



The Messenger

January 2025

The Parish Of Dursley

Price 60p each
£6 Annually

The Ewelme Benefice

**The parish of Dursley
and**

the parish of Uley with Owlpen and Nympsfield

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A Message from the Editors

Dear Readers

Welcome to our January edition. Another New Year and we hope it's a good one.

If I've forgotten anyone in the Review of the Year, I apologise.

Thank you all for your continued contributions to the 'Messenger' throughout 2024, making it full of interesting articles. Don't forget if you have this overwhelming urge to start writing for us please don't hesitate to get in contact.

We wish you all a Very Happy and Peaceful 2025.

From Valerie and Judith (editors)

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JANUARY 2025

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**DEADLINE FOR FEBRUARY 2025 ISSUE
IS SUNDAY 12th JANUARY 2025**

Our Reader Tony King writes.....



Dear Friends,

So as we start to celebrate the New Year, Christmas is passed and all the preparations and panics are behind us! Of course, for Christians the Christmas celebration will always be a joyous acclamation of 'Emmanuel - God with us' and that will continue into the New Year as we celebrate the season of Epiphany.

Originally Epiphany was just a Festival Day celebrating the visit of the 'Three Wise Men'. The word 'Epiphany' is based on an Old Greek word meaning manifestation or showing. Just as the new-born baby Jesus was shown to the shepherds as representatives of the Jews, so the visit by the Three Wise Men was a showing to the wider Gentile world.

Matthew is the only Gospel writer who mentions this event - 'In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem ...'

Traditional nativity scenes depict three "Wise Men" visiting the infant Jesus on the night of his birth, in a manger accompanied by the shepherds and angels, but this should be understood as an artistic convention allowing the two separate scenes of the Adoration of the Shepherds on the birth night and the later Adoration of the Magi to be combined for convenience. The biblical account in Matthew's Gospel simply presents an event at an unspecified point after Christ's birth in which an unnumbered party of unnamed "wise men" visits him in a house (not a stable) with only his mother mentioned as being present as well.

Later tradition fixed their number at three (since there were three gifts), made them kings or Magi, and suggested their resonant names - Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. Magi refers to Persian astrologers - the word was later associated with the occult and came into English as 'magic'.

The link to kings goes back to the Old Testament prophecies that describe the Messiah being worshipped by kings - Psalm 72 talks about kings 'rendering tribute' and 'bringing gifts', while Isaiah says 'Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn'.

In 2000 the Church of England added to the lectionary an optional season of Epiphanytide, stating, 'The Christmas season is often celebrated for twelve days, ending with the Epiphany. Contemporary use has sought to express an alternative tradition, in which Christmas lasts for a full forty days, ending with the Feast of the Presentation on 2 February'.

Each Sunday during Epiphanytide gives a different view of the manifestation. The first Sunday has the Three Wise Men - the showing to the Gentiles. The second Sunday tells the story about the Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist in the River Jordan - the start of Jesus' ministry. The third Sunday has Jesus at a wedding party, where he turns water into wine in the first of his 'signs' as John calls them. The fourth Sunday tells of Jesus in the synagogue, where he reads from words from the prophet Isaiah which refer to himself, and declares his mission.

Finally on the Feast of the Presentation in the Temple (Candlemas), we go back in time as the child who is manifested to the shepherds and the wise men is now recognised by Simeon and Anna, when he comes to be presented in the Temple according to the Law of Israel. He is both "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and "the glory of God's people Israel."

Traditionally at Candlemas, many Christians also take their candles to their local church, where they are blessed and then used for the rest of the year; For Christians, these blessed candles serve as a symbol of Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World.

The concluding prayer of blessing at some services at Epiphanytide seems appropriate:

May God the Father, who led the Wise Men by the shining of a star to find the Christ, lead you in your pilgrimage to find the Lord. Amen.

May God the Son, who turned water into wine at the Wedding Feast at Cana, transform your lives and make glad your hearts. Amen

May God the Holy Spirit, who came upon the beloved Son at his Baptism in the River Jordan, pour out his gifts upon you. Amen.

And yes - a very Happy, Peaceful and Blessed New Year to all!

Tony King

A gentle reminder to wrap up warm when you visit St James, as there is no heating at the moment. THE WELCOME IS WARM BUT THE BUILDING IS COLD.

St James The Great, Dursley




Live Nativity



Saturday 4th January 2025

The play starts at 5.00pm and finishes with hot punch and nibbles

There is no admission charge, but please give as generously as you can to help fund a much-needed new heating system




17th January 7.30pm at Dursley Tab.

An open, public gathering with Simon Opher, our MP, to discuss the "**Assisted Dying Bill**", which is going through Parliament.

An opportunity to share our hopes and concerns. The meeting will be chaired by Simon Helme.

Ewelme Benefice




St James The Great, Dursley

Epiphany Carols

12th January 2025

6.30pm



The Ewelme Benefice Parish of Dursley

The Church of St James the Great

Rector: Revd Dr Juliet Jensen: ewelmerector@gmail.com

Churchwardens: Jan Vonberg & Chris Tyler

www.ewelmebenefice.co.uk

January 2025 Services

Sunday 5th January - Epiphany

10am Parish Holy Communion

Sunday 12th January - Baptism of Christ

10am Parish Holy Communion

6.30pm Epiphany Carol Service

Sunday 19th January - 2nd Sunday of Epiphany

8am Said Holy Communion

10am Reflective Worship

Sunday 26th January- 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

10am Benefice Holy Communion

6.30pm Choral Evensong



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Insight

Gloucestershire



Insight Gloucestershire – Supporting People Living with Sight Loss

We host a monthly hub in Dursley, where you can connect with a Community Sight Loss Advisor for advice, guidance, and equipment demonstrations. Drop in at Dursley Methodist Church, Castle Street, GL11 4BS, on the last Friday of each month from 10 am to 11 am (appointments also available, call to book).

In addition, we're launching Virtual Hubs in partnership with two other local charities, offering online support groups for working-age adults, parents, university students, and young adults. Contact us to find out more and join a supportive community of peers.



Cotswold Vale Talking Newspaper

HERE IS THE NEWS.

Do you wish you could listen to news about your town or village? Well, you can. We at the Cotswold Vale Talking Newspaper know how important it is to stay in touch with your community. We read news stories about your local area from the Gazette, the Yate and Sodbury Voice, features from online news bulletins and from village and church magazines.

If you are visually impaired or unable to read print for any reason, you can listen to us online or on a soundbox with a USB stick that comes through the post every week. This service is entirely free of charge. If you have a friend or family member, or if you are a carer for someone that you think would enjoy this, do get in touch with us. Look at our website www.cvtn.org.uk or call 01453 549133 and someone will call you back to arrange a visit.

January Thoughts from The Benefice Office...

by Clare White



Most of my thoughts for January will be from home as I'm having some radioactive treatment on 6th January and I'll be at home in quarantine until February. Glowing in the dark, probably!

The office will be closed during this time, but I will still be working, but from home, if you need to get in contact with me please email or phone me on 07778842060. I expect Margot (The Cat) will enjoy my company and I'll enjoy having a warm office (bedroom) to work from.

The old year has passed and I would like to remember some people who have died and were my friends- Pauline Thomas, and Chris Raffle, plus Mike Graham. All are terribly missed by so many. Pauline & Chris were so active in our church communities and Mike was such a stalwart in DODs. Lives given to service and never forgotten; I give thanks for knowing them.

A new year has arrived and we all start with the anticipation of what is to come this year. It's a new year, a new start and a new opportunity that God has given us. An opportunity to serve our Lord in whatever he thinks we can do, through ministry, fellowship, care, community outreach and sharing the Gospel.

I know I always start each year with the greatest of intentions and enthusiasm dwindles as the year moves on, usually at some pace, as life gets busier.

The PCC's in the Benefice are hoping to meet early this year to explore how we would like our parishes to develop, this should give us the greatest opportunity to express how we can be an ever developing congregation and community.

I would enjoy to being able to try new ways of worship as I always feel that when we experience different ways of prayer, or scripture we learn more. We stop hearing old comfortable prayers when they are repeated too often; they shouldn't be ignored and forgotten, but developed and perhaps re-explored.

Whatever 2025 brings us we will remember what went before and explore what is to come, supported by God as he guides us along our life's journey.



A Very Happy New Year.

Where Margot will be as I work!



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Eco Church from *Gill Mather*

Happy Sustainable New Year!



This time of year, we tend to look back at the previous 12 months as well as looking forward. Here are a few thoughts from 2024, including some highlights from St James Eco Church in the past year.

In January we were thinking about rubbish, both globally as well as locally. The Christian charity, Tearfund has long-since been highlighting the problems with rubbish, and in particular, plastic. During 2023 and 2024, nearly 150 governments have been meeting under the umbrella of the UN Environmental Programme. The hope is to develop the first-ever global treaty on plastic pollution. Lobbyist groups such as WWF highlight that achieving such an agreement is so important, when global environment progress in 2024 has been poor. I hope and pray that there is a meaningful and lasting agreement reached by all nations.



Gloucestershire Recycles is a partnership of Gloucestershire County Council and its six districts. Their 'Let's Talk Rubbish' campaign aims to answer questions the public have, about recycling. The hope is that it clarifies myths and misinformation. The website seems very 'user-friendly'.

Gloucestershire residents can submit their questions about recycling online and find out more information about the campaign at

<https://www.gloucestershirerecycles.com/talkingrubbish>

St James continues to provide a recycling point for used toothbrushes. The New Year may be inspiring some of us to redecorate our homes. It has in ours, and indeed, we decided to repaint some rooms on the run up to Christmas as well! We discovered that the Gloucester Dulux Centre recycle old paint cans (Woodrow Way, Gloucester, GL2 5DX). They do accept brands other than their own, but it's worth checking their website for further information.



The Eco Church group in partnership with Dursley Freegle has held several successful 'Bring and Take' events over the year. Indeed, it seems to be gaining popularity, and the most recent event in November was very well supported, both with donations as well as people attending.

Plenty of things were taken, but we decided it was time to have a big sort out following the November event. Things have been sorted and kept for the next event planned for St James (Saturday 11th January 2025, 9-12). Surplus things were sorted and taken to Gloucester City Mission, Bristol Homeless Shelter and Kid's Stuff (a Stroud Children's charity)

In March we were thinking about energy, and in particular renewable energy and why this is important. This is relevant of course to both individual households, as well as larger buildings. Each building has its own considerations and difficulties when aiming to reduce its carbon footprint.

It could be argued that this is easier with a modern, well insulated building compared to an old building. In these situations, we need to continue to work towards long-term net zero goals (in other words, reduce the buildings contribution to greenhouse gas emissions). If the solution is too difficult in one area or building, it may be that we can reduce our overall carbon footprint, by implementing green interventions in other areas of our daily lives. For example, this might be how we travel (e.g. cycle or use public transport), eat more plant-based food, heat our homes and the buildings we use (e.g. avoid fossil fuel energy consumption such as oil and gas where possible).

In April we thought about charity A Rocha and its inspirational work leading Eco Church. A recent update from them said that in 2024 8,000 churches in England and Wales are now participating in the scheme which is wonderful. Their aim is to increase this number to 20,000 churches making their difference to climate change by 2030. A Rocha is a Christian charity. They are running an autumn appeal (<https://arocha.org.uk/autumn-appeal>) to help them spread the love of God's creation through churches and act against climate change.

Other church and churchyard projects including the Bug Hotel and swift boxes made progress throughout 2024. We have 2 swift boxes installed in the church tower and will be watching in the spring to see if they are occupied this year. The Bug hotel and surrounding area is establishing well. Yellow Rattle seed has been planted in the autumn with the hope for further wildflowers to grow.



We had another successful Count on Nature event in St James Churchyard in June. Next year, we are planning to have two separate events: one with our usual nature exhibits, craft and art stations, and hopefully a visit by the 'Moth Man' again. A separate biodiversity count will probably held on a different day.

St James Eco Church Team wishes everyone a very happy and peaceful 2025,

Best Wishes from Gill



References

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-november-2024/it-s-time-to-talk-rubbish-and-prioritise-recycling-with-launch-of-new-waste-campaign/>
<https://www.duluxdecoratorcentre.co.uk>

Bellringing *by Philip Pope*



Bellringing practices can be very tiring both physically (particularly ringing some of the bigger bells) and mentally (concentrating on the latest ringing 'method' that you're trying to learn) and there has been a long tradition of retiring to a local hostelry to recover once the bells have been rung down and the church locked.

Our current venue of choice is the New Inn at Woodmancote where we can always be sure of plentiful seating and a warm welcome from Mick the landlord. He always provides an interesting selection of ales and other beverages of which he can, if necessary, explain the characteristics, source and history of each in order to help you make your choice.

The other customers must clearly wonder about the conversation that goes on and one such, well known ex-teacher and local poet David Ashbee clearly went to some lengths to find out more about it. He presented us with the following poem a few weeks ago.

St James the Great, Dursley Bell Ringers

("Now you can follow a bell reliably in rounds, it is time to become a change ringer." – Guildford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers. Creators of vexatious tinnitus since 1927. I made the last bit up.)

I've never talked to them about
Exploding Tittums, Roller Coaster, Weasels,
Only heard their steely tra la la
as I drove past in the dark
Who knows if their skipping rhythms
Inflect my racquet ploys
as I hop from foot to foot to swat
the plunking shuttlecock.

I don't see their shadow figures
hauling on the salley
but filing in before me at the pub.
Their chiming strikes a thirst.
I should ask landlord Mick
to rebadge the New Inn *Bob Majors*
and call the side bar *The Belfry*
but that's ringing the changes too far.
David Ashbee

On the practice of the 5th December we were very early getting to the New Inn. The ringing chamber was inundated with water after heavy rainfall during the afternoon which resulted in our practice being cancelled. This had also happened on a Sunday morning two weeks previously when two of us had to don waterproofs to ring the 5th and 6th bells. But we kept the bells ringing!



ST JAMES FREE BOOK STALL



Happy New Year everyone. I wonder what 2025 will have in store for "The St James Free Book Stall."

We began last year with 1,000 books, a fairly regular stall held twice a month, and a small loyal band of supporters. We ended the year with over 3,000 books, stalls every Saturday morning – many with live 'music for browsing' provided by local musicians and over 100 supporters.

Can the stall continue to evolve? We have grand ideas but.....

The church is completely filled with forty tables covered in books, people and children milling around and boxes of books coming in all the time.

It's not too late to make another New Year's resolution, and one that is easy to keep. Ant hills are built by thousands of ants each moving a little bit at a time. Could you become an 'ant' for the book stall? It would only involve picking up a book and putting it down again in a different place. That is all that is needed and the books will become sorted into different categories. We are not expecting regular commitment, just turn up on a Saturday morning.

If you are thinking that you would like to expand your contacts without joining clubs etc., then this is the ideal situation. Just come along and enjoy the home-made cake and company. The rest will follow.

Thanks for your support in 2024 now it's onwards and upwards. Our first bookstall will be on 11th January. I look forward with eager 'ant'icipation to see you then.

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Thanks from Chris Morgan.....

Chris Morgan would like to thank everyone who attended and/or helped at the recent quiz in aid of the Friends of Julius & Dora Children's Centre. Together with some generous donations, it raised £450. This brings the total raised last year at the slide shows, talks and quizzes to an amazing £5,000. Thanks to all of you who made this possible.

As there will be a quiz in aid of St James in February, there will not be another J&D quiz until the Spring. Watch for further details.



January 2025 Acrostic by Sally Hayward

Journeying into
Another
New Year 2025
Usual parties
And get togethers are going on
Remembering the
Years gone by.



Happy New Year 2025 to you all.



PASTORAL CARE



Please let Revd Dr Juliet Jensen
Tel: 01453 350810 or 07776
910890 or Revd Jane Wood
07983 62352 know of those who
need to be contacted or are in
hospital and we will get in touch.



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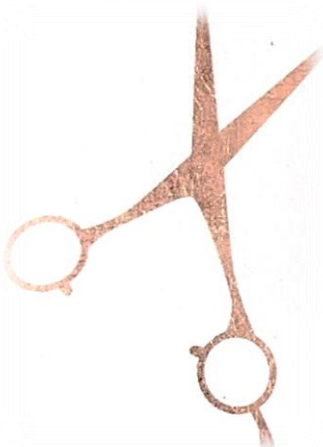


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January 2025

(Joining Zoom details on Ewelme Benefice website)

Wednesday 1st January

Office Closed – Bank Holiday

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

Thursday 2nd January

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

Friday 3rd January

Live Nativity rehearsals

Saturday 4th January

5pm Live Nativity at St James, followed by punch and nibbles

Sunday 5th January – Epiphany

10am Parish Holy Communion at St James

Monday 6th January

[Office closed from today please contact Clare via email or 07778842060](#)

Tuesday 7th January

2.30pm Chris Raffle's Thanksgiving service at St James

Wednesday 8th January

8.45am Morning Prayer via Zoom

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

7pm Fabric & Finance meeting

Thursday 9th January

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

Sunday 12th January – Baptism of Christ

10am Holy Communion at St James

6.30pm Epiphany Carol service at St James

Tuesday 14th January

10am Staff meeting

Wednesday 15th January

8.45am Morning Prayer via Zoom

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

Thursday 16th January

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

Sunday 19th January – 2nd Sunday of Epiphany

8am Said Holy Communion at St James

10am Reflective Worship

Wednesday 22nd January

8.45am Morning Prayer via Zoom

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

7.30pm Dursley PCC

Thursday 23rd January

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

Sunday 26th January – 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

10am Benefice Holy Communion at St James

6.30pm Choral Evensong at St James

Wednesday 29th January

8.45am Morning Prayer via Zoom

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

Thursday 30th January

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

THE THREE KINGS COME BEARING GIFTS....

The figures are from
St James Nativity Scene.

Photo by Clare White,



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CULTURE AND ME

David Vonberg says...I spent a fascinating hour or so with Clive Orchard recently, talking about the things, places and people who inspire him.

Do you have a favourite author or book?

No I don't have a favourite author. I find that there are so many interesting books my choice depends on the mood I am in.

What are you reading at present?

I have two books on the go at the moment.

"1421, the year that China discovered the world" by Gavin Menzies, which puts forward quite convincing arguments that Chinese fleets, using trade winds and ocean currents discovered and charted much of the globe and that Columbus used these charts on his well-documented discoveries. (We, in the West, naturally tend to make the West the centre of everything)

"Prophecy" by S J Parris, whose historical novels are similar to those of C J Sansom

Is there a book which you have often wanted to read or would like to read next?

The next book I am going to read is "The Silk Road" by Peter Frankopan, describing how, fanning out from the East, a network of routes, along which pilgrims and merchants travelled and goods and ideas were exchanged, adapted and refined

Is there a song or piece of music you turn to, to cheer you up?

It all depends on why I want to be cheered up! If I am feeling fairly melancholic, Bruch's 1st Violin concerto will take me to a better place. If I wanted to party then Chris Barber's Jazz band playing "Ice Cream, Down by the Riverside" would put me in the party mood

Do you have a favourite piece of music?

My music tastes are evolving all the time. At the moment I am discovering Shostakovich's symphonies, and busy exploring and enjoying those.

Do you play a musical instrument. If not what would you like to have learnt?

When I was in primary school I played the recorder. I thought I was good but my Dad didn't, so I never progressed any further!

What is your favourite film?

I find it difficult to relate to characters by images. However I was taken to see "Much Ado about Nothing" with Kenneth Branagh. It was brilliant and I came back to check that there was very little alteration from Shakespeare's words. After seeing that we went to Florence for the first time.

Do you have a favourite play?

By far the most powerful play I have seen is "Les Miserables". The scariest is "Woman in Black" which still makes my back shiver. In a different genre, I love "Chicago".

If there was one painting you could own, what would it be and what is special for you about it?

Fortunately, being married to Ann, I have been to many art galleries across Europe - London, Paris, Florence, Rome and Venice, but there is one painting that is special.

When I was recovering from my illness and my mental and spiritual states were in a very low place, I was taken to a Goulandris exhibition in Greece. There, above a doorway leading to one of the exhibition rooms, was the face of Christ with the crown of thorns, painted by El Greco, and I was transfixed. That painting together with the congregation at St James has brought me back to where I am today. In a way, although I don't actually possess the painting, I do own it in my mind.

Do you have special building which means a lot to you and if so why? Although I have been in many special buildings, there is only one special building for me and that is St James. There is something special about the atmosphere and the ambience.

Is there a place where you have felt happiest?

We moved up from Bristol, where there was everything on our doorstep, and we came to Dursley where there was nothing laid on, but everyone got on and did things. It was such a rich place. I have been happiest here in a contented way.

You are having a fantasy dinner party for five – who would you invite? - Many years ago I met someone who had taken part in the Budapest Uprising and had to escape by walking across Hungary. It would be good to share that dinner party with those who have been on a similar journey: Anna, the Big Issue saleswoman who is struggling to make a go of things. Also any genuine asylum seeker, who has had to escape from oppression and gone through all sorts of trials and tribulations. Also to bring Bishop George Browning who did an Australian exchange with us in 1980. His ability to empathise with people and encourage them to give them hope was charismatic. And finally, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Around that dinner table, there

would be so much humanity and so much determination and so much spiritual spark and laughter.



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

by Canon Richard Morgan

January is the month of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which falls in the week culminating in the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul.

Paul is an apt figure with whom to associate prayers for Christian unity. His letters to various churches show both the importance he gave to unity, and the difficulties in achieving and maintaining it. A reading of these letters and the whole New Testament will quickly dispel any idea of a perfect church on earth. Quarrels and mistakes, theological and moral, feature in the Biblical accounts. In a way, that can be a comfort to us in our uncertainties and sometimes shame at our own and the churches' failures to understand and follow the gospel better. It can also encourage us not to lose heart but persevere in humbly seeking God's will for us.

Paul's central concern with unity derived from his conviction that the gospel is for all people, gentiles as well as Jews, that no one is to be excluded or seen as second class. The sense of God's free grace and forgiveness, shown in Jesus' death and resurrection, and God's being indeed the only God and so God of all, underlay this conviction. These need to be foundations and guides of our faith too.

In Paul's letters we see both a concern for a true faith and a commitment to toleration and acceptance of difference, the need to bear with what we may consider a weak or a somewhat overconfident faith. Paul can denounce mistakes, but also realises that a complete uniformity is not possible and perhaps undesirable.

The World Council of Churches notes that this year is the 1,700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, which produced the first version of the Nicene Creed. It drew the line at denial of the full Deity of Jesus, and the later developments of that creed rejected thinking that the Father, Son and Spirit were ultimately just one, so that the Son will vanish into the Father. The insistence on the full and eternal Deity of the Son insists that God really reveals Godself to us, really unites us with Godself, and we can know God is as Jesus shows him to be, and that we will not just be absorbed into God and lost.

But the need to stand firm on the central truth of the gospel was a struggle, and ran the risk of splitting the Church.

So we must seek both the truth of the gospel and the unity of the Church today. We need to hold centrally to love. Things may be difficult, but they have been so in the past, and we can trust in God's love.

A Prayer (from the Bose community) included in the World Council of Churches service for the 2025 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

God our Father, accept our praise and thanksgiving
for what already unites Christians in the confession of and witness to
Jesus the Lord.

Hasten the hour when all churches will recognise each other
in the one communion you willed and for which your Son prayed to
you in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hear us, you who live and reign now and forever.

Amen.

Origins

On the savannah the thorn trees grow.
And yellow-orange colours express
and engage the eye to the horizon.
Cotton dresses (for the heat) and hats
with white socks and brown sandals
create the air of exploration as if
the same door was left open to
finding again what was there -
The first human in Africa.

Elizabeth Oakley
A Dursley Poet

ANOTHER NEW YEAR : TIME FOR CHANGE?.....

Jennifer Kendrick



I have never been more sure of anything since I suddenly lost my best friend two years ago that started a domino effect of countless close family members, friends and contemporaries dying, causing me to do a radical rethink about the way I live now in this moment!

I came up with an exciting blank canvas of muddled mindfulness, grateful for still being independent, with sufficient means and a sound mind! Living alone is not onerous, and I still love to share my home, cluttered as it is with a wealth of visible, sentimental memories that someone once referred to as 'full of rubbish' but that's just fine! Visitors who effortlessly make themselves at home are welcome any time, especially if they find the kitchen and put the kettle on! There is usually a homemade cake or tin of rock buns in the cupboard! Overnight stays nowadays need some thought but nothing is impossible! There is always time to care.

"The greatest barrier to the next level of conscience or consciousness is our comfort and control over where we are now". So writes Richard Rohr in his book, *Everything Belongs: the gift of contemplative prayer*. I have always been a positive thinker! Death does not worry me and I plan to check out of this world in three years' time when I reach 90, ready to hitch hike to the next galaxy for more adventures or just to rest in peace! My family are well aware of my end of life wishes: no heroics or being propped up in long term care: my body to be donated to science and bits left over to be left beneath a yew tree in the country churchyard where my parents married and umpteen ancestors are gathered. Meanwhile, I intend to enjoy myself, following a modest flexible routine that can easily be adjusted, abandoned or improved accordingly!

Everything now takes me time. I am slow and need help to keep domestic chores in check, muddles at a minimum and the larder adequately stocked with fresh food to prepare and, very often, share. I walk every day. I sometimes stop to talk to strangers, always listen and hear new thoughts. I challenge my brain and knit. I scribble to clear the attics of my mind and spend time resting when my body says enough! I struggle with technology but manage it sufficiently to stay afloat and this week successfully resolved a sophisticated scam involving my mobile phone, which was so satisfying!

A few weeks ago in church, I sobbed uncontrollably, overwhelmed by a vision of the streams of living water that vividly reminded me of the

stories and songs of my childhood. Not long after that I was aware of an invisible satanic attack at a time of supreme contentment! I overcame it by the Grace of God, deeply thankful for the experience and assured of my faith that gives me hope and strength. I am gradually relinquishing personal control in favour of more contemplative prayer. It is when we are most vulnerable that we are most blessed.

Life goes on, but differently and if we can meet the challenge of change and decay with positive thought, all will be well!

Save our Scenery!

The OPEN THE BOOK team from St. James, currently led by Joy Pepper and Tony King, go into Dursley Academy regularly to narrate, act and share Bible Stories in school assemblies.



Dave Fittall, sadly no longer with us, made our super scenery and props, mainly from cardboard for ease of transport and bits and bobs for economy! They are now in need of refurbishment as constant wear and tear has taken its toll over the years! Especially Noah's Ark which is real leaky!

We are looking for new ideas and people who would be interested in this exciting project, with a view to having a messy fun day in the summer holidays to put it all together ready for use in the new school year.

Maybe this is something for a family or small group of parents and older children!

Maybe grandparents used to doing crafty things in their sheds.

Maybe somebody just willing to have a go at making-do and mending!

We welcome all talents and none to come together to make it happen!

To express an interest with no obligation, make a commitment, offer help with tools or ask any questions please contact

JENNIFER KENDRICK. jmkendrick07@gmail.com
07905111039 thank you so much!

The Gate of the Year Poem by *Minnie Louise Haskins (1875-1957)*

A Review on 2024 by Judith Staddon.

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of
God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a
known way."

So I went forth, and finding the hand of God, trod gladly into the
night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in
the lone East.

This is the preamble to a longer poem which was quoted by King George VI in his 1939 war time Christmas broadcast to the British Empire, it speaks to readers in all of life's difficult and dangerous situations and tells us the best person to rely on as we journey through the troubled waters of life.

I was reminded of this poem, and thought it appropriate for the New Year magazine, when it was a question in one of Christine Morgan's Quizzes and I was the only person on our table to remember this!!

As usual in January I like to just reminisce about the previous year, sometimes because January magazine is hard to fill, although this year we have plenty of interesting articles as well.

2024 has been a momentous year when finally, Canon Michael was replaced by Rev Dr Juliet Jensen on 1st September. We welcomed her with lovely service here in St James as the whole Benefice, the Town and many organisations greeted her. I am sure it is a steep learning curve for her with four churches and their congregations to care for. The welcome is warm even if St James is still cold, but things are moving, so watch this space....

In January Barbie Davies staged the Live Nativity, including a real baby and live animals, including a donkey.

In May we welcomed a new churchwarden, Chris Tyler, to St James to work alongside Jan Vonberg, who had shouldered the work alone for that previous year.

On June 15th we were all invited to Danny and Donna's wedding in St James. It was so good to have something to celebrate.

In July a Thank You Party was held in St Giles Uley for everyone who supported all the churchwardens during the Vacancy. Having categorically told everyone we would not open our garden, we opened our garden at 52 Woodmancote. It was lovely weather and so many

people came and also enjoyed Cream Teas, served by Clare, Steve and Moya.

Christine Morgan has staged quiz evenings in aid of Julius and Dora centre supporting homeless children in Northern Kenya.

In November we welcomed into our church family by Confirmation, Roland Swift. We also celebrated, with Lionel Jones and his family, Lionel's 100th Birthday on 11th November. There was a service in St James as he had been in the choir for 80 years and it was followed by a party in the Parish Centre where he was able to catch up with family, friends and old colleagues from his days at Mawdsley's.

Eco Church continues and Open the Book visit Dursley Academy weekly during term time to reenact Bible Stories with the children. The Book Stalls on Saturdays go from strength to strength, as does the Organ Recitals, Coffee, Cake and Music, organised by Nigel Davies.

We ended the year with the Christmas Market and the Christmas Carvery, both very successful as usual. Thanks go to Anne Shipton and Clare White for organising the Market and Ann and Clive Orchard and Team for the Carvery.



Photos by
Donna Pinker.
The Christmas
Carvery.
Looking into the
kitchen, Danny
and Clive
carving the
turkey, and
below and left
happy diners.



Of course with the good times we also have to have some sad days and we have said goodbye to many notable friends during 2024, David Ind (son of Jean), William Grant, Dr Jacquelin Hill, Janet Midgeley, Gerry Pierce our one time Mayor of Dursley, John Baldwin, the sudden death of Clive and Ann Orchard's son-in-law and also Chris Raffle, and below a fitting tribute is paid.

In Memory of Chris Raffle....*by Nigel Davies*



To say that the news of Chris Raffle's death was devastating would be an understatement, as she showed no obvious signs of any ailment. We all hoped and prayed that the heart attack which landed her in Bristol Royal Infirmary would not be severe and that she would be brought round from the induced coma. Sadly this was not to be and she died peacefully on Wednesday 4th December.

People always say the kindest things when someone dies, discreetly overlooking the foibles and quirks we all exhibit from time to time, but in Chris' case it's difficult to express in mere words her influence on the community of St James' Dursley and the choir in particular as she was such a positive, outgoing and cheerful person.

Initially she came to St James' for the music! Having been a member of the choir at St George's Cam, she had taken various chorister examinations and was preparing for her Bishop's Award. It turned out that she needed to have a good working knowledge of Anglican church music from the 1600's to the present day; something which was not really possible at St George's. It was in 2008 that David Collins suggested that Chris might like to come to the Friday rehearsals at St James' in order to help to fill the repertoire blanks. Chris obviously enjoyed her time with us and, after just three rehearsals, asked to be a member of St James' choir.

Always well-prepared, early for rehearsals, never searching for music, Chris was a real asset to the choir with her excellent voice and equally excellent sight-reading skills. But like so many of our choir members, her contribution to the work of our church didn't finish at the choir room door. She was thoroughly involved in church life as a member of the PCC, Electoral Roll Officer, flower arranger, member of the Pastoral Care team, and a willing participant in the various dramas Barbie organised.

Hearing of her death, Canon Michael wrote "She was one of the first people I remember meeting on my interview day in Dursley when I was taken to the school where she was in the office. I vividly remember her welcoming me and then telling me that I'd also see her

in St James because she was a choir member and clearly proud to be so. I was impressed to find a church member who was also active in the local community “.

Chris was a real “do-er” which, coupled with her energy, wry sense of humour, sociability and a real concern for her fellows, makes her an irreplaceable loss to our worshipping community. What an irony that she should have won the choir's “Tambourine Award” at the Annual Lunch just a couple of months ago. We hold husband Andy and her family in our prayers and assure them that although Chris will be sorely missed at St James' church, we benefited so much from her presence and all she had to offer.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Thanks to everyone who bought a copy of the Olympics quiz. We raised £40! Here are the answers:

Best wishes, David Vonberg

Heptathlon	Help on that is confused.com (10)
Triple jump	Fall over the French horse fence (6,4)
Discus	Converse without a pole (6)
Hammer	A sham Mercedes gives us the inside meaning (6)
Hockey	An ad hoc key lets us inside (6)
Javelin	Evil Jan is confused(7)
Marathon	The Tamar at Honiton? Must be an inside job (8)
Slalom	Surviving Los Angeles League of Musicians initially helps (6)
Peloton	Pet Loon needs to be sorted out (7)
10000 metres	XMm (3 ,8,6)
Breaking	Smashing (8)
Taekwondo	Don't wake "O" to clear up a right mess (9)
Rhythmic gymnastics	The Eurythmics go singly, forgetting the European Union, but lead the school activity programme (7,10)
BMX racing	Maxing with Criminal Records Bureau shortly is in chaos (3, 6)
Handball	Prehensile, multi-fingered appendage makes an appearance before a posh dance (8)
Surfing	A menial waiting at table you might say (7)
Fencing	Putting up a barrier? (7)
Table tennis	iPad precedes poster girl for 2012 Olympics (5,6)
Skateboarding	A fish is embarking (13)
Water polo	H2O goes well before a mint (5,4)
Decathlon	The Disasters Emergency Committee initially meets Irish Town which has no East (9)
Badminton	Evil with sweet on top (9)
Triathlon	Thro' Latin errors occur (9)
Judo	To start with Juliet understands Diocesan orders (4)

MOUSE DIARY



When MBFTLP wafted by through some blissful mists of mellow fruitfulness outside my front door, I was in a rather thoughtful mood. Notwithstanding the seasonal situation, I said, I think we have to find Billy another billet, because we don't really want a moat around the church and he keeps sharpening his teeth in anticipation. Quite, said MBFTLP, and we really need him to help with Eco church instead. He might come in handy for future projects and perhaps he can join the committee this year. Speaking of the seasonal situation how did you get on with the Christmas fairy this year? She was rather bossy, I said, and said that if I wanted to go to the top of the tree in lieu of her I really had to examine the circumference of the situation in order to climb up to the very top. I guess so, said MBFTLP, now that you have become a book worm, the circumference of the situation has rather changed and the mince pie situation does not improve matters. Well it's my new book you see I said, from the nice lady in the Dursley library. She said it was suitable for me as it was about a church. It's by Susan Howatch. I had a bit of trouble though. The book is rather big and I dropped it on my toe and I had trouble turning the pages to see if I was in it. In what? said MBFTLP. In the book about a church, I said. I would try the Bible if I were you, said MBFTLP, very eruditely, as most things are in there. Ok, I said, that's my new year's resolution. Meantime, Mr Dinosaur seems to be having an anxiety attack. I don't know, said MBFTLP- the problems of Modern Life. (I think there is book on that somewhere). And off she went, in the same thoughtful mood she came in and left all of us in the menagerie to hopefully, have a Billy-free, new year.

Mouse was helped in the writing by Elizabeth Oakley



Prioritise what truly matters in 2025 with 'Run the race'

Do you struggle with nailing down your priorities when you're planning? So many excellent options, coupled with New Year's resolutions can sometimes lead to overwhelming expectations and unrealistic commitments.



Kate Stacey, Diocesan Collaborative Ministry Lead: Lifelong Learning, and Becca Faal, Diocesan Strategic Lead for Safeguarding Training and Learning, are running an event to help us unpick some of the expectations we put on ourselves and support us as we refocus our lives on the bigger picture.

Kate said, "Prioritising what is most important when all choices are good options is something that often puzzles people. How do we make good choices? Becca and I both realised the importance of discerning priorities and wanted to help others to do the same."

'Run the Race', is a led day retreat taking place on 11 January from 10am to 3pm. It is structured so that attendees have plenty of time and space for reflection.

By the end of the day, participants are encouraged to leave with practical next steps, such as scheduling intentional rest, prayer, and joyful activities into their calendars.

Kate explained: "The day will have little bits of input, then big chunks of time. We encourage people to bring their journals and diaries, and they can talk with others, or walk the grounds, whatever helps them process.

"As the event is at the start of the year, it gives people the chance to get on top of their diaries before the diary gets on top of them. Our diary dictates our values, and I would like people to go away from the day feeling like they are in control of their diary; they have all their leave marked down, they have key moments for times of reflection and prayer penned in.

"I'd like people to treat these moments like a funeral, or something vital that they would never dream of missing."

A central part of the day will be adopting the idea that learning to say 'no' can be just as important as saying 'yes' when it comes to living a balanced and meaningful life.

Kate noted: "The inability to say no can lead to burnout and frustration. I have had experiences with chronic illness and burnout from not saying no when I should have.

"Saying no is also not just about self-preservation, but about empowering others. If I say no, somebody else might be really pleased that they could say yes. Saying no makes us more collaborative and reminds us to rely on others."

Another important element of Run the Race is the concept that choices rooted in joy and values are sustainable.

"When we decide what we should be doing, we should choose things that bring us joy. It's hard to be creative and joyful when we are exhausted and overworked, so we should prioritise the joyful things.

"Matthew 11:28-30 says: 'Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.'"

One of the tools Kate uses is the 'bell jar' analogy. Kate explained: "Rocks represent vital priorities like relationships and rest, while gravel and sand symbolise lesser tasks. Fill the bell jar with sand and gravel first, and there's no room for the rocks. Start with the rocks, and everything fits around them.

"The bell jar isn't always the same size. Some weeks, it shrinks, like when you have two days out of your usual routine. Recognising this helps us adjust our expectations."

As you go into the new year, consider adopting these principles of Run the Race. Identify your 'rocks', those non-negotiable priorities that align with your values. Practice saying no to sand and gravel commitments that don't serve your well-being. Finally, remember that the sky won't fall if you say no.

In Kate's words, "There is a redeemer, and it's not me, and it's not you."

It's open to everyone, lay or ordained. Book your place on Run the Race at <https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/run-the-race> .

Events and training

More details for all these events at

gloucester.anglican.org/events - Faithful generations event

Cathedral Green, Gloucester Cathedral, 1 February, 12pm to

5pm - Book now for this fun and creative afternoon where

grandparents and grandchildren can explore Christian faith and spirituality together. There will be prayer spaces, story, activities, dance, interactive worship and more.

<https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/faithful-generations-event>

Cathedral Eucharist for the Celebration of the Epiphany, Nave, 12 College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LX, 5 January, 10.15am

A Cathedral Eucharist, commemorating the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus Christ.

<https://gloucestercathedral.org.uk/whats-on/cathedral-eucharist-for-the-celebration-of-the-epiphany-25>

Faithful Generations 'What can a grandparent do?' workshop

Church Centre, St Andrew's Church, Station Road, Churchdown, GL3 2JT, 11 February

Becky Sedgewick, author of *Grandparenting for Faith*, leads this workshop, teaching how to understand the importance of strong intergenerational relationships and how to share and demonstrate faith meaningfully.

<https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/faithful-generations-workshop/>

Run the race, Prinknash Abbey, Gloucester, GL4 8EX, 11

January, 10am to 3pm - An opportunity to reflect on your priorities, schedule activities that bring joy, and identify what can be let go.

<https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/run-the-race/>

Have your say

Visit Facebook **f/Diocese.of.Gloucester**, email Natalie at **nsansom@glosdioc.org.uk**, follow us on Twitter **@glosdioc**, view videos on YouTube **Diocese of Gloucester** or visit our website **Gloucester.anglican.org**

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Years Mind January

2nd Derek Taylor 2018

4th George Henry James Fry 2006

5th Norman Gardner 2002, Lawrence Lewis 2023

6th Edgar Pope, Derek Manning 2012

7th Gordon McKillop 2024

8th Daisy Lane 1982, Peter Gubb 2016, Robert (Bob) Grover 2023

9th Bernard Siveyer 2015

11th Anne Ireland 2019

13th Norman Orchard 1997

15th Greta Keep 2019, Patricia Pinker

16th Olive May James 2010, Marjory Skrine 2016, Allan Wiggall 2020

17th Len Spencer

18th Romala Vaisey 2024

19th Edith Esther Woollams 2006

20th Joan Edom, Michael Peachey 2021, Gerald Field 2022

21st Anne Staight 1989, Helen Halliday 2004, Tom Wheeler 2011,

Margaret Preater 2017, James Kennedy 2021

22nd Leonard Victor Parry 2003

24th Shirley Roberts 2020

25th Charles James 1981

27th Vera Moon

29th Kay Trump 2001, Jean Parnham 2016, Harry Mather,

Paul Jenkins 2023

30th Herbert Iles 2021

31st Stephen Cook 2019

FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS.



Baptisms at St James

We welcome into our church family by Baptism

Hayley Skye Burns 15th December

**We share our thoughts and prayers
with the families of those who mourn
the loss of those they love.**

Burial of Ashes

Janet Midgley 14th November 2024 at St Mark's

Patricia Savage 2nd December at St Mark's

100 CLUB

Final draw for the year. December draw as follows:-

1st - 119 - Anne Shipton

2nd - 194 - David Collins

3rd - 193 - Colin Wyatt

**Sarah says that subs are now due and Many thanks
for your support.! Please pay David Wood,
Sarah Hodge, Philip Staddon.**

**Don't try and pay Clare in the Benefice Office as she
will be working from home during January and early
February,**

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Contact Barbara Weldon

07816 533206

email: bandbweldon1@gmail.com

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between 9.00am and 5.00pm.**

Useful Telephone Numbers

TO BOOK THE PARISH CENTRE.

Clare White Tel: 549280

E-mail: ewelmebenefice@gmail.com

BELLRINGERS

Elizabeth Byrne Tel: 07788 800849

100 CLUB

Sarah Hodge Tel: 545155

CHOIR

Anne Shipton Tel: 545419

David Wood Tel: 545073



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