clear that Philip was alert to any personal ethnic and class prejudices he might have against this black, high ranking official. Even as a Jew, he was prepared to overcome any embarrassment in talking with a eunuch! Philip willingly spoke to a person he would not normally think of talking to!

- What opportunities has God given us to share the gospel with different people?

Be Expectant! Finally, Philip was ready to answer the Eunuch's question, 'who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' (34). He went on to show how Jesus himself fulfilled the Scripture and so led this man into commitment to Christ. So well prepared by the Holy Spirit was the Ethiopian's heart that it seems he believed immediately and asked for baptism.

- Are we expectant that God will bring across our path those who want to know more about Jesus?

Rev Paul Hardingham

SERMON NOTEBOOK : 'People Like Us'- in the Book of Acts

AQUILA & PRISCILLA

The Acts of the Apostles is sometimes described as the Acts of the Holy Spirit. However, the early Church grew as the Spirit used people like Aquila and Priscilla. In Acts 18 we read how this couple had a significant impact on the life of the church at Corinth. So let's see how they can still encourage us if we want God to use us today.

The Couple

The two of them made an interesting Christian couple! Aquila was a Jewish leather worker, a freed slave from Pontus on the Black Sea. It appears that he had been a slave in Rome, won his freedom and married Priscilla the daughter of the house. They then set up business in Corinth as a result of the Emperor Claudius' eviction of all the Jews from Rome in AD 49.

- What does this say about the variety of people that you find in your church?

Their Encouragement

Aquila and Priscilla had a real gift of helping others. On arriving in Corinth, Paul went into partnership with them, in business as well as the gospel. This provided Paul with the base for preaching and founding the church. After travelling with Paul to Ephesus, they met Apollos and instructed him fully in the Christian Faith. He went on to become a significant church leader.

- How can we practically encourage our leaders?

Their Home

Both Paul and Apollos enjoyed hospitality in this couple's home. With their varied backgrounds, they set up a shared household and lived and worked together. Our homes remain vital places for witness and encouragement in today's church, where we can share our hearts and lives with other believers, as well as those seeking God for themselves.

- In what ways do we use our homes for the gospel?

Rev Paul Hardingham

THIS WORLD GOD MADE

This world God made so beautiful,
Its wonders thus displayed.
The dawn, the day, the setting sun,
Designed to give us aid.

The stars above, that brightly shine,
And moon, that tracks below.
Infinity, which knows no bounds,
As constellations glow.

The overcast of darkness falls,
We sleep, and find due rest,
From toil and stress, the faint of heart,
We wake, new strength possessed.

With explorations, we then find,
Inventions, man aspire,
And knowledge of the sick, to heal,
Technology require.

The earth, so full of riches given,
We benefit and live.
While nature with its balance fair,
Our adoration give.

And when at last, mans time is spent,
We first should understand,
The earth, creation, God hath made,
In Heaven, we grasp His hand.

David E.N. Collins.

YOUR LIFE, YOUR CHOICE: HURRY SICKNESS

Every day we are pressured to cram more and more activities into fewer and fewer hours. This has been described as 'hurry sickness' and it's something we can all identify with. For example, when did you last attempt to join the slowest checkout queue at the supermarket? Hurry is an enemy of our spiritual life, as most things connected with the kingdom of God cannot be done in a hurry!

We should draw a distinction between being busy and being hurried. Busyness has to do with our outward condition, while hurry is all about the state of our souls. It arises from having too many competing priorities at any given moment. Jesus was often busy but never hurried! We can train ourselves to be less hurried in the following ways, which will help to be more in tune with God's priorities.

Slowing Down:- To break the hold of a frantic pace of life why not deliberately slow down eg walk more slowly or stand at the longest check-out queue in the supermarket?

Saying No:- How do our decisions help or hinder our ability to love God and others? Looking at your diary, what do I need to do differently?

Balancing Rest and Work:- Although we complain about working long hours, many of us secretly love it! We associate busyness with importance and too much free time indicates that we are not needed. What is a helpful rhythm of work and rest in our lives? How can we take seriously the Sabbath principle of having one day a week to rest and not work? We might do something we don't usually give time for eg taking a long walk or having an unhurried conversation with a friend, as well as avoiding more regular activities eg checking emails!

De-cluttering:- The more stuff we accumulate, the more time and energy are required to maintain it. What could we live without in order to live more simply? Go through your wardrobe, loft or garage and give away what you don't use.

Using Leisure Time Creatively:- When we actually take a break we often end up simply watching TV, surfing the net, shopping when we don't need anything or eating when we are not hungry! Why not choose leisure activities that really refresh you. It's not a case of more leisure time, but using the time we have more creatively.

Paul Hardingham

ENCOURAGEMENT

My dear child I love you
I rejoice over you with singing,
I encourage you with my love.
Encourage others with *your* love.
Build them up and help them to
use the special gift I give them
for the coming of my Kingdom.
I will use you beyond anything
you or the world can understand.

Do not despise
the day of small things.
A tiny seed grows to a mighty tree.
Encouragement waters such seeds
enabling them to grow and fruit
and become what I want them to be.
You need each other for this to
happen-
without encouragement life is a desert.

Otherwise how shall all people know
that you are my disciples?

Mary Hathaway

(Taken from 'Contact' January 2010,
magazine of St Peters Church, Bromyard)



SOMEDAY. WHEN THE KIDS ARE GROWN..

"... children are God's best gift." (Psalm 27.3)

Someday, when the kids are grown, things are going to be a lot different. The garage won't be full of bikes or electric train tracks on chipboard and I'll actually be able to park both cars neatly in just the right places.

Someday, when the kids are grown, the sink won't be choked up with elastic bands or paper cups and the mixer won't stand for six hours coated with the remains of a midnight chocolate milk shake.

Someday, when the kids are grown, the telephone won't look as if it's growing out of a teenager's ear. It will simply hang there, silently, amazingly valuable, free of lipstick, human saliva and mayonnaise.

Someday, when the kids are grown, I won't have to an-

swer 'Daddy is it a sin that you're doing 42 in a 30 miles zone?' or promise to kiss a rabbit goodnight, or wait forever until they get home from dates.

Someday, when the kids are gone, the place will be begin to take on a touch of elegance. The clink of china and silver will be heard on occasion and echo through the hallway. The telephone will be strangely silent, the house will be quiet, calm, always clean.... and we'll spend our time not looking forward to someday, but looking back to yesterday - and thinking, "Maybe we could baby-sit the grandchildren and get some life back into this place!"

Enjoy your family today, they're God's gift to you.

*From UCB daily notes,
The Word for Today,
free from 01782 642000.*

LETTING GO

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." Proverbs 3.5

Letting go of someone you love and putting them into the hands of God can be one of the hardest things you'll ever do. As this poem puts it:

As children bring their broken toys with tears for us
to mend,
I brought my broken dreams to God because He is
my Friend.
But then instead of leaving Him in peace to work
alone,
I hung around and tried to help in ways that were my
own.
At last I snatched them back and cried, 'How can
You be so slow?'
'My child,' he said, 'What could I do....you never did I
et go.'

To let go of someone doesn't mean you stop caring. It just means you can't do it for them. It means you stop rescuing them and allow the consequences to correct them to make them whole. It means you choose neither to fix them nor judge them; just to pray for them and believe God to accomplish what you can't do. Letting go means facing your own selfishness and the need to adjust everything to your desires, then saying instead, 'Not My will, but Thine, be done.' (Lk 22.42) It removes others as either the cause of your pain or the source of your joy, then places your focus back where it should be - on God. It's deciding to fear less and love more. In other words, letting go is - letting God do it his way. Why don't you do that today?

*From UCB daily notes,
The Word for Today,
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THOMAS (JOHN 20: 19-31)

How could I
Be in the right place for so long,
And then miss the moment that matters?

It's unfair and unbearable.
It cannot be true,
And I will not
I will not believe it.

I will not
I will not believe second-hand.
My eyes need to see for themselves.

The faces of joy, the peace
And the knowing, separate us.
And I want what they have,
Oh, I want what they have.

But the doors are locked.

I turn and look up through my sadness,

And He is here.

He is here for me.
He is here because I need him
And he knows.

My Lord and my God.

Daphne Kitching

SUNSET

The summer sun is sinking low;
Only the tree-tops redden and glow;
Only the weather-cock on the spire
Of the village church is a flame of fire;
All is in shadow below.

H W Longfellow

SO WHAT IS THE OCCULT, ANYWAY?

The primary definition of the word 'occult' is 'hidden' or 'concealed'. The specifically religious meaning of the word covers a wide range of mystical phenomena. Broadly speaking, the following religious practices are identified as 'occult'.

Spiritism: this is the belief that people can make contact with those who have died. They do so through a medium, in order to receive revelations from the spirit world.

Clairvoyance: this is the belief that some people have powers that are 'extrasensory' – enabling them to see what cannot be seen by our ordinary five senses.

Fortune-telling: this is the practice of predicting the future by 'reading' tea leaves, palms, tarot cards, etc.

Astrology: This is the belief that the future can be foretold by studying the relative positions of the sun, moon, stars and planets in the sky. 'Horoscopes' offer people advice on their lives, based on these astrological calculations.

Witchcraft: A witch is someone who claims the ability to contact and use powers from the unseen world. They tend to call themselves 'white' witches or 'black' witches.

The Bible takes the occult seriously, and says it is evil. It utterly forbids anyone to dabble in it, calling it

'detestable'. Just some of the verses that mention it are:

'Let no one be found among you... who practises divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcrafts, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults with the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.' (Deuteronomy 18:10-12)

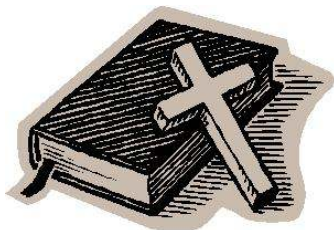
"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity... idolatry and witchcraft... I warn you that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19)

Isaiah 47:11-15 contains a long list of all the occult practices for which the Lord will judge Babylon. Revelation 21:8 also condemns those who practise magic arts.

Instead, if we are worried about our lives, and want to know what to do, the Bible again and again urges us to turn to God. He has promised "never to leave you or forsake you". We are to read the Bible, for it is God talking to us; and to pray – which is us talking to God, and waiting to hear from him.

As Paul summed it up: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting errors, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living...." (2 Timothy 3:16).

THE BIBLE – STILL MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO OUR LIVES, FROM THE UK TO DUBAI...



exposed to the Gospel."

Dubai lies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Its oil fields have made it one of the richest places on earth. And the combination of oil and tourism has attracted an influx of migrant workers. Today, more than three quarters of the UAE's population is made up of migrant or expatriate workers.

But because work is demanding and workers are isolated from their families for years at a time, it can become an overwhelming life. That's where Bible Society comes in bringing hope, support and encouragement through the Gospel. Arulraj is sharing the gospel with around 600 labourers drawn by the area's vast construction projects.

On Bible Sunday, we have the chance to remember people like Arulraj and the men and women among whom they work.

"When people are in difficult situations, I counsel and pray with them," says Arulraj Kovil Pillai, a chaplain to migrant workers in Dubai. "The most exciting thing is seeing people's lives changing when they are

This year's theme – Count on It – is taken from Isaiah 55.1-11. Isaiah gave this message to the people of Israel when they were in exile in Babylon. They'd been there for 70 years and were losing confidence in the God who was to deliver them to their own land.

Isaiah is reminding them that this is not the end of the journey and that they can have confidence in their God to fulfil his promises for the future.

This message is as relevant to us today as it was to the Israelites thousands of years ago. It helps us to rediscover the living certainties of God's Word in times of trouble.

Today, Bible Society is bringing the knowledge of the fact that you can count on God's word to millions of people around the world, including migrant workers both at home and abroad.



And for us in the UK, it's also a wonderful reminder of the security we can find in God's word during the recession. Uncertainty seems to reign around us, but God's promises to us still hold firm. We can count on them.

We hope that it will be a blessing to you. And, the Bible Society are also helping to bring the transforming Word of God to millions of people around the world. And that's priceless.

Alan Kember of Bible Society.

NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS ...

"You cannot serve God and mammon," Jesus states categorically (Matthew 6:24).

We don't want pie in the sky when you die. We want steak on the plate while you wait. That's not the point, though. Mammon in the context of those words of Jesus appears to refer to care about material things. He is concerned with the inner struggle we experience between things and God.

Loren Cunningham, the founder of Youth With A Mission recounts how many years ago in New Zealand he was speaking at a Youth for Christ retreat. Walking down a moonlit path one night, he had the distinct impression God was talking to him. "Loren, what do you have in your pocket?" He reached in his pocket and drew out some notes and some change. "I've got some money, Lord." So many exciting things had been happening at the conference, he was ready to do anything God told him. "Throw your money down on the ground," that voice said. Quickly he threw the money down and walked on.

Before he got very far, God spoke again. "Go and pick it up, Loren." After hesitating for a moment, he went back and felt around on the ground for the scattered coins and bills and shoved them back into his pocket. As he came into a lighted area, a figure was walking towards him. It was the stringy-haired teenager he had been counselling

earlier who was a drug addict. Again the voice said "Give all the money in your pocket to him." Loren argued, allowing the boy to pass him and disappear into the darkness. "You know this boy can't be trusted. He'll use the money on drugs." But God kept on at him. "All right, Lord," he sighed. "If this is really you, have that same boy be there when I walk back around this building."

He practically fell over the stringy-haired youth as he rounded the corner and instantly gave him the money. In the light of an outdoor lantern, he watched as the youth began to cry. "I just told God I would go to that Christian drug rehab place if he would give me the money! I had some. But with this," he shook his head in wonder, fingering the bills and coins, "There's exactly enough to get there!" Smiling, the young man pumped Loren's hand and left.

Loren reviewed what had just happened. He had been willing to throw the money on the ground at God's prompting. But he had clutched the money tightly when God directed him to give it to an 'unsuitable' young man. That day Loren learned that those willing to give freely, wherever the Lord leads, will see God multiply their resources to reach the world. That's YWAM's story.

Olave Snelling

DEAR GOD

I want to thank you for what you have already done in my life.

I am not going to wait until things in my life look better -
I am not going to wait until people say they are sorry -
I am not going to wait until the pain in my body

disappears-

I am not going to wait until my financial situation improves

I am not going to wait until I get the job-

I am not going to wait until the journey gets easier -

I am not going to wait until I understand every experience
in my life that has caused me pain or grief; I am
thanking you right now.

I am thanking you because I am alive.

I am thanking you because I made it through the day's
difficulties.

I am thanking you because I have walked around the
obstacles.

I am thanking you because I have the ability and the
opportunity to do more and do better.

**Most of all, I'm
thanking you, God...
because you
haven't given up on
me.**



LAVENDER BISCUITS

If you have lavender in your garden, do try these delicious August biscuits! They come out soft when warm from the oven, and 'crisp up' as they cool down. Goes well with a rich creamy desert such as syllabub or ice cream.



Use: 225g unsalted butter, softened; 110 g caster sugar; 175 g self-raising flour; 1 medium egg, well beaten; 1 tbsp dried lavender flowers (Makes 20-24 biscuits.)

What to do: Pre-heat your oven to 180C/Gas

Mark 4. Cream butter and sugar in bowl until light and fluffy. Add a spoonful of flour to prevent curdling, then mix in the beaten egg. Stir in flour and lavender flowers, mixing well. Drop teaspoons of the mixture, spaced well apart, on to baking trays lined with parchment paper. Bake for about 15 minutes until the biscuits are brown around the edge and golden yellow in the centre. You'll need to do several batches. Leave to cool on baking tray for several minute. Then use spatula to transfer to a rack.

Higher power?

A Sunday school teacher said to her children, 'We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Bible times. But, there is a higher power. Can anybody tell me what it is?' One child blurted out, 'Aces!'



St DAVID'S DAY

1st March

St David, Saint Dewi in Welsh, is the national saint of Wales. When he was about 30 years old he established a monastery at Glyn Rhosyn, the Vale of Roses. A legend about Glyn Rhosyn says that years before David was born St Patrick came there to settle but an angel sent him on to Ireland, saying that the place was already reserved for David who would be Wales' patron saint. This place is now called St David's (Ty Dewi) where the cathedral now stands.

There are lots of legends about St David: one story is that there was very little fresh water near the monastery but when David prayed for water, a spring came up at his feet.

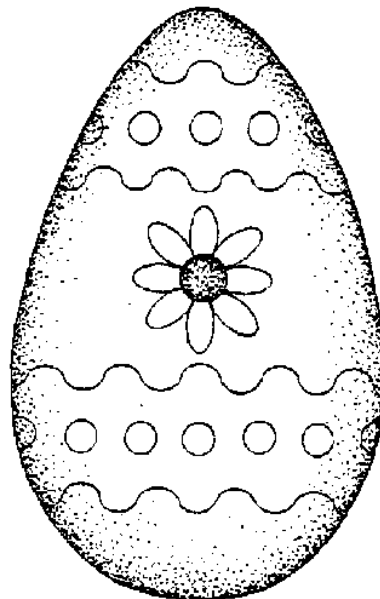
When he was a young man he attended an assembly of bishops where the crowd was so large that people couldn't be heard for the noise. But when David began to speak a hill rose under his feet so that everyone could see and hear him.

EASTER JOY!

When you wake up on Easter Day it feels different – really full of joy - because we are celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus.

But on the first Easter morning the friends of Jesus were very sad when they woke up because they didn't know that Jesus had risen. They wouldn't believe Mary when she told them she had seen Jesus in the garden by the tomb. Thomas refused to believe unless he saw Jesus and could feel his wounds (that is why we still call someone a 'doubting Thomas'). But Jesus wasn't angry and he invited Thomas to see for himself the marks the nails had made. Why don't you read about the first Easter Day in each of the Gospels? The accounts are easy to find as they are at the end of each Gospel.

We can't see the actual marks like Thomas, but we can know the real truth, that Jesus is risen. Jesus told Thomas, and all of us. "Happy are they who never saw me and yet have found faith." So Easter Day must be the happiest day of the year!



MARCH

When we shorten the name of this month we write Mar. – all the answers to this quiz begin with the letters MAR, so which MAR is.....

A breakfast jam made with oranges?

A long distance race?

Author of one of the Gospels?

A small ball of glass?

The 4th planet?

A wooden puppet?

Lazarus' sisters?

An alternative to butter?



Answers at the bottom of the page.



How do you get two whales in a car?
Across the Severn Bridge.



Last month I wore white all the time so the traffic could see me.
That must have kept you safe.
No, a snowplough knocked me down.



Answers: 1. marmalade 2. marathon
3. Mark 4. marble 5. Mars 6. marionette
7. Mary and Martha 8. margarine

EASTER EGGS

Melt 6 oz plain Fairtrade chocolate in a bowl over a pan of hot water. You might need some help with this.

Take the bowl with the chocolate in it away from the hot water. Add 2 eggs yolks, 1 oz butter and 2 teaspoons single cream. Beat the mixture until it is thick then put it into the fridge to chill until it is firm enough to handle.

Shape the mixture into 12 eggs and roll them in chocolate strands.

And here is an Easter egg to colour in - you could trace the pattern off to make Easter cards if you want.



What did the mother egg say to her baby on its first Easter?

Don't get over-eggcited.

