

A black and white photograph of a flock of sheep in a field. The sheep are in the foreground, some facing the camera. In the background, there is a village with a church spire, and further back, a castle or large building on a hill. The sky is bright with some clouds.

# <sup>SAINT</sup> Barnabas CLARKSFIELD

**January 2023**

**[barnabas-oldham.co.uk](http://barnabas-oldham.co.uk)**



## Services at St Barnabas' Church

**Sunday 9:30 am Parish Worship**  
**Thursday 10:00 am Holy Communion (said)**

**The first Wednesday of each month: Holy Communion at the Alexandra Nursing Home in Glodwick, at 11:00 am.**

**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

### Vicar

**The Revd Dr Paul Monk**  
**St Barnabas' Vicarage, Arundel Street, Clarksfield, Oldham OL4 1NL**  
**Tel: (0161) 624 7708**

### Assistant Curate

**The Revd Denise Owen (who is Vicar of St Thomas' Church Moorside)**  
**Tel: (0161) 652 0292 and E: therevd.dowen@yahoo.co.uk**

### Lay Readers

**Peter Haslam (0161) 345 0215**  
**Lucie Reilly (07880) 861 751**

### Wardens

**Peter Haslam (0161) 345 0215**

**Administrator Sarah Gura (07708) 714 813**  
**Community Worker MaryAnne Oduntan (07908) 004 682**  
**Treasurer Mrs Vicky Heaton (07468) 463 753**  
**Parish Hall bookings The Vicar (0161) 624 7708**

## Letter from the Vicar

As a year, 2022 lies behind me and a new year suddenly looms ahead. Like an expanse of pristine snow, 2023 awaits the imprint of my plans and actions. It's fresh, new, and wholly available.

A new year is always an opportunity. The sight of my blank diary pages fills me with great hope and optimism. They also cause a sense of responsibility and dread. I could fill 2023 with good things and admirable plans, but I could also waste it with self-centred busyness and achieve nothing. After all, as the Bible says, 'Without vision the people perish' (proverbs 29:18, AV) which may be saying something similar to the old saying, 'If you aim at nothing you're sure to achieve it'.

In response to the choice between these opposites, I will attempt something positive and revisit the concept of a resolution.

My resolutions for 2023 are both complicated and simple. I want to be a better person. I want to waste less time and spend my money more wisely. I want to help more people and make the world a better place. I want to be me and not a pretend, play-acting version of me.

And then I realise that all these resolutions centre round me. And, for that reason, they exclude the God who can make them worthwhile. It's like building a house without foundations or writing a novel without words. Any resolution that excludes God cannot make someone into a better person because there is only one way to create a good person and that's with God at their core.

So my New Year's resolution for 2023 is simple. I will try to put God at the centre of everything I do. That way, all of this year's resolutions will involve God. I will pray more, of course, and study the scriptures. I will look for God in the people I meet.

All resolutions are easy to make, more complicated to articulate, and can be difficult to live. Luckily, a Godly life does not need to be lived alone, because God Himself offers to empower the life we live.

Wishing you the infinite and holy life that comes from living in the Spirit of God.

PAUL



His parents brought him,  
In obedience to the Law.  
A baby six weeks old,  
To offer thanks and dedicate their son.  
Nothing unusual—  
But for Simeon and Anna,  
Revelation.

Only mentioned once,  
These two had been around.  
Waiting and watching  
Prayerfully for years,  
Longing to see salvation.  
And patience was rewarded  
When they saw the Child.  
A moment of recognition  
And they spoke about  
Fulfilment, theirs and his.  
For once old people had the best lines.

Age does not have to mean  
Diminishment. There may well be  
Constraints, but there is also  
Space and time for patient  
Prayerful growth to  
Wisdom's fruitfulness.

Ann Lewin (inspired by Luke 2:22–38)

## Senior moment

## Bible readings for January 2023

**Sunday 1 January**

**Naming of Jesus**

First: Numbers 6:22–end  
Epistle: Galatians 4:4–7  
Gospel: Luke 2:15–21

**Sunday 8 January**

**The Baptism of Jesus**

First: Isaiah 42:1–9  
Epistle: Acts 10:34–43  
Gospel: Matthew 3:13–end

**Sunday 15 January**

**Second Sunday of Epiphany**

First: Isaiah 49:1–7  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:1–9  
Gospel: John 1:29–42

**Sunday 22 January**

**Third Sunday of Epiphany**

First: Isaiah 9:1–8  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:10–18  
Gospel: Matthew 4:12–23

**Sunday 29 January**

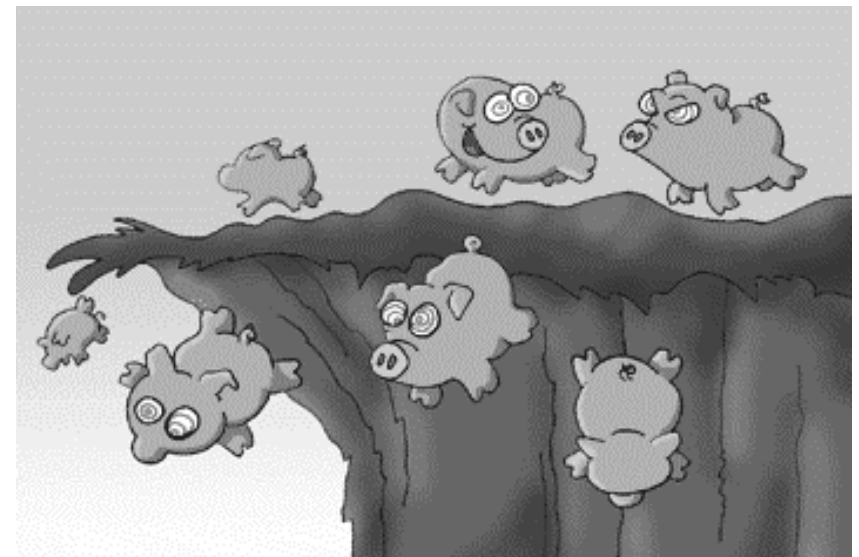
**Fourth Sunday of Epiphany**

First: 1 Kings 17:8–16  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:18–end  
Gospel: John 2:1–11

**Sunday 5 February**

**Third Sunday before Lent**

First: Isaiah 58:1–9a  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 2:1–12  
Gospel: Matthew 5:13–20



**'Say what you will ... I thought it was cool the way that  
Jesus got those demons to leave Roger ...'  
(with apologies to Mark 5:1–19)**



St Peter said, 'The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree' (Acts 5:30)

Moses said in Deuteronomy 21:35, 'Anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse'. When the first Christians were trying to understand how Jesus dealt with our sins, they remembered this verse and applied it to Jesus' death on the Cross. Paul was writing his first letters very soon after the Crucifixion, probably in the 50s AD, before there was any clear understanding of the Atonement. But in effect, he said, 'Jesus was cursed because He was killed on a tree; therefore His resurrection represented a lifting of that curse'.

This idea explains why, when St Paul was writing about the Cross, he often says 'tree' instead of 'cross'. Actually, the idea is not so outlandish. The upright part of a Roman cross was often a dead tree with a slot in its top into which was slotted the horizontal beam on which the victim was nailed—like the Greek letter Tau. A crucified man was therefore quite literally 'hanging on a tree'. And, in Jewish thought, that's why he was cursed.

St Paul wrote in Greek so those who translated his letters appear to struggle when conveying the subtlety of his ideas. That's why the Greek word translated as 'tree' here, which is *xulon*, is sometimes translated 'tree' but at other times is translated as 'wood'

The translators of the Bible are wanting to reinforce Paul's arguments by their choice of wording, so in St Paul's letters *xulon* is often translated as 'tree' but appears elsewhere as 'wood'. For example:

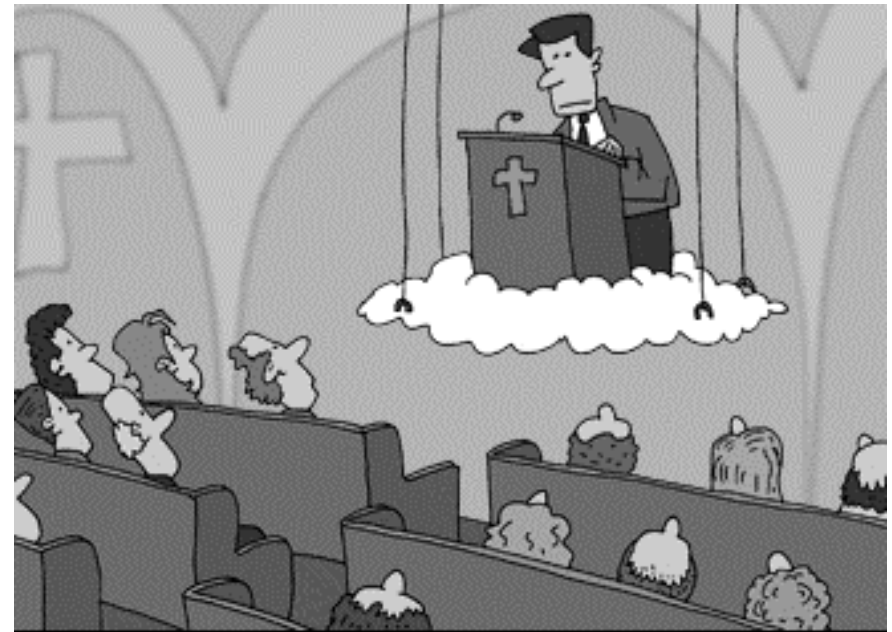
- When Judas took a crowd to arrest Jesus, the Bible says they came with 'swords and clubs' (Matthew 26:47) where the word 'clubs' in Greek is again *xulon*. This same word appears again in verse 55.
- St Paul constructs a metaphor about the kinds of foundation on which we sometimes build our Christian lives. He talks about building on 'gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw ...' (1 Corinthians 3:12) where 'wood' here is again *xulon*.
- In Revelation, St John writes to a Jewish Church in Ephesus and says, 'To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God' (Revelation 2:7). In the New Heaven and New Earth, we read about the 'tree of life' bearing twelve kinds of fruits to be harvested every month, and the 'leaves of the tree' were 'for the healing of the nations' (Revelation 22:2)

In each case, the word 'tree' translates *xulon*. This 'tree of life' is again mentioned in Revelation 22:14.

- While describing the wealth of the Anti-christ's government, and its economic collapse, we read of gold, silver, pearls, precious stones, fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet, twine, *wood*, vessels of ivory or precious *wood* (such as cedar), brass, iron, and marble (Revelation 18:22). This time, *xulon* is always translated as 'wood'.



## Did you know?



**He thought this approach would lend greater authority to his preaching, but in fact it only resulted in more sprained necks.**



# The naming and circumcision of Jesus

**On the eighth day, when it was time to  
circumcise the child, they named him Jesus,  
the name the angel had given him before he  
was conceived (Luke 2:21)**

In the Church calendar, we celebrate the first day of the New Year by remembering the naming and circumcision of Christ.

**The circumcision** Jesus was Jewish, and Luke 2:21 suggests his parents were devout and followed the Law of Moses, so it was natural for them to follow his birth by naming and circumcising the baby on the eighth day of his life. That's why we celebrate on 1 January.

Before about the seventh century, the Church celebrated 1 January as the 'eighth day' on which the child Jesus was circumcised and then received his name.

It was probably in Spain and Gaul that it first became a 'feast', and therefore a celebration. These celebrations were directed toward Mary and looked backward to Christmas and the birth of Jesus.

Jesus' circumcision has traditionally been seen as the first time his blood was shed, and thus suggests the beginning of his redeeming of human-kind. That he could bleed demonstrates that Jesus was entirely human, like us; that (via his parents) he consented to be circumcised showed his obedience to the Law of the Bible.

**The naming** Jesus's naming has great significance. In Jewish thought, the name given to a child was prophetic. In other words, parents chose their child's name in order to point the child's soul in a chosen direction. We see something similar in some African cultures today.

That's why the Jews took such care when choosing a baby's name. Indeed, they believed that giving an inappropriate name could cause a child to deviate from God's path. That's why John the Baptist's family seemed to panic when his mother Elizabeth chose the name of John. (From within this context the curious story in Luke 1:59–64 makes more sense: John's father Zechariah only regains his ability to speak when he finally listens to God. His words coincide with God's words: he becomes a prophet in order that his son might also become a prophet.)

'Jesus' is the Greek translation of a Hebrew name 'Joshua', which literally means 'The Lord saves'. He is named after the man who gave his name to the sixth book of the Old Testament. This book describes the chosen people following Joshua into the Promised Land to accommodate an explicit promise from God.

That Jesus had the same name as the first Joshua is significant: by following the new Joshua (Jesus), a new tribe of chosen people—us—can enter safety in a new land. The Lord lets us enter this new and spiritual life, which is how we are saved.

Within this prophetic mindset, our salvation is wrapped up in the name of Jesus. That's one of the reasons why, as Christians, we conclude our prayer with the words, '... in Jesus' name'.

*Almighty God, whose blessed  
Son was circumcised in  
obedience to the law for our  
sake and given the Name  
that is above every name:  
give us grace faithfully to bear his Name,  
to worship him in the freedom of  
the Spirit,  
and to proclaim him as the  
Saviour of the world;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.*



The word 'Epiphany' means a revelation, a moment of sudden insight or understanding, when the veil that separates us from God suddenly becomes transparent. It's a moment of sudden and great realisation when we suddenly sense who God is and gain an insight into His love. He allows Himself to become known. He is no longer utterly transcendent and becomes immanent.

In the Bible, we give the name 'Epiphany' to the coming of the three wise men ('magi' or kings) who seek Jesus. They do so because God allowed them to see a star in the heavens which led them to Jesus.

Generally the moment of Epiphany comes when a soul least expects it and when most needed. Clearly, God knows everything and knows when a soul most needs the comfort and empowerment that comes from an authentic encounter with Himself.

No Christian can cause that moment of epiphany to occur. It cannot be forced, which is perhaps why such moments are rare and treasured. But a life lived close to God can promote their arrival. They cannot follow a star in the sky nor a road across a desert. But every Christian can seek God through prayer and scripture.

**The season of Epiphany is an invitation to reflect on the many little 'epiphanies', glimpses of how things really are, which are vouchsafed us in the Gospel. The first Sunday of Epiphany is a time to reflect on the moment when 'the heavens opened' at Jesus' Baptism and we were given a glimpse of Father, Son and Holy Spirit together at the heart of all things. The sonnet is a reflection on that mystery.**

**Beginning here we glimpse the Three-in-one;  
The river runs, the clouds are torn apart,  
The Father speaks, the Spirit and the Son  
Reveal to us the single loving heart  
That beats behind the being of all things  
And calls and keeps and kindles us to light.  
The dove descends, the spirit soars and sings  
'You are beloved, you are my delight!'**

**In that quick light and life, as water spills  
And streams around the Man  
like quickening rain,  
The voice that made the universe reveals  
The God in Man who makes it new again.  
He calls us too, to step into that river  
To die and rise and live and love forever.**

**Malcolm Guite**

# Epiphanies



William Temple was born in 1881 in Exeter, Devon. He was the second son of Frederick Temple (1821–1902), born just before his father became Archbishop of Canterbury.

He graduated from Oxford with a superb degree then stayed in Oxford to teach. While still teaching, he was ordained in 1909.

Between 1910 and 1914, Temple was Headmaster of Repton Public School after which he returned to ministry as a full-time cleric. After a short time in Parish life, Temple served first as Bishop of Manchester (1921–29), then Archbishop of York (1929–42) and finally as Archbishop of Canterbury (1942–44).

Temple was a tireless teacher and preacher. He was also a prolific writer. Today, he is perhaps best known for his book *Christianity and Social Order* which he published in 1942 soon after becoming Archbishop of Canterbury. The book attempted to combine faith and socialism: he wanted to create an Anglican social theology capable of promoting a just post-war society. He also used it to weld together his defence of the working-class movement with economic and social reforms. It sold prodigiously and made a huge impact which led directly to Clement Attlee's post-war Government creating the welfare state.

William Temple held a dizzying array of other offices, all of which were underpinned by his desire to improve Britain—the country, its people and its national Church. He was the first President (1908–1924) of the *Workers' Educational Association*; he was chairman of an international and inter-denominational Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship held in 1924; he participated widely in the ecumenical movement that sought to bring together the different Christian denominations. He was one of the Anglican delegates to the World Conference on Faith and Order held in Lausanne in 1927, and helped to prepare and chair the second World Conference Faith and Order in Edinburgh 1937. He is also noted for being one of the founders of the Council of Christians and Jews in 1942.

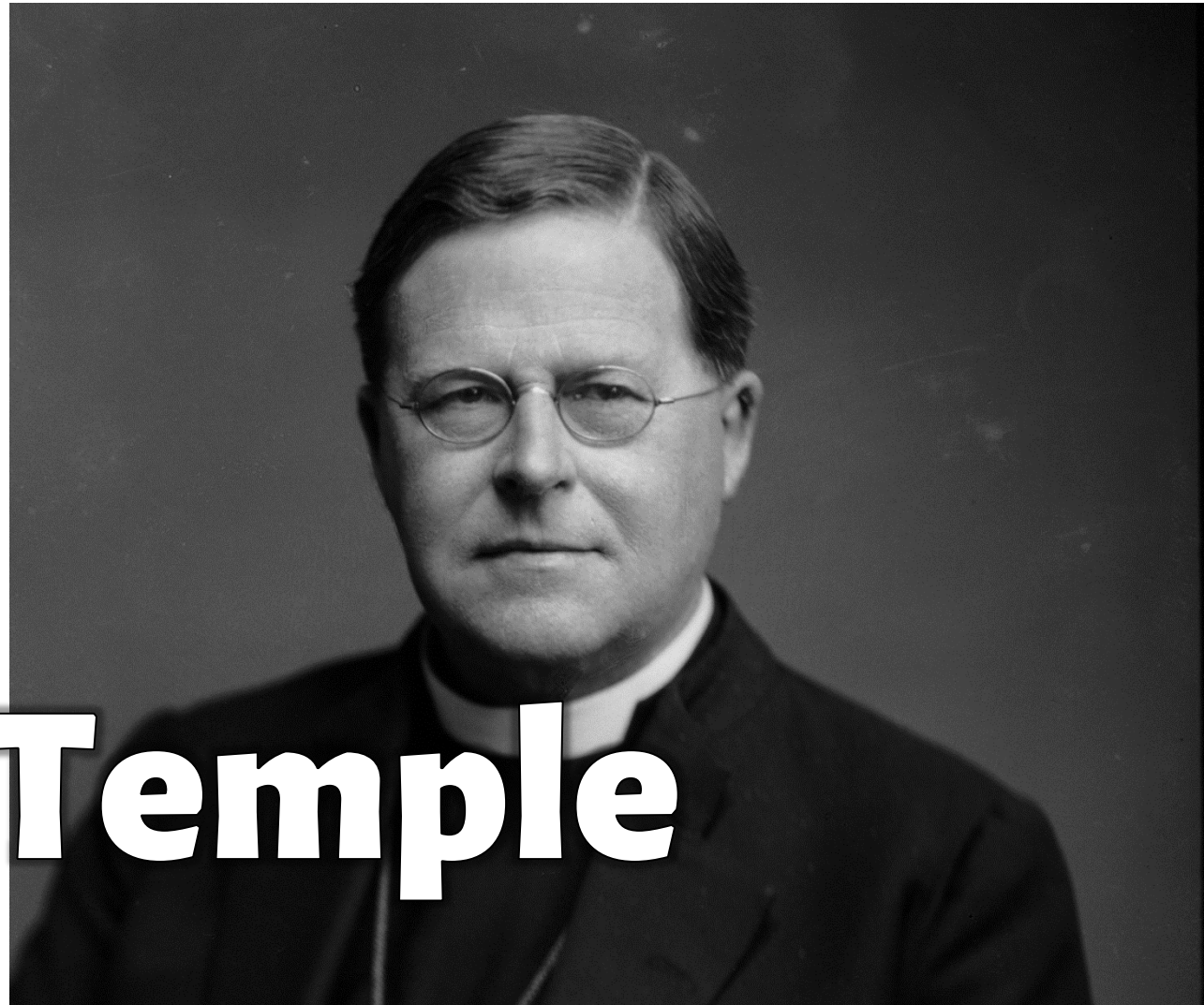
Temple worked tirelessly to bring together the various British Churches to support the Education Act of 1944. This same energy led him to form the British Council of Churches and help form the World Council of Churches.

Temple died on 26 October 1944 and remains the last Archbishop of Canterbury to have died while in office.

**The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.**

**William Temple**

# William Temple





Names are important. People get upset when their names are misspelt, mispronounced or forgotten. Names are also important in the Bible, so it usually repays close attention when we look at a person's name. Why else would God change the name of Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5), Jacob to Israel (Genesis 32:28), or Solomon to Jedidiah (2 Samuel 12:24)?

The Jews—not only at the time of Jesus, but for a long, long beforehand—always looked extremely closely at a person's name. That name could never come about as a matter of a parent's choice or accident, because the Jews held that a person's name was *prophetic*: it not so much predicted their character as somehow *predetermined* it. That's why the friends of John the

It goes further. A name was so important that a person's whole personality could be bound up in their name. That's why Jesus chose to underpin his template of prayer with a statement that 'God's name is holy' (Matthew 6:9). It's a Jewish way of saying that God's very nature is characterised by the concept of holiness.

So it was entirely natural that God would choose a name for His Son that predicted the salvation he enacted: 'The Lord saves'.

**The Church celebrates the naming and circumcision of Christ on 1 January.**

# What's in a name?

Baptist were amazed (and, we guess, extremely anxious) when his father went against ritual and family custom to call him 'John' (Luke 1:63); incidentally, 'John' means 'God is gracious.' Any person called 'not loved' (think of Hosea 1:6; 2:23) could never expect to experience the joy of love, and so on. And think also of Naomi insisting that her name be changed to 'Mara'—which means 'bitterness' (Ruth 1:20) after her husband died.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the ancient Jews, as they thought about their coming Messiah, should have fussed (even obsessed) about what his name would be. Think for example of Isaiah's prophesy, 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6, KJV). And notice how precise was Gabriel's instruction to Mary, that she should call her baby 'Yeshua' (Luke 2:21) (which is 'Jesus' in Greek, and means 'The Lord saves').



# The 'marks' of the Church

There are many ways of defining a Church. One of the simpler checklists appears near the end of the Nicene Creed. This list has four entries which we often call 'the marks of the Church'.

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.**

We call this fourfold list the 'marks of the Church'. Any true Church is:

**One** In God's eyes, Church denominations are irrelevant: there is only one Church, of which all members of all congregations are a valid part, provided they seek to abide by the other marks of the Church, as below. A denomination is clearly far from being true to God if it says it *alone* is the Church.

**Holy** The Church is at its most authentic when it genuinely seeks to live as God demands. So it will be holy. This holiness literally means 'apart-ness,' meaning the Church should never succumb to the temptation to be like the culture in which it finds itself. It must be *different*.

**Catholic** This word means literally 'all-embracing' and follows from the first point: the true Church has a common mission and doctrine which act as unifying themes. In this context, then, 'catholic' does not mean anything to do with the Roman Catholic denomination, which did not even exist when the Church's creeds were being written. Rather, it describes the unifying nature of faith such that, when true to itself, the Church seeks to live a Godly life regardless of denomination.

**Apostolic** The Church, when true, follows the teachings of the first apostles. The true Church seeks to obey God as revealed in the Bible.

The description of the Church at the end of the Apostles' Creed is simpler:

**I believe in the holy catholic Church.**

Let your religion be less of a theory  
and more of a love affair.

G.K. Chesterton

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

Ascension, Baptism, Bible, Creed, Christian, Easter, God,  
Holy Spirit, Pentecost, Son, Temple



Complete the sentence below. All the missing words are listed below. You can read the story in book of Exodus.

After \_\_\_\_\_ died, the Israelites stayed in \_\_\_\_\_ and were very prosperous. The Egyptians complained that it was not fair, so their king, \_\_\_\_\_, made the Israelites into \_\_\_\_\_. He also said any baby \_\_\_\_\_ should be killed, but the girl babies could be left alive. One lady hid her baby boy in a basket in the reeds by the river, and he was found by the \_\_\_\_\_, who took care of him. He was called \_\_\_\_\_, and grew up to be a leader of the Israelites. After a while, they got sick of being \_\_\_\_\_ badly treated, so Moses asked the \_\_\_\_\_, Pharaoh, to let them go. He said they could, but kept changing his mind, so \_\_\_\_\_ sent a lot of plagues on Egypt, like \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. One was so bad the Israelites had to mark their houses so they would not be killed by it; they called it the \_\_\_\_\_, and always remembered it. To make sure the people knew how to behave, God gave Moses a list of rules, called The \_\_\_\_\_. After a while, God helped Moses and his people to escape by clearing a path for them through the sea, but the army that was following them got \_\_\_\_\_.

**Missing words:** Joseph, Egypt, Pharaoh, slaves, boys, princess, Moses, King, God, frogs, flies,



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

**These words relate to the Ten Commandments**

Can you find them in the grid above?

False Gods, gossip, friends, Holy Day, hurting, idols, jealousy, killing, Loving God, lying, pride, stealing

**Wordsearch**



**This picture shows the naming of Jesus**  
You will find the story in the Bible, in Luke chapter 1.

**Colour this picture**



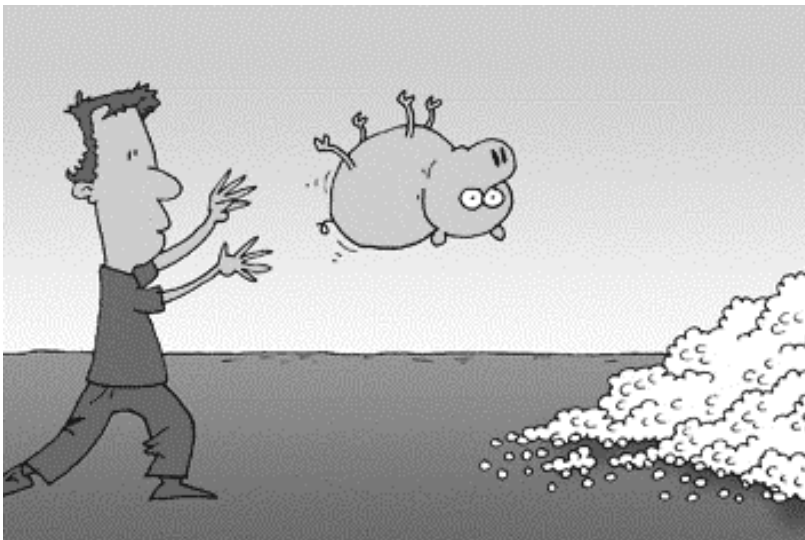
# Dates for your diary

Sunday 1 January	9:30 am	<b>Annual Covenant service.</b>
Wednesday 22 February	10:00 am	Service for <b>Shrove Tuesday.</b>
Sunday 19 March	9:30 am	Service for <b>Mothering Sunday.</b>
Sunday 2 April	9:30 am	Service for <b>Palm Sunday.</b>
Sunday 9 April	9:30 am	Service for <b>Easter Sunday.</b>
Sunday 30 April	10:30 am approx.	<b>Annual Church Meeting.</b>

## From the parish registers

### Burial of ashes

Monday 19 December     **Edith Mulligan** at Greenacres Cemetery.



**In an effort to change things a little,  
he started throw swine before pearls.**

(with apologies to Matthew 7:6)

**It looks much as it did before,  
Now that the cards and decorations  
Have come down.**

**The furniture of life is back in place,  
The old routine takes over.**

**But are we the same?**

**Is there no echo of the angels' song  
Lifting our spirits, no stillness**

**In our hearts, reminding us that**

**We were there, just for a moment,  
At that birth,**

**Catching a glimpse of glory?**

**Let's not put that away,**

**Tangled with tinsel, for another time.**

**Let's ponder in our hearts, like Mary,  
And let the Christ child grow with us,  
Through the year.**

*Ann Lewin*

**Twelfth night**



The Epistle of St Paul to Philemon is generally known simply as 'Philemon'.

Most scholars agree this brief letter was written by St Paul. It is also the shortest of his letters that we have, consisting of only 445 words and 25 verses. Nowhere in the letter does Paul authoritatively identify himself as an apostle, but as 'a prisoner of Jesus Christ'. He calls his co-author Timothy 'our brother', and addresses Philemon as a 'fellow labourer' and 'brother.'

Philemon was a Christian who allowed a small church to meet in his house in Colossae (**Philemon 1:1-2** and **Colossians 4:9**). He might have held a high position in this Colossian house-church in a manner akin to a modern bishop. It is likely that Philemon was wealthy by the standards of the early church since his house was big enough to accommodate the church that met there.

At the time of writing, Paul was a prisoner (in either Rome or Ephesus). He and his co-worker Timothy wrote to Philemon and two associates: a woman named Apphia, who may have been his wife, and a fellow worker named Archippus, who may be assumed to have been Philemon's son. Archippus also appears to have had special status in the group that met in Philemon's house (**Colossians 4:17**).

St Paul wrote on behalf of Onesimus, a former servant of Philemon who had left him. Beyond that, it is not self-evident what occurred previously. The letter describes Onesimus as having 'departed' from Philemon: he had once been 'useless' to him (a pun on Onesimus' name, which means 'useful'), and had done him wrong. Perhaps he stole from his rich master. Most modern scholars think that Onesimus was a slave who had run away to become a Christian believer. Paul sent him back to face his aggrieved master, and used this letter as a way of seeking reconciliation between the two Christians.

We don't know how Onesimus came to be with Paul. We have var-

ious ideas: perhaps Onesimus was in prison with Paul; maybe Onesimus had been brought to Paul by others who wanted forgiveness and reconciliation; maybe Onesimus came to Paul by chance (or in the Christian view, by divine providence); or Onesimus sought Paul, as a friend of his master and asked him to broker a reconciliation. Whatever the truth, he was told to return to Philemon with this letter, wherein Paul told Philemon to forgive him and receive him as a 'brother beloved'.

Although not explicit, the text could be saying that St Paul did nothing to change Onesimus' legal position as a servant / slave, and that he was complying with Roman law in returning him to Philemon. On the other hand, the text could also be interpreted as saying Paul was demanding Onesimus' legal freedom and, as an act of both trust and reconciliation, told Philemon he was accountable in the higher court of God to forgive Onesimus and set him free.

# The Letter to Philemon

For more information, go to:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/philemon>

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



At the beginning of the Bible, God created everything, and started the process by creating light. Given that God created the sun and stars later, that light must be metaphorical or spiritual rather than physical.

Very ancient Jewish traditions said this first light created was the glory of God. In effect, God was creating evidence of Himself. Later, the Israelites interpreted any mention of light in the Bible as evidence for God's presence or involvement. Obvious examples include the burning bush (Exodus 2) or the pillar of fire that led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land (Exodus 13).

With time, the idea of God's glory manifesting itself as light or fire became entwined with the Jewish people's idea of Law: God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-23, 34). Everything on that occasion was accompanied by thunder and *lightning*. So bright was this light that Exodus 19:12-13, 21-25 suggests at least some of the Israelites wanted to go on to the mountain to gaze directly at God.

It was said that whenever the Law of Moses was read aloud, the glory of God was also present: Think of Psalm 119:105, 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' or 'For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light' (Proverbs 6:23).

Later, when Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, God told him to put a lamp above the box that contained the two Tablets given to Moses ('the Ark'), which must burn at all times.

Later still, the Jews combined more closely these ideas of Law and light by lighting special candles whenever anyone read aloud from the Law. To this day, in most synagogues a *Ner Tamid* flame is located above the alcove where the Torah scrolls are kept.

Now fast-forward to the New Testament, where Jesus calls himself 'the light of the world' (John 8:12) and adds 'Whoever follows me will ... have the light of life'. He also shone with a brilliant light at the Transfiguration (Mark 9). And the Prologue of John's Gospel describes Jesus as 'the light that has come into the world' (John 1:6-9).

Tying these strands together, then, helps us see Jesus as the glory of God. It also implies that he embodies the Law (for example he gave a New Commandment in John 13:34).

# Jesus, Light of the World





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If your prayer is selfish, the answer will be  
something that will rebuke your selfishness.  
You may not recognise it as having come at all, but  
it is sure to be there.

William Temple

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And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the  
child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before  
he was conceived in the womb. *Luke 1:21 (AV)*

**I name you now, from whom all names derive  
Who uttered forth the name of everything,  
And in that naming made the world alive,  
Sprung from the breath and essence of your being.**

**The very Word that gave us words to speak,  
You drank in language with your mother's milk  
And learned through touch before you learned to talk,  
You wove our week-day world, and still one week**

**Within that world, you took your saving name,  
A given name, the gift of that good angel,  
Whose Gospel breathes in good news for us all.  
We call your name that we might hear a call**

**That carries from your cradle to our graves  
Yeshua, Living Jesus, Yahweh Saves.**

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