



^{SAINT} Barnabas CLARKSFIELD

January 2021

medlockhead.co.uk

Services at St Barnabas' Church

Sunday 9:30 am Parish Worship

When the pandemic is over:

Monday 2:30 pm Prayers in the vestry

Tuesday 10:00 am Holy Communion (said)

The first Tuesday of each month: Service of Holy Communion at Moor Haven Nursing Home on Ripponden Road, starting at 2:00 pm.

Baptisms and marriages by arrangement with the Vicar.

Please submit items for the February magazine by 15 January. Please e-mail files to paulmonk111@gmail.com

People at St Barnabas' Church

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Mr Peter Haslam (0161) 345 0215

Mrs Nicola Williams (07549) 630 943

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Miss Sarah Gura (07708) 714 813

Treasurer

Ms Gisele Onwumere

Parish Hall bookings The Vicar (0161) 624 7708

Letter from the Vicar

None of us can have anticipated that 2020 would be so unusual, so daunting, such a marathon, so filled with suffering. It was truly a dreadful year. Most of us, will look forward to the New Year with a determination to make it a better one.

But how can we make it better? Circumstances have the habit of dictating how we feel. Many choices have already been taken out of our hands. We may be re-assessing and responding, convalescing or grieving. The situations to which we are responding could be grim.

We don't know what 2021 will be like but the future already presents a large number of challenges. In large measure, then, we need to plan ahead, but differently. Before we start, we must recognise that our scope for exercising free will is vast. The choices before us are too many to list. But each offers an opportunity to love or hate; and to encourage or tear down. And everything offers a chance to show God that we desire to follow Him or to go our own way. Therefore, although we don't yet know the content of 2021, we *do* have some hold over the way we respond to the future and its unknowns.

As we approach the gateway between this year and next, I wonder how we'll feel in a year's time ... or five years' time? It will depend in large part on our choices now—not choices about *what we do* but about *who we are*. God wants us to choose to be His disciples and respond to everything with Godliness.

Our year will end with more thankfulness if we respond to any and every situation with the intention to please God rather than ourselves. It's inevitable because that's the way God has pre-programmed our souls.

Wishing you a 2021 filled with great love, and much joy and profound peace:

PAUL

A New year's blessing

May God make your year a happy one.

Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,

But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;

Not by making your path easy,

But to make you sturdy to travel any path;

Not by taking hardships from you,

But by taking fear from your heart;

Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,

But by keeping your face bright, even in the shadows;

Not by making your life always pleasant,

But by showing you when people and their causes need you

most and by making you anxious to be there to help.

God's love, peace, hope and joy to you for the year ahead.



2021 dates for your diary

Sunday 3 January

9:30 am: **Covenant service** during the liturgy of the first Sunday of the year.

Wednesday 17 February

Ash Wednesday

From the Parish Registers

Christian funeral

Friday 11 December

Kevin Atkinson at Oldham Crematorium.

Monday 21 December

Frank Bradshaw at Oldham Crematorium.

Burial of ashes

Monday 21 December

Elaine Mercer, at Strinesdale



This image shows a blanketing of winter snow. The way it excludes all the colour and most of the texture forces us to look in a new, different way at the landscape. We may reach different conclusions as a result. Similarly, God is inviting us to strip everything away when we look at Him in order to see Him more clearly. This can be painful, but it also brings new and wonderful insights.

Bible readings for January

Sunday 27 December

St John the Apostle

First: Exodus 33:7–11a

Epistle: 1 John 1

Gospel: John 21:19b–end

Sunday 10 January

Baptism of Christ

First: Genesis 1:1–5

Epistle: Acts 19:1–7

Gospel: Mark 1:4–11

Sunday 24 January

Epiphany 3

First: Genesis 14:17–20

Epistle: Revelation 19:6–10

Gospel: John 2:1–11

Sunday 3 January

Epiphany

First: Isaiah 60:1–6

Epistle: Ephesians 3:1–12

Gospel: Matthew 2:1–12

Sunday 17 January

Epiphany 2

First: 1 Samuel 3:1–10

Epistle: Revelation 5:1–10

Gospel: John 1:34–end

Sunday 31 January

Epiphany 4

First: Deuteronomy 18:15–20

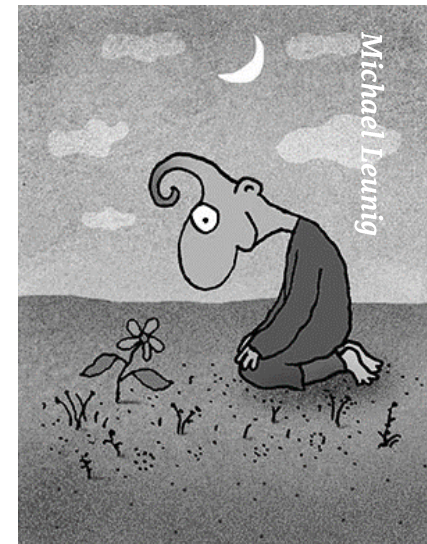
Epistle: Revelation 12:1–5a

Gospel: Mark 1:21–28

Little flower, let us pray;
The world gets madder every day.
There's very little that I understand:
The anxious hearts, the broken land.

All I want to know is you:
Your leaves so green, your petals blue.
Your wonderful humility
Are made of love and sanity.

Little flower, let us pray
Together in this childish way,
For there within your petals curled
Lies wisdom that would heal the world.



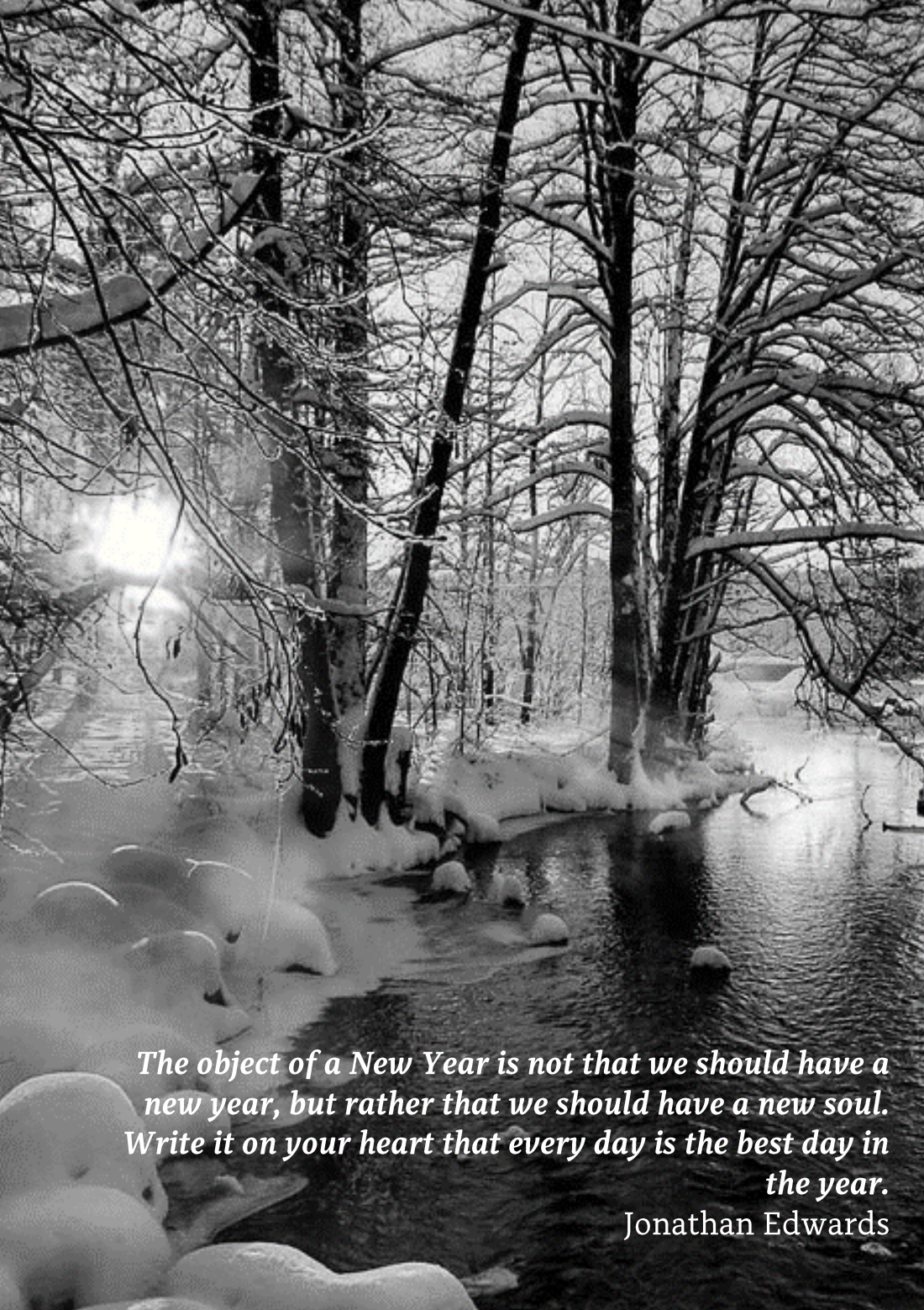


*You pay God a compliment by
asking great things of Him.*

St Teresa of Avila



'I blame this on manna-made climate change'
(with apologies to Numbers 14)



*The object of a New Year is not that we should have a
new year, but rather that we should have a new soul.
Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in
the year.*

Jonathan Edwards

We always sing four or five hymns in Church. Some of their labels are obvious but the names of some are obscure.

We call the second hymn the 'gradual'. Its name comes from the Latin for 'step' (*gradus*; which explains why the word 'gradually' means 'step by step'). By ancient tradition, at this point in the service a psalm was sung by a solo cantor on the steps of the *ambo* (an elevated platform, pulpit-like in structure, from which the Gospel was read or sung by the deacon). The congregation respond with 'Alleluia' or a verse from the psalm itself. Today in most churches, a hymn is sung instead of the psalm, but it's still be referred to as the 'gradual'.

The priest would climb an further step after the Gospel and sermon and before celebrating the Eucharist.

The name during the service serves a straightforward liturgical purpose: together with the visual metaphor of climbing steps during the service, it says the content becomes progressively more important each time the celebrant stands higher. The gradual hymn occurs immediately before the proclamation of the gospel to the people of God which is, of course, the climax of the Ministry of the Word. The language and climbing that accompany the second hymn therefore prepares the congregation for an encounter with the Word.

Why is it the 'gradual' hymn?

Because We Hunkered Down

These bleak and freezing seasons may mean grace
When they are memory. In time to come
When we speak truth, then they will have their place,
Telling the story of our journey home,
Through dark December and stark January
With all its disappointments, through the murk
And dreariness of frozen February,
When even breathing seemed unwelcome work.

Because through all of these we held together,
Because we shunned the impulse to let go,
Because we hunkered down through our dark weather,
And trusted to the soil beneath the snow,
Slowly, slowly, turning a cold key,
Spring will unlock our hearts and set us free.

Malcolm Guite

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<https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2017/02/03/because-we-hunkered-down>

The Gospel of St Matthew is the first book of the New Testament and one of the most quoted books from all the Bible. It is one of only two Gospels originally written by an Apostle (the other is that by John).

Matthew's Gospel is noted especially for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5–7), and the full versions of the Beatitudes (5:3–10) and the Lord's Prayer (6:9–13). The story of the Wise Men at Epiphany only appears in Matthew. Similarly, only Matthew cites Jesus stating the Golden Rule (7:12) or Jesus reaffirming the Law of Moses (5:17) and the Commandments of God (19:17–19). The Gospel concludes with Jesus calling the Apostles, 'to make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe everything that I have commanded you' (28:19–20)—the Great Commission.

Author Although the first Gospel is anonymous, the early church fathers were unanimous in holding that Matthew, one of the twelve apostles, was its author. The name 'Matthew' means 'gift of the Lord'. He was a tax collector who left his work to follow Jesus (9:9–13). In Mark and Luke he is called by his other name, Levi. Some have argued on the basis of its Jewish characteristics that Matthew's Gospel was written in the early church period, possibly the early part of 50 AD, when the church was largely Jewish and the gospel was mainly preached to Jews (Acts 11:19).

Place The Jewish nature of Matthew's Gospel may suggest that it was written in the Holy Land, although many think it originated in Syrian Antioch.

Intended readers Matthew wrote his Gospel in Greek so his intended readers were obviously Greek-speaking. But they also seem to have been Jews. Many elements point to Jewish readership: Matthew's concern with fulfilment of the Old Testament (perhaps explaining why he includes more quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament than any other New Testament author). He also gives a full statement of the Great Commission (28:18–20).

Taken together, these passages suggest that Matthew's Gospel has a universal outlook despite its Jewish background.

Purpose in writing Matthew's main purpose in writing is to prove that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. He chose to do so primarily by demonstrating how Jesus (in both his life and ministry) fulfilled the Scriptures, by which he would have meant our Old Testament. To that end, Matthew includes nine proof texts unique to his Gospel.

Structure of the Gospel Matthew arranged his texts like an artist. He wove his Gospel into five great discourses: (1) chaps. 5–7; (2) chap. 10; (3) chap. 13; (4) chap. 18; and (5) chaps. 24–25. He made this intension clear by concluding each section with a common refrain, saying something like 'When Jesus had finished saying these things ...' (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1). This fivefold division suggests Matthew was modelling his book on the structure of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament). He may also have been trying to portray his work as a new Pentateuch with Jesus as a new and greater Moses.

For more information, please visit the following sites:

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/matthew>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Gospel-Matthew>

The Gospel according to Matthew

The first major Christian festival of 2021 is Epiphany, when we remember the wise men who came to visit the infant Jesus.

In ancient times, Epiphany was the most important Christian festival after Easter. This fact may seem surprising or even bizarre to many modern minds.

The reason goes something like this: if the wise men had been Jewish, they would not have needed to ask about the ancient prophecies of a Messiah to be born in Bethlehem. Both tradition and Scripture forbade the ancient Jews to practise astrology; and most of them knew their Bibles. The Church has always, therefore, assumed the wise men were not Jewish. They were foreigners ... possibly from Persia.

This means the wise men were the first non-Jews—Gentiles—to worship Jesus. Our modern minds probably can't grasp the enormity of this statement, but the early Christians certainly did. Most of the prophecies about the Messiah assumed he was intended for the Jews alone yet God allowed non-Jews (the wise men) to be among the first to see that he had arrived. In other words, God was forcing the Jew to share 'their' Messiah with those outside the Jewish faith.

This argument may seem almost irrelevant in us in modern-day Oldham except that many church people think of Jesus as being theirs alone. And many folk outside the Church (if they ever think of Jesus at all) think of Jesus as being 'only for religious people'. So, like the Jews of long ago, the modern Church often tries to hoard the Messiah for itself—or hides him as a secret.

If true, this is a shocking assessment of the Church, because it shows that we fail to understand one of the reasons why Jesus came to earth: he came to break religious exclusion. He is Lord of all. He came for all. He *is* for all.

As we enter the season of making New Year resolutions, perhaps we should rejoice that Jesus can be worshipped by everyone, including those outside our immediate circle of the church. Try to ensure that, every day, we tell someone new of our wonderful redeemer Lord.

Epiphany

Suitable presents

**If it's the thought that counts,
What were they thinking of,
To give him these, gold
Frankincense and myrrh?
Extraordinary gifts to give a child.**

**When Mary pondered, later, on these things,
I wonder if she thought that
These are given to all—
Gold: our potential, gifts that make us
Royal, each in our own domain;
Incense: our aspirations, prayers
And dreams, calling us on;
Myrrh: soothing healing for our pain.
Not gifts for children,
But, like him, we'll grow.**

Ann Lewin

The word 'Epiphany' is used primarily in science and in religion. The word means a moment of sudden and great revelation or realisation. Something causes us to realise a truth that somehow we previously did not know. We understand, we know and often we're never the same again.

The season in the Church year immediately following Christmas is called Epiphany. The seasons of Christmas and Epiphany meld together in most people's minds because Epiphany remembers the coming of the three wise men—the Magi—who also appear in the Christmas story. This episode in the story is called 'epiphany' because they are suddenly confronted with the new truth that God has come to earth in the form of a small baby. They probably had a mental image of what he was like and were changed by a different reality.

God invites all of us to share their journey. He wants us to make an intellectual and emotional journey from an idea about God to a truth. Almost certainly, the prior idea will be greatly different to the truth. Like the wise men, God is inviting us to grow through an epiphany.

Most of us grow in our faith through a series of small epiphanies. But occasionally a person experiences a much larger moment of realisation: think of St Paul on the road to Damascus, for example, or Peter, James and John seeing Jesus transfigured on the mountain.

God allows these moments to enable us to grow in faith. He wants us to become more like Jesus and therefore more spiritual. He intends them as a gift and as a privilege because not everyone is so lucky.

Many people use figures of speech when talking about these moments of realisation. For example, some people talk about a 'thin place'. The phrase tries to give the idea that the barrier between earth and heaven is thin enough that we gain an extra experience of God. The barrier is a little thinner than elsewhere.

A related phrase talks about a 'touching place'

because the encounter is intimate and involves the heart.

The Bible is clear that all of us need to grow in our relationship with God. For example, Hebrews 6 says, 'Let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding' (NLT).

That final 'God willing' is intended to emphasise that we can't force God to reveal Himself. It's His choice and He will lead us one step at a time at His discretion and from within his infinite love.

*You, who teach us a new song,
and train our feet to follow:
meet us in our searching
and turn our hearts and minds
to the one who gives his life for the world;
through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.
Amen.*

*Prayers for the
Inclusive Church
Steven Shakespeare,
Canterbury Press*



*O God, whose beauty is beyond our imagining
and whose power we cannot comprehend:
show us your glory as far as we can grasp it,
and shield us from knowing more than we
can bear
until we may look upon you without fear;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen.*

The post-communion collect for the
Third Sunday after Trinity
by Ann Lewin

A million minor epiphanies

Colour the wise men



Answers

The activity 'What is God like?' **below**

Starting with the first blue speech-bubble and going clockwise:
unpassable, infinite, eternal, immortal, invisible, ineffable, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient.

No: it is not yours to open buds into blossoms.

Shake the bud, strike it; it is beyond your power to make it blossom.

Your touch soils it, you tear its petals to pieces and strew them in the dust.

But no colours appear, and no perfume.

Ah! it is not for you to open the bud into a blossom.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.

He gives it a glance, and the life-sap stirs through its veins.

At his breath the flower spreads its wings and flutters in the wind.


Colours flush out like heart-longings,
the perfume betrays a sweet secret.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.

Extract from

Fruit gathering

by Rabindranath Tagore (translated from the Bengali)



The whole of Greater Manchester remains in the Government restriction level, Tier 3. Accordingly, our services can occur in the Church but all of us attending must wear masks, practise social distancing, and use hand gel. Sadly, we're still not allowed to sing or meet socially for more than a few moments.

- Please give praise to God that we can still assemble for worship even if we cannot worship in all the ways we wish.
- If you know of anyone suffering severe economic problems owing to the pandemic, please speak to one of the wardens, or to the Vicar.
- We are still incurring costs. Please continue, if possible, to give your financial gifts to the Church.
- We do not know when these Government restrictions will be lifted.
- Please visit our Church's website regularly. Please go to, **www.medlockhead.co.uk/virus**
- Thank you for your patience. We love all of you and miss all of you. We hope very much to see the whole Church family restored as soon as possible.
- **Worship resources, including transcripts of services and links to YouTube services, can all be found on our site, www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources**

Covid updates

God reveals himself as...

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

Find all the words printed in bold below in this wordsearch.

God is wonderful

God is love (1 John 4:16)

God is truth (John 4:24)

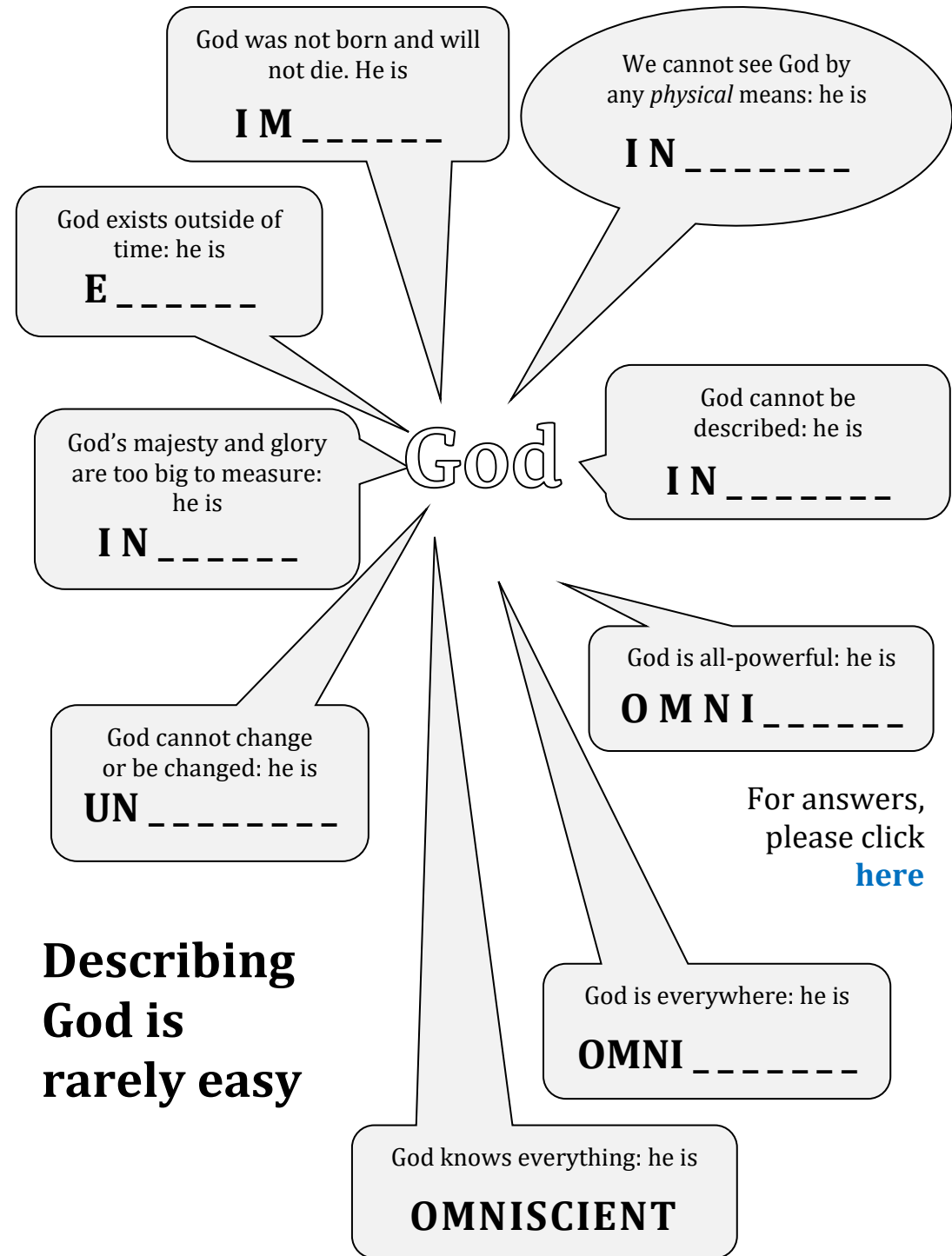
God is Spirit (John 4:24)

God is light (1 John 1:5)

God is mercy (Deuteronomy 4:31)

God is a consuming fire (Exodus 24:17 and Hebrews 12:29)

Jesus said 'Whoever has seen me has seen the **Father**' (John 14:9)



**Describing
God is
rarely easy**

Charles Alfred Coulson was born in 1910 to Alfred and Annie Coulson. At the time of his birth, his father was principal of Dudley Technical College and also superintendent of the local Methodist Sunday School. Charles and his younger twin brother were brought up in a very devout home. Their whole attitude to life was dominated by this Christian upbringing.

Both boys excelled at school. In 1928, Charles earned a scholarship to read mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge. He then took a further degree in physics, and won many academic prizes. He was soon awarded a PhD, in 1936, for work on the structure of molecular methane. He continued as a research fellow at Cambridge for another two years and worked alongside some of the greatest quantum physicists ever.

By this time, the Second World War was obviously imminent. Charles became very active socially which is how he met Eileen Florence Burrett. She was the daughter of a well-known inventor. They had met previously at meetings of the Cambridge University Methodist Society, when he was an undergraduate and she was studying to become a school teacher. They married in 1938 and subsequently had three children.

Charles was a conscientious objector during the war so taught at Dundee University, carrying a very heavy work load. He taught mathematics, physics and chemistry. Subsequent promotions took him to universities in London then Oxford.

All this time, Charles was developing ground-breaking theories to describe the way that chemical bonds form, and the way these bonds dictate the molecular structures of chemicals. In fact, he later showed that a molecule's three-dimensional structure can be used to predict the way it reacts. This result may seem obvious today but revolutionised chemical thinking in its day.

Charles was accredited as a Methodist local preacher in 1929, but he later said his religion was perfunctory until a moment of epiphany in 1930. There-after his faith was deep, first hand, and informed everything he did.

Charles' faith developed and grew in tandem with his scientific work. He served on the *World Council of Churches* in the period 1962 to 1968.

Charles was convinced that Christian faith could not be lived apart from the other aspects of a person's life. His connections as a top-level scientist at Oxford University together with his work with the World Council of Churches led to

to work with many charities, culminating with a position as chairman of *Oxfam* between 1965 and 1971. He believed that religious faith was essential for the responsible use of science so, while working with *Oxfam*, encouraged scientists to help improve Third World food production.

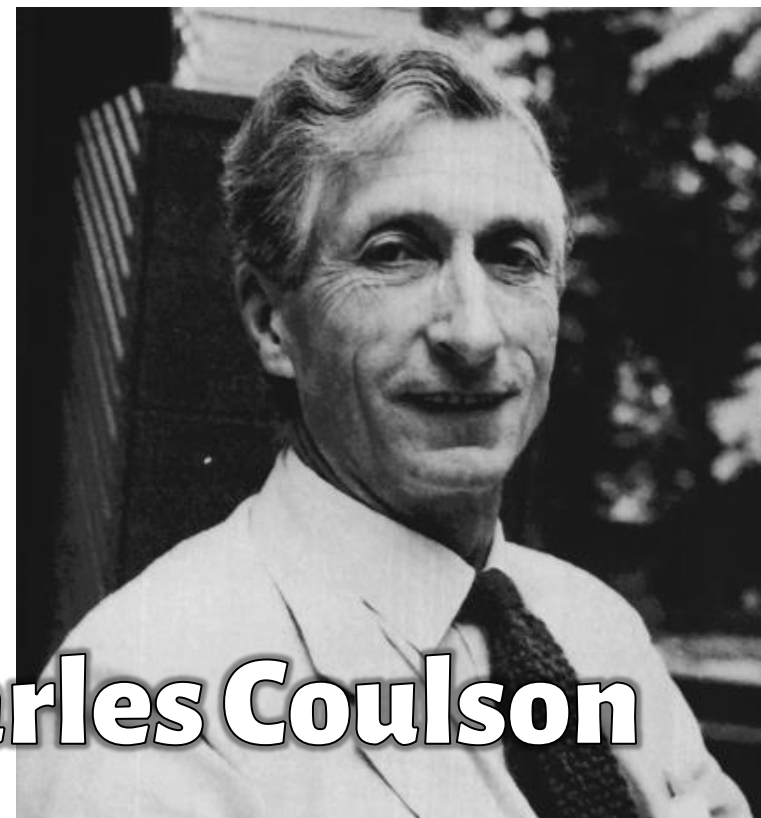
He wrote many books—scientific as well as Christian—and in one of them coined the phrase 'God of the gaps'. But his widest religious impact occurred through his many BBC broadcasts.

Charles viewed chemistry, mathematics—indeed science in general—as a kind of religious activity. He wrote masterful textbooks and delivered popular science lectures as lay sermons.

Charles will be best remembered for his major scientific work which helped pioneer links between quantum theory and the problems of molecular structure, dynamics and reactivity. The way he worked was considered unusual but clearly yielded valuable results. Having generated quantities of scientific data, he 'went on retreat' which, in his case, meant spending several days at a time in intense prayer with meditation on Scripture and fasting. Only when he could see a scientific

way forward did he return to the university. All his key epiphanies and insights occurred while accompanied by prayer in this way.

Charles died on 7 January 1974 — the day after the feast of the Epiphany.



Charles Coulson

More information

<https://mathshistory.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Coulson>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Coulson

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4028426?seq=1>

W	H	I	C	J	H	T	I	A	F
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E	D	R	O	W	S	N	C	B	T
S	T	O	N	E	S	T	V	X	O
S	T	E	M	P	T	E	D	A	P

Angels, Bread, Centurion, Faith, Healed, Leper, Rooftop,
Servant, Stones, Tempted, Wilderness, Word

Wordsearch

The opening lines from a poem called *The Months* by Sara Coleridge (daughter of Samuel Taylor Coleridge) popped into my head the other day: *'January brings the snow, makes our feet and fingers glow.'*

These days, however, the weather is increasingly more extreme and less predictable and generally, our climate is a cause for concern to us, as we learn more about the ways humankind has impacted our earthly home for the worse ... particularly since the industrial revolution.

On 12 December, a few of us gathered outside St Thomas' Church for an hour-long prayer vigil to mark the fifth anniversary of the UN's adoption of a *Framework on Climate Change* (The Paris Agreement). One hundred and ninety six state parties set a long term goal to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 °C in order to avoid predicted catastrophic consequences.

There isn't room here to outline what those consequences could be if we don't act now. If you want to find out more, I recommend you look at the information on the website for **extinctionrebellion.uk** (I warn you, it's scary stuff!)

Whatever you believe about exactly how earth, and life on it, came into being, we acknowledge that God is the creator and divine architect of *'... all that is, seen and unseen.'* We are charged with caring for God's creation and it is the one of the Church's 'Five Marks of Mission'—*'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.'*

As individuals, we all know what personal measures we can take at home to lessen our impact on the environment, but we also need to pray and take up opportunities, as they occur, to encourage councils and governments to take this existential threat seriously. It's clearly part of what we must do to maintain what God created ... and considered *"very good"* (Gen 1.31) ... secure for future generations.

Revd Jane

Curate's Corner



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