



The Teesdale Worm

**Magazine of the Barnard Castle and Teesdale and
Darlington Circuits**

Issue 1 - November 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to this new edition of our Circuit newsletter. I hope you will forgive me if I refer to us as one Circuit. We know, or course, that this is not quite true yet, but we look forward and anticipate that shared future together. Producing a single newsletter helps us take a simple and small step towards that future.

Likewise I have chosen a logo intended to echo, in its colour and shape, firstly the meandering path of the river that connects us and second the local legends of worms that we discover in our folklore, not least a few metres from my new home. Before anyone writes to correct me, I know that our local worms were actually dragons, for this I beg a little poetic license. Dragons do not fair well in the Bible or our legends. Worms on the other hand have a very important role in renewing our soil, transforming organic material, recycling key nutrients and generating structure. Soil without worms is a very poor thing indeed as any gardener will attest.



I wonder and strongly suspect that there is a lost saying of Jesus that goes something like, *"The Kingdom of God is like a worm, hidden, transformative and very very wiggly."* I admit I may have paraphrased the Greek somewhat but you get my point.

A blue worm also offers a number of possibilities for the crafters amongst us. Perhaps we should institute a competition inviting as many as wish to produce their own version of our blue Teesdale Worm. Perhaps every Church should have their own. Photos please for the next edition of the newsletter!

Let me end simply by reminding you gently that the early bird gets the worm. The theologians amongst you will recognise this as a proverb about the presence and power of the Holy Spirit early in the morning. If this was your first thought please refer yourself to your nearest Minister or local preacher for treatment. I intend it simply however as an encouragement to submit articles and adverts early to Lindy, we cannot communicate if we don't know what is going on. We plan to publish the newsletter by the second Sunday of the month.

May I thank you for your warm welcome as the incoming Superintendent and end simply with the prayer that we might be worms, for Jesus sake. Amen.

Take care
Tim

News from the Pews at Harrowgate Hill

Church re-opens for Worship

After much careful preparation and prayer, our church re-started Sunday morning worship on 6th September. We realise that some of our regular congregation are shielding or don't yet feel comfortable to attend worship, but many have appreciated the Circuit on-line services during the lock-down and continue to do so. Printed service sheets from the District have also been circulated to many without computers and this has also been valued.

Welcome to yet Another Brian!

The Circuit Welcome Service for Rev Brian Hutton which took place at Harrowgate Hill on Saturday evening 19th September was a joyful occasion enjoyed by friends from across the circuit. It was such a pity that his wife Lara was unable to join us that night because of visa delays. Thankfully, they are now all together with their daughters, Emily, and Rachel in their new home. What an adventure for them all.

A watery tale of Woe

Less welcome news is that our boiler house roof began to leak in the middle of September which caused a major electrical failure. Like a set of dominoes, the water affected the sump pump, the failed sump pump flooded the boiler room out and the flood killed the boiler pump and some parts of the two boilers. The electricians and plumbers just about took up residence and Brian Simpson found a huge set of wellies came in useful. Thanks to our treasurer's work, we should be able to claim most of the repair bill from Methodist Insurance. What a shock for Sunday worshipers and the organisations that hire our premises as October got gradually colder. A lesson to all our property stewards across the circuit – buy some wellies, just in case!!!

Looking forward

The church stewards are recommending to the Church Council that we should re-introduce Holy Communion services. This might result in a 9.30pm Holy Communion service on Christmas Eve. If friends from across the circuit that don't have a service that evening wish to join us, a booking system will be available. We are also planning a 9.30am Christmas morning celebration; a Covenant Service on Sunday 10th January and our Church Anniversary service on 7th February. Harrowgate Hill will be 118 years old that weekend! Give thanks to God for all his gifts.

Daisy Simpson's a Star

Following publicity about Marcus Rashford and the need for children's meal support during half-term, Vanessa and Brian's granddaughter had an idea that she could provide food parcels in Darlington to those that normally qualify for free school meals. There was an appeal via Facebook for £6.00 donations which resulted in over 175 bags being prepared! Our main hall at church was turned into an assembly line with lots of support from church friends, family, and neighbours. Lots of bags were delivered to individual homes, and more bags were donated to similar schemes at The Basement at Darlington Baptist Church, Cornerstone Arts and to Red Hall Community Centre.



That weekend, the lectionary passage was Matthew 22: 34-40. This work really does reflect the second commandment of Jesus – Love your neighbour as yourself.

Thank you to Daisy and her family, and all those that supported in any way from across the Circuit.

Brian Simpson

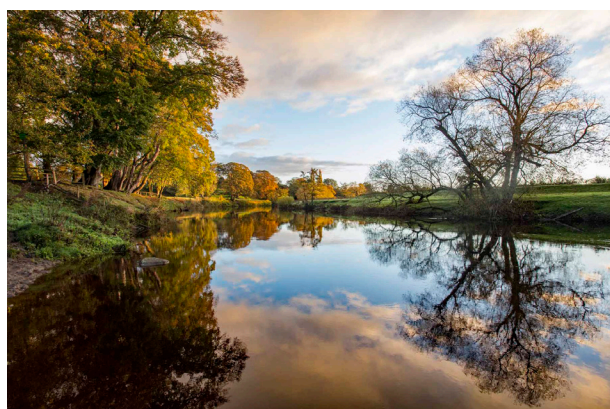
News from Hurworth and The Mustard Tree



We're delighted to say that Hurworth Methodist Church and The Mustard Tree café both reopened in July. Whilst there had been large-scale community support action in Hurworth during lockdown, the physical meeting space provided by the church's café is a lifeline to many who are more isolated.

The Mustard Tree Café provides a welcoming, socially-distanced space to meet with other members of your household with tables removed to allow plenty of distance and other Covid-19 precautions in place.

Hurworth is such a stunning place to visit at any time but the Autumn colours are particularly beautiful right now. Do come and pay us a visit and perhaps walk one of the lovely river routes available. Take away food and drink is available if you'd prefer that option.



WANTED - volunteers

The Mustard Tree Café is run by a blend of staff, students and volunteers however we would be delighted to welcome some new volunteers. If you'd like to support the pastoral work and community outreach by the café then do contact Andy Robinson, Café Manager for more information.



This year's Harvest collection, received during the service led by Rev Brian Hutton, was donated to the Women's Refuge in Darlington.

A mammoth Hurworth village effort took place last year for Christmas to knit angels which, were then hung around the village to surprise people as gifts for them. This was well received and really blessed people.

Lyn Hatch



News from Barton

Recently Joyce Bowe celebrated her 98th birthday with a garden party in her front garden. She has supported Barton Chapel with her fellow Christians for 70 or more of these years and is an inspiration to us all who share her faith. Long may our little place of friendship and worship continue as it has for her.



So much was planned before Covid-19 - the Village Hall joins up the village and plans had to be changed! The focal point became the cross on the green. On VE Day it was adorned with flags and forget-me-nots. During the Summer it had any plant in an unusual container. It soon filled up! On Remembrance Day its poppies and flags, plus our poppy net cascading over the Hall towards the Cenetaph. In this time of need we must remember them! *Carol*

Winter is approaching, no-one wants to look back at 2020. The clocks have gone back an hour, but let's look forward - to Spring! Recently the folk in the village received a voucher from Strikes, Northallerton offering a packet of 'free' daffodil bulbs. I sent a message on the Village gmail to say that if you had enough daffodils in your garden would folk consider giving these vouchers for free daffodils to the Chapel? Long story, short - I received hundreds of bulbs and with the help from Graham Cutler and his wife Jude, Wes and Shirley, we planted a special display on the green beside the Chapel ... so if you are passing through Barton around daffodil time in 2021, make a little detour to see what you think of our gardening! Hopefully you'll see a host of golden daffodils! *Joan*

A warm welcome to Barton: Since moving into Barton 5 months ago, I have been constantly surprised by how warm and welcoming it is! I remember when I first realised we had moved into somewhere special; it was a lovely summer afternoon and I was sitting by the willow trees on the village green. Within a few minutes of reading my book, I was approached by a dog walker, wondering what I was reading. We had a lovely chat about books and he welcomed me warmly to the village. A few moments later, another curious dog walker stopped by for a chat. He also welcomed me warmly and offered any assistance we may need to settle in. Feeling very happy to have met such lovely neighbours, I settled back to my book, when out of the corner of my eye I saw a lady and her dog approaching. Her warm smile and friendly nature made me feel so happy, and as we chatted, she pointed over to the Chapel and invited me to attend with her when it reopened - I was overjoyed! In the space of half an hour, I had been so warmly welcomed by local villagers and invited into a community of wonderful friends at the Chapel. I no longer feel like the new girl - I am part of this wonderful village! *Julia*

NEWS FROM ELM RIDGE

It is hard to believe that it is some eight or nine months since we were invited to contribute to a Circuit Circular, and what a different year we have had.

The things that spring to mind about Elm Ridge during the past long weeks are more or less all mentioned in our weekly publication - the Elm Ridge Newsletter - which has become more and more popular around the circuit, containing news, views, humour and meditations. Issue 31 was the most recent one - Issue 1 came out on Mothering Sunday - and it had been started in anticipation of maybe doing 12!

We then suffered a Divine Intervention of our own - reported in issue 3! Two weeks following the commencement of lockdown, on a peaceful Saturday evening, after enjoying her supper, Ali heard a huge

crash. She raced to the back windows of her flat, but could see nothing untoward over the lawn. However, on going to the front of the building what she saw was startling. A HUGE BRANCH – the size of a tree in itself, had come down from the copper beech tree in the centre of the triangular island. Was this the Almighty heralding the change of clocks to BST that week? Or was He giving His own opinion on the closure of the church for worship? He chose His time wisely, as normally cars are parked in the Disabled Bays and they would inevitably have come to grief. The job of removal of that branch was too big a job for the intrepid MMG (Monday Morning Gang) so tree surgeons had to come in and make the tree safe. “Great” we said, “Plenty of firewood for the Shepherds’ brazier for Journey to Bethlehem” (we had no conception at the time that the way things would progress would mean that J2B would not take place this year).



We then started a weekly column called “Prayer Points” ably put together by Richard McElheran to reflect the needs of the church, country and world, and to focus our minds on our prayer life. We advertised services available on the internet – Wesley’s Chapel, Swan Bank, Central Hall etc. – and Morning Prayer opportunities with Wesley House, and Cliff College. We started a feature “Lockdown” in the lives of our members’ – how they were learning to fill in their days, new experiences, imaginative things to do, activities enjoyed. Many people from our end of town “discovered” what was at the end of our drive, and took advantage of our grounds, followed the prayer trail – as someone said “the buildings are locked for now, but the grounds are open, we have gateposts but no gates, so all are very welcome to visit.” Lyn commenced the weekly Zoom Meeting on a Tuesday morning, so that people from all over the circuit had the opportunity to chat, pray, encourage, study and discuss together for 45 minutes.

Another weekly feature much appreciated was the Superintendent’s Reflections commenced by John Howard.

By May we were well into the swing of things, and received a lovely message from the new Vicar of All Saints in Ravensdale Road, with whom strong links are being made. We also printed news from other churches – receiving articles from Hurworth, Barnard Castle and Barton over the weeks. More would be welcome!

In July we commenced a series “As it was in my beginning” which was compiled from extracts from the diary of Jonathan Hodgkin, the eldest son of Mary Anna Hodgkin (nee Pease) and Jonathan Backhouse Hodgkin of Elm Ridge, describing his childhood living in the building when it was a Quaker home.

It has grieved us that we have this year had to cancel our June Garden Party, our Summer activities, the Christmas Coffee Morning and Journey to Bethlehem. We are working on ideas as to how we can make Christmas special under a further lockdown which may (or may not) continue until Christmas itself. Watch this space, as the ideas are radical but could be tremendous fun.

In late June we received the news that we could work towards reopening our church buildings and after much prayer and thought we decided to delay reopening until the beginning of August, and to commence with services in our Hall looking over the grounds as we praised God that we could be back. The first week 22 attended (we could seat around 38 in the Hall at a social distance), and the attendance grew as the weeks passed. During this period we were delighted to welcome everyone to the farewell event for the Rev. Bill Mullally and the Rev. Solomon Joseph – a lovely afternoon in the grounds all together again! It wasn’t quite the event which had been envisaged pre virus days, but nevertheless became a very pleasant, perhaps sad in some ways, afternoon, which enabled everyone to say their personal goodbyes and thanks. Some of us were also able to join with our friends at Bondgate to say our farewells to that well loved place.

As was said at the time – “It will be very different without Bondgate Church at the centre of our Circuit, but we must look forward with assurance, and being travelling people of God go where the Lord has need of us, give our thanks to God for all that is past, pray for comfort for those who are hurting, and seek God’s will and his purpose for us.”



We returned to worshipping in the church building on 6th September. We can seat up to 50 people – if everyone who has been arrived on the same Sunday I am afraid we couldn’t seat them all, but God has been good and we are almost up to capacity most weeks. The services have been a joy, and even if all the hymns come over the loudspeakers, our valiant organists are happy to come along and play before and after service to provide some “live” music for us. In early September too we said “hello” to the Rev. Tim Boocock, the Rev. Brian Hutton and the Rev. Graham Cutler.

We held a Harvest Festival “of sorts” on 20th September, focussing on bunches of flowers (enabling 16 bunches to be delivered to sick, elderly and those struggling for whatever reason), the gift of food which provided goods for the work which is being done at The Well, along with cash donations to help provide meals for children in the October Half Term. A worthwhile exercise and a way of thanking God for what we have.

In September we commenced a new series in our Newsletter – bits of Elm Ridge history, providing the stories behind various things around the building. So far we have heard about the provision of the organ, the “Mouseman” Lectern, the Bell and its Stand, which prompted a further article called “History above our Heads” – if you wish to know what that is about ask for a copy of Newsletter No. 30!

As this is written we must lockdown again – MHA weekend must be re-thought this time around – and we cannot know how long this current lockdown will last. But (as mentioned above) we are “travelling people of God” and so we travel on. In the words of Paul – “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Mary Everitt



The Well

Happy Birthday to us, happy birthday to us! Yep! can you believe it’s been a whole year since we became The Well? And what a year it’s been, for all of us.

Who would have thought that the virus that they were struggling with in China would spread around the world like wildfire and have such devastating effects?

We had our final service at Pierremont at the end of September and although a very emotional morning for lots of us, it was also very much a celebration of both our Harvest and our time in that building. The following week we became The Well with another joyous morning of worship and celebration.

From that morning we have steadily grown. Our worship is always intergenerational and a little crazy sometimes but as a family (an increasingly extending and welcoming family) we enjoy worshipping together, We’re pretty keen on eating and socialising together too, then after six months WHAM! lockdown.

As you will have all have asked yourselves, “How do we continue to be church in our community now?” For us it meant coming to a stop for a short while, worship wise but then we began our services again but online, still intergenerational - but all online. And they worked well. As when we were in church, various people took part, it was recorded beforehand and put onto our Facebook page at 10.30am on a Sunday morning when we all watched together. Using the wonders of technology we were able to message each other with comments during the service and afterwards we got together, with our cups of coffee via Zoom. HOORAY! we could be together, apart.

After a while we made the decision to put these services ‘out there’ for everyone to share in and so they did, they’re still there if you want a little squizz. For those unable to access online service, they received a pack each week containing notes on the week’s theme and some activity bits and pieces so they could worship with us in a different way.

We also began a new prayer group via Zoom as well as a study group and while there are some who still can’t be part of those, we have others who for various family reasons couldn’t physically attend but can join in from home.

The Baby Bank which offers free baby equipment and supplies to families all over the town still operated but on a collect by appointment or delivery basis. Make Lunch during the school holidays still happened but instead of families coming in for their meal, they recieved bags of grocereis instead.



Holiday Club also happened, online but still managed to be the usual mix of fun and madness.

Then restrictions began to ease and we were again allowed to meet together but only in a Covid safe way.

Our first service together was a farewell to Bill and Val and took place in the carpark. What a strange but amazing morning that was. all carefully spaced in our family bubbles we came back together to worship. It was so good to be together again and what a packed morning we had.

We welcomed six new members, who all told their amazing testimonies (lumps in some throats and tears shed!) and welcomed four folks who were transferring their membership. Then one of our lovely new members was baptised in a full emersion baptism before we said a sad goodbye to Bill and Val.

We still have a very real sense of hope and of God’s calling to our new home and new work and we know that for some, what we do has proved to be a lifeline. Someone recently refered to us as ‘a beacon of light in the community’ and we thank God for the little glimpses of the difference His love in action can make. Exciting stuff, being a Christian, isn’t it?

Chris Russell

Haughton

We re-opened for worship on 20th September for our very different Harvest Festival to which we were thrilled to welcome our new Minister, Rev Brian Hutton, and his two lovely daughters, Emily and Rachel. Sadly, the ongoing restrictions meant that we were unable to offer the hospitality of our usual Harvest Celebration Lunch and dazzle Brian with our range of wonderful desserts. But we hope to remedy this next May when we will be celebrating our 196th Chapel Anniversary (in 2025 we will be good company as we celebrate our 200th Anniversary along with the Darlington and Stockton Passenger Railway!). In the meantime, we wait patiently for things to get back to normal with our various activities which we

know are being greatly missed eg Coffee@Haughton and Craft and Chat. But on a brighter note the Chat and Craft group are running a Christmas Competition decorating large pine cones which will be judged by Brian (pictures will be available). And on a positive note, during the downtime we have taken the opportunity to brighten up our chapel with some decorating and an upgrade to our central heating, and (shortly) installation of a new kitchen. We are energised and encouraged by these improvements, and we look forward to when we will be able to meet properly and offer friendship and fellowship to all in our community.

Valerie Tooth



METHODIST HOMES

Unfortunately we will be unable to celebrate the work of Methodist Homes in our usual way because of the impending lockdown. At Elm Ridge we have had to cancel our visiting preacher - Rev Dr Chris Swift who is the Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality at MHA. Also the Saturday morning coffee morning of which we were to be a beneficiary has had to be cancelled too.

MHA, as many other charities are well short of income because of the restrictions. The charitable income supports the chaplaincy service and music therapy both of which are even more valuable at the moment. Most of the churches in the Circuit generously send an annual donation which is gratefully received. If any individual would like to make a further personal donation I would be very happy to receive it - if it could be sent through the Circuit Office - c/o Elm Ridge Methodist Church, Carmel Road South, Darlington. DL3 8DJ

I am putting three links on for the MHA YouTube. One link has information on doing a virtual Christmas card. This will be emailed to the homes to show people that people care. Normally Elm Ridge has sent around 200 friendship cards, as the Uniformed Organisations took it up, and added greatly to our number sent, but this year MHA are trying to keep the risk of infection down by not sending physical cards. If more information is required please contact me:

Another link has information about various activities in which you can join virtually, and a third link contains videos and information on MHA.

Josanne Hall

<https://www.mha.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/christmas-friendship-appeal/>
<https://www.mha.org.uk/communities/digital/>
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMZWRPmUZ2WUZmnPoRR-f_g

News from the Barnard Castle and Teesdale Circuit

Marriage and Relationships Study Groups led by Alan Coustick and John Howard are about to restart via Zoom.

Wednesday 25th November 7:30 - Session 4
Thursday 3rd December 2pm - repeat of Session 4

The Pathway — Middleton

The Pathway employed Debbie Andrew from January 1st 2020 as a Development Worker. She has worked very hard, assessing what is needed in our community regarding the spreading of God's love.

She has made links with the school and organised some Church members to be DBS checked, asked some to bake for the school staff, to show how appreciated they are in the community, and to help the staff hear readers regularly. (Pray, Bake, Read).

Due to Covid-19, the reading could not be undertaken, but the praying and baking continued. Debbie was furloughed during lockdown, but continued to construct prayer stations to be put on The Pathway website.

Due to lockdown, and some members' isolation, Pray, Bake, Chat evolved. Debbie

sourced boxes and labels to present baked gifts to take to people, and then chat on doorsteps, or within homes as restrictions allowed.

The Zoom Service continues on the 3rd Sunday of each month at 7pm.

Barnard Castle

The Monday Cell Group continue their fortnightly meetings via Zoom.

Staindrop

The worshipping community at Staindrop are not meeting in the church at present, but they are having telephone services by telephone conferencing. These have proved very popular and will continue until the Coronavirus situation changes.



Sixteen books of the Bible are hidden in the text below - how many can you find?

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. It might have been a fluke, but it kept people looking so hard for the facts that, for some, it was a revelation.

Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books were not capitalised, but the truth finally struck home to numbers of the readers, while to others it was a real job.

We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you! Yes, there will be some really difficult ones to spot; others may require judges to help them.

A lady I know says she brews a cup of tea so that she can concentrate better, but I will quickly admit that it usually takes a minister to find one of the books! There will be loud lamentations if it can not be found. See how well you can compete. Relax now, for there really are sixteen names of books of the Bible hidden on this page.

One vicar found fifteen books in twenty minutes, but it took him three weeks to find the sixteenth! Don't give up - see how you get on!

Approaching Advent

It seems to happen in a moment. The season of gratitude and harvest, then the season of remembrance and suddenly Advent is upon us.

In those moments our attention shifts from remembering and a focus on things past and we are encouraged to begin imagining. Advent marks the season of anticipation, preparation, longing and yearning for the coming, the return of Jesus. The season bids us imagine what it would mean to live as a people prepared for His coming. It's aim, like the prophets before us, is not primarily to focus us on the future but to allow that imagined and anticipated future to shape and form and mould the present. To allow that imagined future to work its transformation within us.

In this way our present is not just a product of our past and its accumulated layers of history, tradition and memory. It is also the product of our imagined future. This holy work of imagining is just as important as the disciplines of remembering. Yet it is, perhaps, most often neglected. Churches and disciples understand the importance of memory but often underestimate the importance of imagination, of being able to hold a picture or a vision of what may be as the first step in being able to see and receive that future being birthed amongst us. As we approach the season of advent how might you make time for imagining? How might you feed or cleanse or exercise your imagination? What transformation does the Spirit wish to make within your heart that you might be better prepared for his coming amongst us?

May you dream dreams and see visions!

Tim



The Virus by Edwin Hird

O, nasty virus, why have you
Come here to devastate our land?
You take the weak folk, strong folk too
And smite them with your pow'rful hand.

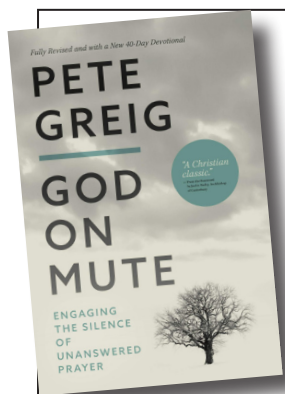
O nasty virus, go away!
We do not want you on our shore.
We do not want you here to stay
To hang about for ever more.

O nasty virus, we are strong
And all your germs we will destroy
And this will be our joyous song
'We did our wits and skills employ'

But, nasty virus, if we fail
And you for evermore live here
We will succumb to your regale
And struggle on in mortal fear.

So nasty virus, do not live
Among us bringing misery
But some compassion to us give
So we can live in liberty.

Book Reviews



God on Mute **Engaging the silence of** **unanswered prayer**

by Pete Greig
Pub David C. Cook
400pp

ISBN 978-0-8307-8071-6
Available on Amazon: £10.35

During the covid lockdown earlier this year, our fellowship group studied *The Prayer Course*, presented by Pete Greig, an English clergyman, and shown on YouTube, via Zoom. This study of the Lord's Prayer was presented in dialogue form in such a relaxed, open way that I was led to read his book, "*God on Mute. Engaging the silence of unanswered prayer*"

Most of us will, at times, have experienced God's silence, and Pete Greig, one of the founders of the 24-7 Prayer Movement, describes this book as "*An honest book about unanswered prayer written to help anyone who is hurting to find a little comfort and a few answers. It's not going to answer all your questions, but I like to think it will help answer some of them. It takes the form of a journey through the four days of Christ's betrayal, death, burial, and resurrection.*"

The book is very biblically based, but is also strongly based on his experiences dealing with

the protracted illness and near death of his wife, and life-changing experiences and quotations from many other Christians. He pulls no punches about his highs and lows, and the book, although easy to read, has the authenticity of profound spiritual truth.

Having been originally published in 2007, the new edition was updated during the covid lockdown, and published in August this year. This new edition contains a "40-day devotional called 'God Unmute' to help readers explore and apply these important themes in their own personal prayer times". I found the book both inspiring and comforting. The new edition is also available as an ebook and an audiobook.

Irene Cooper, Cockerton Church

"I find my bedside book by Catherine Campbell inspiring. She writes in October of a moment of enlightenment when reading the valley of the shadow of death. "I had not recognised that I was to walk through this valley, not live in it." The walk through being but a season that held the promise of what God has ahead for us. We are not meant to dwell there in sadness".

A new concept to me and I feel it could also relate to our present Covid restrictions. I hope it will be found comforting to others and be a blessing.

Margaret Day, Cockerton Church



Mine

'I have a dream;
please don't influence it - it belongs to me
I have a delicate heart;
please don't break it - it belongs to me
I have peace of mind;
please don't disturb it - it belongs to me
I have to follow a path;
please don't obstruct it - it belongs to me
I have an amazing life;
please let me live it - it belongs to me
I have a choice;
please don't choose for me - it belongs to me
I have freedom;
please don't capture me - it belongs to me
I have incredible feelings;
please don't hurt me - They belong to me
I have a lot of love;
please don't hate me - Love is mine to share
I'm on my material journey;
don't follow me - it won't be fair
So ... I have a dream; it's my dream to be free'

(Written by Kuli Kohli: born in Uttar Pradesh in India but has lived in England since 1973. A council worker in Wolverhampton, she is married with 3 children and helps to run Blakenhall Writers' group. She has written a novel about living with cerebral palsy and writes a blog for Disability Arts online)

The Seafarer's Version of the 23rd Psalm

The Lord is my pilot, I shall not drift;
He lighteth me across dark waters,
He steereth me in deep channels.
He keepeth my log;
He guideth me by the star of holiness for
His name's sake.
Yea, even midst the thunders and tempests of life
I dread no danger, for Thou art with me.
Thou preparest a harbour before me in the
homeland of Eternity;
Thou annointest the waves with oil
- my ship rides calmly.
Surely sunlight and starlight shall favour
me on the voyage I take,
And I will rest in the port of my God forever.
Amen



Give THANKS
to the LORD
FOR He IS GOOD..
His mercy
ENDURES FOREVER
Psalm 106:1

When I say 'I am a Christian'
I'm not shouting, 'I've been saved'
I'm whispering, 'I get lost!
that's why I chose this way'.

When I say 'I am a Christian'
I don't speak with human pride,
I'm confessing that I stumble
Needing God to be my guide

When I say 'I am a Christian'
I'm not trying to be strong,
I'm professing that I'm weak
And pray for strength to carry on.

When I say 'I am a Christian'
I'm not bragging of success,
I'm admitting that I've failed
And cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say 'I am a Christian'
I don't think I know it all,
I submit to my confusion
Asking humbly to be taught.

When I say 'I am a Christian'
I'm not claiming to be perfect,
My flaws are all too visible,
But God believes I'm worth it.

When I say 'I am a Christian'
I still feel the sting of pain,
I have my share of heartache
Which is why I seek God's name.

When I say 'I am a Christian'
I do not wish to judge,
I have no authority
I only know I'm loved!



Clamouring for your Christmas Cake? Missing the choirs and the carols? Going crackers and would rather be pulling crackers?

How would you like to nominate somebody who meets all that criteria and deserves a little bit of TLC, or at least their own little helping of Cake and Christmas cheer?

Well now you can, just let Lyn and Chris know who you are nominating, and then perhaps you can also help us to make it happen. (pastoral@darlingtoncircuit.org.uk / lyncookson.dmc@gmail.com)

Donations of ingredients (recipe to follow), cake decorations and icing, packs of Christmas cards, boxes of crackers or even just a small financial donation would help us to make up small Christmas gifts for those who might be alone or in difficult circumstances. Or, how about making cake yourself, to give away to someone you know. Its not too difficult and a mix for a standard size cake can be cooked in a few small baked bean tins to provide individual cakes for your friends. They look good, they taste good and it will do you good to donate or to make cakes.



Last Minute Christmas Cake!

Yes I should really know better, being a 'proper' baker now and all, but my family Christmas cake is still, as yet, unbaked. Usually Christmas cakes, like most rich fruit cakes are matured for at least two months before eating. There are a few reasons for this - one, it develops and deepens the rich flavour; two, you can give your cake regular "feeds" with brandy (or other spirits of your choice) to add even more flavour, moistness and festivity; and three, it makes the cake cut better without crumbling, which is particularly important for a wedding cake, where the cake must be cut into lots of small portions.

According to Jane Asher, the secret is to boil the fruit mixture with whisky, stout, orange juice and treacle for ten minutes and leave overnight before adding the rest of the ingredients. It will give the matured flavour you have been enjoying from our cakes for the last few years.

So if you'd like to put this recipe to the test, you can eliminate the alcohol and substitute coke, juice and other liquids when you make your own cake, but I inherited a bottle of Drambuie along with several slightly left field spirits in the drinks cabinet when my grandpa died and I've been waiting for a reason to use them. I've just boiled up the fruit and I have to say it has already put me in the Christmas spirit, as the house is filled with delicious festive aromas. And as it's the season of giving, I thought I would share with you my version of Jane's recipe. I'd love to hear how yours turns out.

Last Minute Christmas Cake Recipe - makes 1 x deep 8 inch round cake

200g currants	Juice of 1 orange and 1/2 lemon (to make 75ml)
200g raisins	2 tablespoons black treacle
100g sultanas	200g butter, softened
100g dates, chopped	200g muscovado or dark brown sugar
75g dried prunes, chopped	200g plain flour
75g dried figs, chopped	50g ground almonds
150g glace cherries, halved	5 medium eggs, lightly beaten
100ml Drambuie	1 1/2 teaspoons mixed spice
225ml Guinness (a nod to the Irish heritage)	75g blanched almonds, chopped
Zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon	

1. Take a large saucepan and fill the pan with the dried fruit, Guinness, Drambuie, orange and lemon juice and zest and treacle. Bring the mix to the boil and simmer gently for ten minutes, stirring every so often. *I like to add a bit of Irish Christmas spirit by singing out loud very badly to The Pogues' Fairytale of New York as I'm stirring, but that's optional!*

2. Take the pan off the heat and leave to cool. Once it's cold, tip the mix into a bowl, cover and chill in the fridge overnight.
3. The next day, preheat your oven to 140C and double line an 8" round cake tin with parchment. Make sure your parchment is a good 4 inches tall as the cake is quite deep and can rise higher than your tin.
4. Sieve the flour, baking powder and spices into the bowl of your mixer, then add all the remaining cake ingredients except the chopped nuts and beat thoroughly until smooth.
5. Fold in the fruit mixture and chopped nuts. At this stage you can add good luck by asking everyone in the house to give the mix a stir**.
6. Pour the mix into your prepared tin and smooth the top, making a dip in the middle so that it rises up evenly.
7. Bake the cake for 3 hours and check with a skewer to see if it's done. It may need 30-60 minutes more so keep checking every so often and cover the top with foil if it's browning too much on top.
8. Cool the cake in its tin for 10 minutes before turning out to cool completely.
9. Once cool, wrap the cake in baking parchment, then foil and keep somewhere cool until ready to ice. Feed the cake by skewering a few holes and drizzling over 1-2 tablespoons of Drambuie every few days.

**I remember the tradition of stirring the cake mix when my mum made our Christmas cake every year and I loved the chance to be involved from a really young age, when I had to stand on a chair to reach the bowl. I also did this as a primary school teacher, and all 100 pupils plus all the teachers would line up in the Dining Hall at lunchtime to stir the giant mix in the bowl. Those were the days when the school cook would allow teaching staff the freedom of the kitchen!



Many stories of Christmas baking, boxes of goodies to take home and learning about international Christmas and customs. Did you know that the stollen bread is said to represent the Infant Jesus in his swaddling bands?

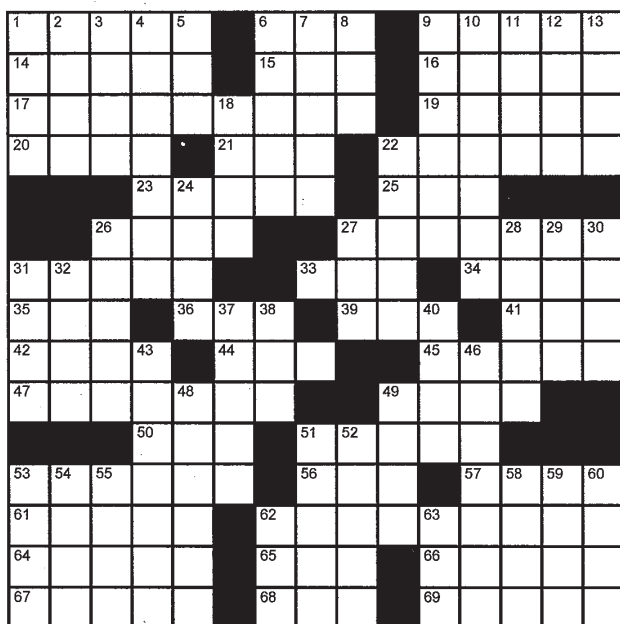
Lyn Cookson



Deadline for items for the December issue is: Friday, 27th November.
Please send to admin@darlingtoncircuit.org.uk or
Circuit Office, c/o Elm Ridge Methodist Church, Carmel Road South, Darlington. DL3 8DJ
Thank you!

Cross Word(s) from the Gospel of Luke

By Jay Waggoner



Across

1. A lot of paper
6. 17th letter of the Greek alphabet, and part of an early Christian symbol
9. A medieval bailiff or steward of a manor
14. Peaks
15. Chop down a tree
16. More aged
17. Luke's profession
19. More than one means of mass communication
20. Lob, as a ball
21. Industrious insect
22. Who Luke ministered to
23. Shakespeare baddie, and others
25. Black tropical bird with a long tail
26. River of Bern, Switzerland
27. Part of what gives identity to something or someone, as your spirit
31. What Jesus is unto our path
33. Keyboard key title
34. Polio vaccine pioneer
35. Cain's response to the Lord: " ? my brother's keeper? "
36. NCO
39. Of Mice and ?
41. Fannie or Daisy
42. Bathroom powder
44. Real estate buy
45. What some 68 Across do
47. Comes out of, as the woods or swamp
49. Bartholomeu ? , Portuguese navigator who discovered the Cape of Good Hope

50. An ode has been written on a Grecian one
51. Anti - ? cream
53. Pollen-producing organ of a flower
56. El ? , epic historical film of a Christian Castilian knight
57. A friend of Luke's
61. ? diem, seize the day
62. What Luke wanted to do with Christ's life
64. Sneak ? ... as at Christmas time
65. Moray or conger
66. An insurance company
67. Pork, beef, and chicken
68. Nwsppr. and mag. bigwigs
69. Bashar Al - ? , Syrian in the news

Down

1. Really into watching, as an exciting football game
2. Repeat
3. Vanderbilt (etiquette authority), Tan (novelist), and Alcott (golfer)
4. King of the Jews
5. Social Security abbreviation for extra income
6. Short for a BIG animal
7. Preliminary races at track and swim meets
8. Don't rent
9. A group of 22 Across Luke was trying to reach
10. Mournful poems
11. A collection of Old Norse poems
12. Blood carrier
13. Pitchers' stats
18. Home for a house bird
22. Cut - and - ?
24. ? - and - crafts
26. Spry and limber
27. Shade tree
28. Jane and John
29. Social unit composed of a large number of families
30. Just barely made it
31. Not on time
32. Worship leader in a mosque
37. John ? , astronaut and senator
38. Partner of fros (?)
40. German no
43. Pastry served with tea
46. Crows, as Heckle and Jeckle
48. A group of 22 Across Luke was trying to reach
49. A prank or caper
51. Was in pain the day after a workout
52. Young young women
53. A fraudulent scheme or confidence game
54. Record
55. $4\pi r^2$ or $\frac{1}{2}b \cdot h$
58. The book Luke wrote in addition to the Gospel
59. Arm bone
60. Pencil part
62. Bee follower
63. Goat's no (?)





Christmas Present Appeal

Many Salvation Army churches and centres across the UK will be running a Christmas Present Appeal, collecting donated presents until mid-December. Please support your local Christmas Present Appeal by donating new, unwrapped toys and gifts for children who might not otherwise receive a Christmas present. The gifts will then be wrapped and distributed to those in need.

Suggested Gift List for Children and Young People

We believe every child deserves a new gift at Christmas so we are unable to take used or second hand items for the Christmas Present Appeal.

0-3 years: dolls, teddy bears, cot mobiles, baby clothes, bath toys, CDs of suitable music and nursery rhymes, puzzles

3-5: dolls and action figures, cars, lorries, DVDs and CDs (music and nursery rhymes), colouring sets, pencils, crayons, books, puzzles

5-9: educational games & toys, stationery (colouring sets, pencils, crayons, school sets), CDs & family friendly DVDs, books, puzzles, wordsearch, crosswords

9-12: games and toys, stationery, DVDs, books, t-shirts, hair accessories, gloves, scarves, hats

13-16: books, make-up and toiletries (please try to ensure non-allergic ingredients if possible), gloves, scarves, hats, t-shirts, hair accessories and gift vouchers

Over the years, millions of children and young people have benefited from gifts donated to The Salvation Army.

By giving a gift to our Christmas Present Appeal you can make a real difference in someone's life at Christmas.

Elm Ridge is taking part in the Salvation Army Christmas Toy Appeal for 2020. The Office will be open from 10-2pm on Monday, 7th December (Government Guidelines depending) to act as a HUB for donations of toys to be given - these will then be given to the Salvation Army in time for their appeal. If your church is already taking part then please take part in that appeal - but if not and you would like to donate, please bring your items along on 7th so that they can be included..



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