

# The Magazine Of Hall Green United Community Church



**December 2025  
Issue 54**

# BAD HEADLINES

Two Ships Collide. One Dies

Nation's Head Seeks Arms

Squad Helps Dog Bite Victim

Red Tape Holds Up New Bridge.

Shot Off Woman's Leg Helps Nicklaus to 66

Kids Make Nutritious Snacks.

New Study Of Obesity Looks For Larger Test Group

Include Your Children When Baking Cookies

Hospitals Are Sued By 7 Foot Doctors.

From June, taken from Inspire Magazine

## DO YOU READ OUR PORCH PRAYER?

Here are a few examples taken from an article by Keith. Read it on page 7

We are praying for lasting peace in Gaza and the West Bank

We are praying for the newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, Right Rev Dame Sarah Mullally

This prayer is for Hope

We are praying that all spaces, physical and digital, are safe for all.

By sharing prayers such as these, we invite all who pass through our porch to pause, reflect, and join their hopes with ours for a more just and peaceful world.

"However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at" Stephen Hawking .Sent by Nina.

Notices from Elaine



**Peers, Lunatics and Civil Servants May Not Be Candidates** This one from 1945, also from June It's the headline for guidance to becoming an MP. She wonders when did they change the rules?!



It was Christmas Eve in the supermarket and a woman was anxiously picking over the last few turkeys in the hope of finding a large one. In desperation she called over a shop assistant and said "excuse me, do these turkeys get any bigger?". "no, sorry" he said patiently, "They all dead"

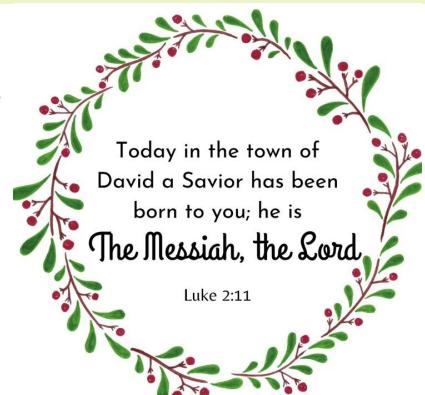
How did Joseph and Mary weigh baby Jesus? They had a weigh in the manger.  
What's the absolute best Christmas present? A broken drum - you can't beat it!  
What did the English teacher call Santa's helpers? Subordinate Clauses.  
What do you call a snowman with a six-pack? An abdominal snowman.  
What did the bald man say when he got a comb for Christmas? "I'll never part with it"  
Why are Christmas trees bad at knitting? They always drop their needles.

All minutes are of equal value  
Sixty seconds and no more  
Each of these can change the future  
Or ruin all that's gone before  
Can you spare the Lord a minute  
As you rush on through your day?  
Dry your hands and stop to listen  
Meditate to Him and pray.

Faith C Gage Taken from Christian Year Publications Submitted by Edna White

## Christmas Trivia Quiz. Answers on page 14

1. In Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," what was Scrooge's first name?
2. In what year did Christmas Day and New Year's Day fall in the same year?
3. What happens every time a bell rings in the film "It's a Wonderful Life"?
4. What do you call a snowman with a six-pack?
5. How many of Santa's reindeer's names start with the letter "D"? Name them.
6. In which modern-day country was St. Nicholas born?
7. In the classic song, "Frosty the Snowman," what made Frosty come to life?
8. According to the song, what did my true love give to me on the eighth day of Christmas?
9. Which Christmas ballet premiered in 1892?
10. When was the first Christmas card sent?
11. Which British monarch delivered the first royal Christmas broadcast?
12. In which country is it now traditional to eat a KFC for Christmas dinner?



*“Since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church”*

*(1 Corinthians 14: 12)*

Christmas is that time of the year when perhaps our thoughts are often focussed on presents, the giving and receiving of gifts as we try and celebrate the coming of the Christ-child.

And whilst it often feels like consumerism has taken over the way in which this is done today and many people I speak to want to try and make Christmas a simpler affair, a simpler celebration; gifts are something that I found myself thinking about recently as some within the pastorate have begun to explore the *Leading Your Church Into Growth* material.

In the very first session we looked at the DNA of church growth:-

**Desire:** Churches only grow when the leaders and members have a desire to grow.

**plan:** Rather than doing lots of disconnected activities there needs to be a clear plan in place.

**Action:** Churches need to act in order to grow.

For the church to grow, this ‘DNA’ needs to run through all the clergy, the leaders, volunteers, and all activities of the church.

*(Taken from the *Leading Your Church Into Growth: Local Manual*)*

So when I look at the verse from the first letter to the Corinthians quoted above I find myself wondering about how we hear those words today.

The Apostle is writing to a group of people who are eager for spiritual gifts. It seems that they have needed to have some teaching about what these gifts are and how they are to be used, together with the value of each of those gifts. The apostles’ teaching is set out in 1 Corinthians 12, 13 and 14 if you would like to read through it yourself.

But what stuck in my mind from my reading of this particular verse was that the people the apostle was writing to **were eager** for spiritual gifts; they were eager for God’s blessings to be upon them; they were eager for God and for the church to be built up, to be strengthened, to grow.

**What is our desire today?**

**Do we want the church that we are a part of to grow?**

If we have that desire to grow, if we are eager for spiritual gifts, what exactly are **we** doing to see that happen?

What are our plans and what actions are we taking?



When the wise travellers saw a new star in the sky, they could have simply made a note about it in their journals and stayed exactly where they were. Instead they noted that this was a sign that a new King had been born and they had to do something about it.

They packed their bags, set out on their journey and didn’t stop until they found the Christ-child, the joy of creation.

When I first became a Christian the church I began to attend had what was a new song in those days which I keep going back to as I reflect on these things:-

*I want to serve the purpose of God in my generation.  
I want to serve the purpose of God while I am alive.  
I want to give my life for something that’ll last for ever:  
Oh, I delight, I delight to do Your will.*

The chorus goes:-

*What is on your heart?  
Show me what to do.  
Let me know Your will, and I will follow You.*

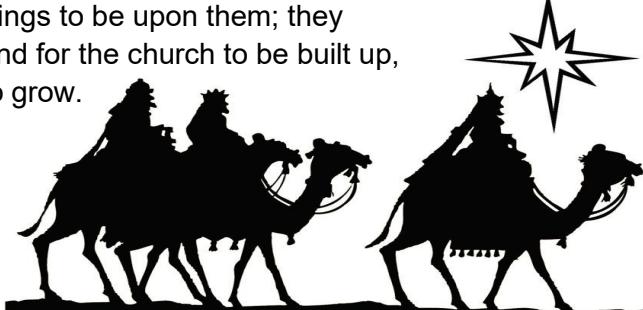
© Mark Altrogge 1982 Sovereign Grace Praise/Song Solutions CopyCare

As we come to celebrate Christ’s coming as a babe in Bethlehem this Christmas and as we move forward into another New Year, we can make a fresh commitment to do the things that are on God’s heart – will you join me in doing so?

With every blessing for Christmas and the New Year  
Your minister and servant

Mark

P.S. Melanie adds her greetings too!

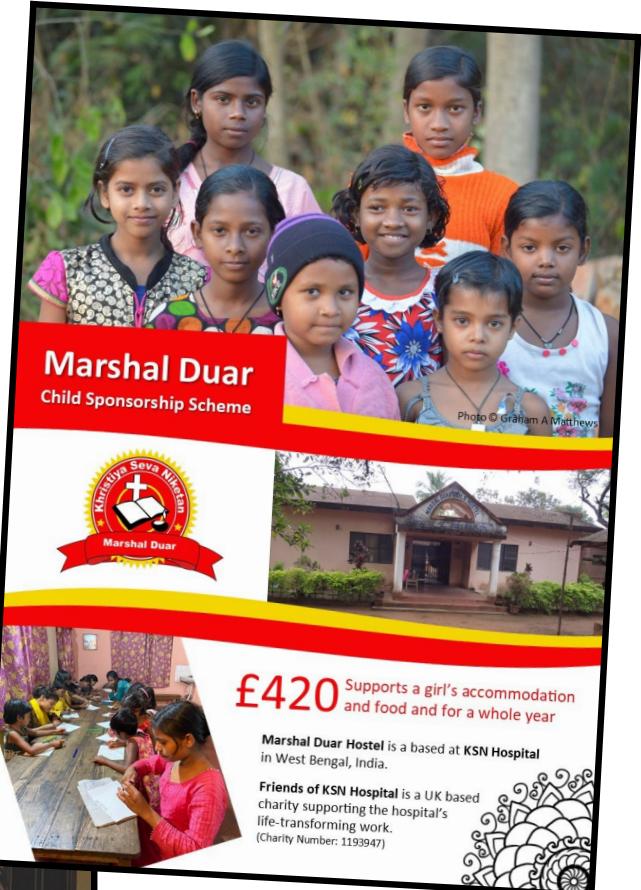


# A Taste of India – The Sabbatical Journey

Thank you to all those who attended our recent “Taste of India” evening. We hope that you had a good time, and we hope that when Melanie and I return from our sabbatical we will be able to share more with you about what we will have been doing.

As you know the West Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church has a link with the Diocese of Durgapur in North India and on our sabbatical we will be spending the majority of our time with the Church of North India in that location.

We leave the UK on 12<sup>th</sup> January and will be returning on 8<sup>th</sup> April. Please do pray for us on our journey and for our time there, and pray too for the Church of North India.



Marshal Duar Hostel provides safe accommodation for local girls whose families are struggling to care for them.

Just £420\* can support a child with her accommodation and food for a whole year, and ensure that she will receive a full education and pastoral support.

\*£35 per month or £28 a month plus Gift Aid. Gifts of any amount are gratefully received.

## Ways you can help:

- Give via [www.stewardship.org.uk/pages/MarshalDuar](http://www.stewardship.org.uk/pages/MarshalDuar)  
Stewardship is an online giving service which collects money on our behalf and adds Gift Aid as appropriate.
- Request a standing order form to pay directly into our account:  
[info@FriendsofKSN.org.uk](mailto:info@FriendsofKSN.org.uk) or credit 08-92-99 67220755 ref: MDuar

Find out more at: <https://friendsofksn.org.uk> [facebook.com/FriendsofKSN](https://facebook.com/FriendsofKSN)

## Thank you!

**Marshal Duar**  
Child Sponsorship Scheme

**KSN Hospital** was established in 1914 by Dr. Caleb Davis, a Welsh Methodist missionary doctor. The hospital is a not-for-profit organisation providing essential healthcare to the local community of farmers and tribal communities living amongst the surrounding teak forests. Financial resources are limited and KSN is committed to providing affordable healthcare. **Friends of KSN Hospital** is a UK based charity set up to support the hospital's life-transforming work, with the long-term aim of improving facilities so the hospital becomes independently financially sustainable.



As those who were present at our evening event recently will know, the situation for Christians in India varies depending on where you are. In some places things are relatively stable but in others persecution is real and threatening. This is also the case with people of some other faiths as well. Please pray for peace and harmony throughout that vast country.

To date £330 has been donated to the projects in India that we spoke about at A Taste of India – Thank you again! **Mark**

# Khristiya Seva Niketan Hospital

Serving the local community in West Bengal for over 100 years



Friends of KSN Hospital is a UK based charity supporting the hospital's life-transforming work

Find out more: <https://friendsofksn.org.uk> [facebook.com/FriendsofKSN](https://facebook.com/FriendsofKSN)

Contact us: [info@FriendsofKSN.org.uk](mailto:info@FriendsofKSN.org.uk)

Charity Number: 1193947



## Friends of Khristiya Seva Niketan Hospital



KSN Hospital was established in 1914 by Dr. Caleb Davis, a Welsh Methodist missionary doctor. The hospital is a not-for-profit organisation providing essential healthcare to the local community of farmers and tribal communities living amongst the surrounding teak forests. Although financial resources are limited and KSN is committed to providing affordable healthcare.

Friends of KSN Hospital is a UK based charity set up to support the hospital's life-transforming work, with the long-term aim of improving facilities so the hospital becomes independently financially sustainable. We have supported the purchase of an operating microscope, anesthesia and respiratory equipment, a digital x-ray convertor, fire safety equipment, and paid for a building to house equipment for a blood bank. We support various ongoing projects such as eye camps and the Marshal Duar Hostel which provides safe accommodation for local girls whose families are struggling to care for them.

- Donate directly into our Cooperative Bank Account: Sort Code 08-92-99 Account 67220755
- If you pay directly into our account, please email us to request a Gift Aid form, if applicable: [info@FriendsofKSN.org.uk](mailto:info@FriendsofKSN.org.uk)

[facebook.com/FriendsofKSN](https://facebook.com/FriendsofKSN)

Charity Number: 1193947

**Thank you!**



# A CHRISTMAS TRILOGY OF A LITTLE GIRL

## The note to Santa....

A little girl sat by the fire, her mum, dad, brother and she, feeling excited and full of glee.

It was time to write to Santa that all important note; the one that states clearly just what she'd like most.

She finished hers first and folded it neatly; It is now ready to go straight up the chimney.

Her dad tried to grab the note quickly, give it to me. No no said the little girl, it's for only Santa to see.

Her mum looked confused and so did her dad as the note went upwards into the black, then dad said to mum; now what do we do., the note's disappeared into the flue.

What do we buy, what do we get. But children are fickle and soon forget,  
when Christmas does come will hopes all be met.

## Curled up for Christmas

It's Christmas eve and early to bed. Must I?, said the little girl. Yes! said her mum, that's what I said. Out came the tin, her curlers therein. Oh no said the child Santa cannot see ME with my curlers in.

Why not said mum with great surprise. Santa will not leave me presents if I'm a sight for sore eyes. But said mum...

Susie will come tomorrow and HER hair will be pretty but yours will be straight and what a pity.

The child then gave in and went to her bed. Mum kissed her GOODNIGHT. No more was said.

Christmas morn came quickly, gifts placed on her bed. Had Santa noticed her curlers but ignored them instead.

Or was it her prayer to God for a gift she would find. It must have been thought the child for God is kind.

## Questions at Christmas

Christmas day gone, turkey all had. Questions the child thought of so she went to her dad. Is Santa and Jesus one and the same as they both came at Christmas then went home again?

No! said dad, Santa is Santa and only brings toys but Jesus is king and brings lots of joys.

He gives us faith and hope and peace like a dove but most of all darling he brings us all LOVE.

The little girl asked if God is Jesu's father then who is God's dad?

HER dad smiled at her gently, no answer was pending  
Maybe our readers would write their own ending.....

PEACE – HOPE – AND LOVE TO YOU ALL AT CHRISTMAS  
( Dorrie xxx The little girl!)

# Good News - Bible Sales On The Up!

Sales of Bibles are soaring in Britain with publishers pointing to the increasing spirituality of Gen Z.

Between 2019 and 2024 there was an increase of 87%. Sales shot up from £2.69 million to £5.02 million according to figures published by SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) Group, the Christian publisher.

The Bible Society said that the 2018 volume of their Good News Bible (Youth Edition) was "by far our most popular" with sales almost doubling since 2021.

This edition has explanations of important passages and infographics plus space for writing notes.

A survey in January 2024 found that 35% of those over 65 said that they were very or fairly spiritual whereas 62% of 18 to 24 year olds said the same.

The chief executive of SPCK, Sam Richardson said that "Atheism once considered by modern society to be the view of most rational adults, no longer seems to carry the same weight or appeal. Young people—Gen Z in particular — are statistically far less likely to identify as atheists than their parents."

*Taken from an article in The Times submitted by Nina,*

## For those of you who puzzle over terms like Gen Z read on!

A generation is a group of people born within about 20 years of each other. They take on an identity because the members generally have experienced life events and particular historical moments at the same age and these influences can define their lives. For example Gen Alpha is the first generation who will never know a time when social media didn't exist, and they're far more tech-savvy than any previous generation,

1901- 1927 The Greatest (GI) Generation

1928- 1945 The Silent Generation

1946- 1964 The Baby Boom Generation

1965- 1980 Generation X

1981- 1996 Millennials or Generation Y

1997- 2010 Generation Z

2010- 2024 Generation Alpha

2025- 2039 Generation Beta

Now you can identify yourself!

# Stubborn seeds and concrete!

"God of justice and joy,  
when our courage falters,  
when our hearts grow hard,  
when we can't see the fruit of our labour —  
remind us why we began.

Plant in us again  
the stubborn seed of goodness  
that grows through concrete."

These words, by the Wild Goose Resource Group, were part of the opening worship at For Goodness Sake: the gathering of Christians who long for justice.' They were reproduced in the November newsletter from JPIT along with the questions at the end of this article.

JPIT - Joint Public Issues Team – is helping the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church to pray and work for peace and justice, through listening, learning, praying, speaking and acting on public policy issues. When I have the privilege of writing a Porch



Prayer, I use JPIT resources alongside the lectionary, I learn a lot about global issues, and it influences the way I approach issues more locally too. During JPITs Politics in the Pulpit feature last month it was inspiring to hear our own Rev Melanie Smith discussing how issues in contemporary news and Bible readings relate. There was certainly lots to think about and grapple with around areas of justice and fairness.

If you would like to find out more, the JPIT website is: [jpit.uk](http://jpit.uk)

The Wild Goose Resource Group have a huge range of resources too, including a daily Thought for today, [iona.org.uk/wild-goose-resource-group-about](http://iona.org.uk/wild-goose-resource-group-about) or [ionabooks.com](http://ionabooks.com)

Alex from JPIT is pondering these questions, perhaps you would like to too?

'Where do I witness to justice?

Where do I experience joy?

What hardens my heart? What am I labouring for? Why did I begin?

What is the stubborn seed of goodness growing through the concrete?'

*Ali Raybould*

If my computer was better organised I could tell you exactly when the first porch prayer was written but all I can say is that it was during the time when Lorraine was our minister.

In the remodelling of our church it was planned that all who entered the building would do so via the main porch. That would bring them past the sanctuary doors with their glass panes giving a view of the sanctuary and the illuminated cross on our altar and they would be reminded of who we were.

But how would they know what we stand for, what is important to us and what we are concerned about? That question was the genesis of the porch prayer. Each week, one of a small team of writers creates a "headline prayer" which is displayed in the porch and a longer intercessory prayer which is used in the Wednesday morning Zoom Prayer Group and published in the weekly newsletter.

The very first one said: "We are praying for those fleeing violence and oppression. May they find refuge, welcome and hope wherever they land." Since then the majority of our prayers have tended to focus on issues of social justice and inclusion reflecting our Lord's concern for those who are marginalized and whose voice needs to be heard. This means that sometimes we are challenging populist and political views (like the rhetoric which labels benefit users as "work-shy", refugees as criminals and immigrants as non-contributory beneficiaries of our welfare state).

We are guided by the research and stance of the Joint Public Issues Team (a partnership between the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church) and by the statements and prayers of our church leaders. Occasionally we will include prayers from our denominational websites.

But our prayers also celebrate our Christian seasons reflecting their messages.

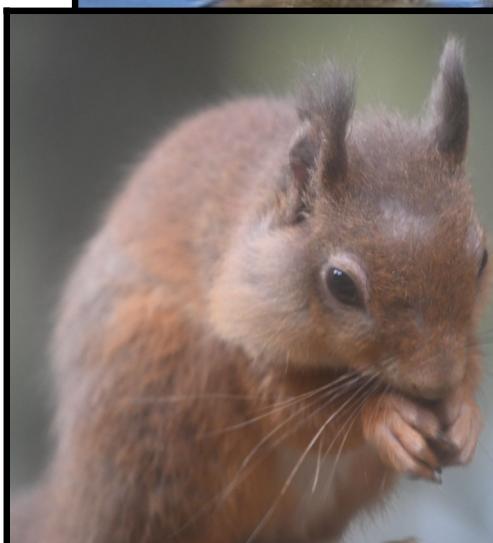
And we respond to world events and to the impact of floods, earthquakes, famine and war— indeed to anything which causes human suffering at home or abroad. They are not, however, simply cries for help: they often give thanks for those who work to bring peace and to alleviate suffering and for the blessings which surround us. Then there are prayers which draw on passages of Scripture and the messages they hold for us.

There are many blessings for those of us who pen these prayers (and there is an open invitation to others to join us). They often involve extensive research. Frequently that brings us into contact not only with the voices, images and thoughts of those who suffer, but also with those working tirelessly to support them who reveal that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ is a God of justice and mercy and is in them incarnate and active in our world.

*Keith Dennis*

# AUTUMN IN THE HIGHLANDS

The photograph of the robin on the front cover was sent by Vic and Sherley Newton and taken by David, their son, when they were in The Cairngorms last October. They want to share some of their other stunning photos. Definitely makes me want to visit Scotland next Autumn!



## "Connected to Places"

Quiz in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support

**A minimum donation of £3.00 but your added generosity  
would be greatly appreciated.**

Organised in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (261017)

Supporting

**MACMILLAN  
CANCER SUPPORT**

*First Prize £35      Second Prize £20*

*Everyone submitting a quiz form will be  
entered into a draw to win one of three £10  
Marks & Spencer vouchers.*

**Closing Date: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026  
Answers out after 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Each clue leads to an answer where there is some connection to a city, town, country or place - for example:

A buttoned jumper	Cardigan
Used in marmalade	Seville oranges
Message passed along a line of people	Chinese whispers
A roulade cake	Swiss roll
Things disappear from here	Bermuda triangle
Meat that won at Waterloo?	Beef wellington

This quiz is designed to be fun and raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support. *Please feel free to circulate it more widely, encouraging your friends, family or colleagues to take part in the fundraising.* Over the past 28 years this quiz has raised more than £300,161. The fundraising total for last year was £25,103 and with your help we hope to exceed that sum with this latest quiz. This will be the penultimate quiz, with our final 30th quiz coming out next year.

In the event of a tie, winning entries will be entered into a draw.

GOOD LUCK AND THANK YOU

You can donate online at  
<https://www.justgiving.com/page/joyces-quiz-29>

OR BACS transfer -details on the back page

PLEASE SEND COMPLETED FORMS to: Joyce's Quiz  
c/o Y. Roberts 40 Priorsfield Road, Kenilworth, Warks, CV8 1DB



1.	<b>Popular spaghetti accompaniment</b>
2.	<b>German water perfume</b>
3.	<b>Horse riding trousers</b>
4.	<b>Language we can't understand</b>
5.	<b>Mexican toy dog</b>
6.	<b>Displayed by the British in WWII</b>
7.	<b>A chess opening for black</b>
8.	<b>A pine from the Isle of Man?</b>
9.	<b>Roxie Hart musical</b>
10.	<b>A fry-up to start the day</b>
11.	<b>21 shillings</b>
12.	<b>Society of London barristers</b>
13.	<b>Scottish beef</b>
14.	<b>Midcalf trousers</b>
15.	<b>Canvas container with drawstring</b>
16.	<b>Flat round liquorice confectionery</b>
17.	<b>Horse trials in May</b>
18.	<b>German dog that might be hot?</b>
19.	<b>Elite credit card</b>
20.	<b>Beware of Greeks in this gift</b>
21.	<b>Graham Greene, seaside novel</b>
22.	<b>Poached on a bed of spinach</b>
23.	<b>Headwear from Crimea</b>
24.	<b>Aromatic cocktail ingredient</b>
25.	<b>Shipshape and ..</b>
26.	<b>5 line humorous rhyme</b>
27.	<b>Gothic tale by Daphne du Maurier</b>
28.	<b>MIX CV</b>
29.	<b>'Huddersfield Ben' was this breed's father</b>
30.	<b>Hand-made Cuban smokes</b>
31.	<b>Provoked an American war</b>
32.	<b>Information barrier in an organisation</b>
33.	<b>London Borough fowl?</b>
34.	<b>Cooked US state?</b>
35.	<b>Dance craze in the 1920s</b>
36.	<b>A blue orange liqueur</b>
37.	<b>Derbyshire sweet delicacy</b>
38.	<b>The gun that won the West</b>
39.	<b>Blue and can be dolce</b>
40.	<b>Hard-wearing cotton twill</b>
41.	<b>Magnesium sulphate</b>
42.	<b>Pulled out of a wine bottle</b>
43.	<b>Squares in marzipan</b>
44.	<b>You are here without a hat?</b>
45.	<b>Bonding with the hostage takers</b>
46.	<b>Irish deep basin</b>
47.	<b>French savoury tart with bacon</b>

48.	A spinach beet
49.	Stinging marine invertebrate
50.	Horse, no taller than 42 inches
51.	Shortbread that sounds Austrian
52.	Help bison to fly?
53.	South American rodent pet
54.	German woodland cake?
55.	The only white cliff flatfish?
56.	Rivalry match within a geographical area
57.	Cakes in washing vessel?
58.	Edward 8th's classic knot
59.	Spice from French Guiana
60.	Degree that includes a work placement
61.	A brimless felt hat
62.	From 'Gorge'ous Somerset?
63.	Paper sleeve from Philippine hemp
64.	Pleasant cookie?
65.	A lawnmower and draught horse
66.	Poultry, war torn capital city
67.	Porcelain
68.	Pongo and Perdita
69.	Comes in a ball with red wax coat
70.	Common tick-borne illness
71.	Wine twice distilled in oak
72.	Set sail in the Mayflower
73.	Traditional Scottish food
74.	The race that stops the Australian nation
75.	Embroidery stitch for a single dot
76.	Vanilla flavoured dessert topping
77.	Keeps broken bones in place
78.	They don't vote for Christmas
79.	Brand of dark chocolate
80.	Complete meal for the tin miners
81.	The oldest annual one is in Boston
82.	Emergency food carried by mountaineers
83.	New Zealand capital footwear
84.	Burgundy sauce from Titania's fairy?
85.	"Nothing more can be done"
86.	Vodka, ginger beer in a copper cup
87.	Classy university closed-lace footwear
88.	Holey Swiss product used in fondue
89.	Chemical red dye and a bloody battle
90.	Ended WW1
91.	Share the cost of a meal

92.	Fermented condiment containing anchovies	
93.	Black organic gemstone	
94.	Capsicums from Galacia	
95.	School where a sport was invented	
96.	Bakestones or pics	
97.	Public school untidy food?	
98.	The black cab	
99.	Created by Colonel Sanders	
100.	Robin Hood's colour	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We got a copy of this quiz from, Hall Green United Community Church \_\_\_\_\_

I/We donated via: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like a copy of the answers, please provide your e-mail address or a stamped addressed envelope. If you don't want to send in your entry but would like the answers, please e-mail [joycesquiz@gmail.com](mailto:joycesquiz@gmail.com)

You can donate online at  
<https://www.justgiving.com/page/joyces-quiz-29>

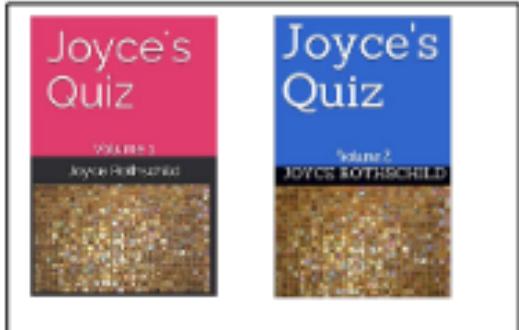
OR via BACS transfer (please give your name in the reference)

Name of business account is Joyce's Quiz

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# FOOD AID IN BIRMINGHAM

Data has been published from the Birmingham food aid count which took place between 24th March - 6th April 2025.

Groups and organisations providing food aid across the city were asked to count the visits of people that used their services over one of the two weeks. 137 groups and organisations have been included in this summary. The previous food aid count was in 2023. In the 2025 survey, two thirds (66%) of groups and organisations felt that the numbers of people using their project had 'definitely increased' since the 2023 survey.

This is an unpleasant picture. Although part of this increase can be attributed to improvements to capacity so as to meet existing demand, a more likely source of this increase in people using community food provision is simply that more people are food insecure now than in 2023.

This is confirmed by Trussell Trust's 'Hunger in the UK' 2025 report which found that in 2024,

**"14.1 m people across the UK, including 3.8 m children, lived in food insecure households, compared with 11.6 million people in 2022 (including 3.2 million children)**

Alarming Statistics forwarded by Sam our administrator.



## Leading Your Church Into Growth

The Leading Your Church Into Growth sessions continue over the next few months and are based at Solihull URC and be held on Saturday afternoons from 2pm to 4pm.

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2026 Session Three: Telling the Story to Others

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026 Session Four: Develop Engaging Worship (led by Mission Development Officer and Mission Enabler)

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2026 Session Five: Becoming an Inviting and Welcoming Church

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2026 Session Six: Making a Pathway for Seekers to become Disciples

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2026 Session Seven: Begin a Planned Journey of Growth

Please consider using the Leading Your Church Into Growth Prayer in your prayers:-

**God of Mission,  
Who alone brings growth to your Church,  
Send your Holy Spirit to give,  
Vision to our planning,  
Wisdom to our actions,  
Joy to our worship  
And power to our witness.  
Help our church to grow in numbers,  
In spiritual commitment to you,  
And in service to our local community,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**



The Seeds Of God  
Everything has its season  
In order for new growth  
One day the beauty will be seen  
From the seeds that God has sowed  
For our lives are like a garden,  
The planting of the Lord,  
Sun and rain combine to bring  
A bountiful reward  
Everything has its season  
In order for new growth  
One day the beauty will be seen  
From the seeds that God has sowed  
MS Lowndes

# Cathedral Relief Services

One of the organisations that Melanie and I spoke about at our “A Taste of India” evening was Cathedral Relief Services, who are part of the Church of North India and work in Kolkata. Rig David, the one who has charge of the operation in Kolkata on a day to day basis wrote the following recently in the Friends of Cathedral Relief Services newsletter:

Rig David – Why we do what we do

The task that we face is enormous. About 1.4 million people live in the slums of Kolkata. That is about a third of the population. This year we were able to help about 400 children and 300 mothers and women who are leaders in the communities, providing them with health facilities and food supplements, as well as giving them skills that will help them achieve a degree of independence. We might only be reaching a small percentage of the people who need help, but what we bring to them makes a huge difference to their lives. If we always thought in terms of statistics, we might be overawed. Instead, we like to think about individuals. That is why I would like to tell you about two people we have helped.

Bishal Das joined us as a pupil at the start of the Hastings project and attended both pre-primary and primary classes. He was sponsored by the Gabbi Basra Bursary programme to attend a government school. Having now successfully completed state higher education, he is preparing to continue his academic career. The way he has used the good start CRS gave him to do well in the government school is exactly what we are seeking to achieve.

## HURRAH FOR THE RAILWAYS –200YEARS.

As I stepped on to a train on my way home from work, one of my slip on shoes came off. I turned, in time to see it teeter on the edge of the step and then fall off the train. Minus a shoe. I returned to the platform and found that the shoe had fallen beneath the train. A rail worker said he would fetch it for me when the train had left. Not thinking very clearly, I told him that I had intended travelling on that train. What happened next was beyond customer service. The train was moved forward and the worker retrieved the shoe and I re entered the crowded evening train very careful not to catch anyone's eye!



Sunita Devi is an example of a mother following in a daughter's footsteps. She was so impressed when her daughter, Dipa, completed her training course at Pally Mangal in 2022 that she decided to join up for it herself a year later. After passing the course, she set up a tailoring shop in her one-room home.



She and her daughter run the shop together, earning close to Rs. 3,000 per month, enabling her to put her other children through school. This shows how our philosophy of 'teaching people to fish rather than giving them fish', works in practice.

We cannot solve the problem of poverty for everyone, but we can help people like Bishal, Sunita and Dipa. They matter.

Whenever I visit one of our projects, I am aware that our ability to help is only possible because of the generosity of our supporters in the UK and other countries. With your help we can maintain the work. That is why I want to thank you for your donations and your prayers. They mean a great deal to us at CRS and to all the people we work with.

If you would like to support CRS then you can do so by:

**Donating by credit card or by setting up a direct debit, visit [www.friendsofcrs.co.uk](http://www.friendsofcrs.co.uk)**

**Give regularly by standing order or bank transfer, email [secretary@friendsofcrs.co.uk](mailto:secretary@friendsofcrs.co.uk)**

**To send a cheque to:**

**Friends of CRS c/o Reverend Anita Matthews, St Peter's in the City, St Peter's Street, Derby DE1 1SN.**

QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1.Ebenezer
- 2.Every Year
- 3.An angel gets its wings
4. An abdominal snowman
- 5.Three. Dasher, Dancer and Don-her
- 6.Turkey
- 7.An old silk hat
- 8.Eight maids a-milking
- 9.The Nutcracker
- 10 1843
- 11 King GeorgV in 1932
- 12 Japan

# Branded a witch, but she found Jesus

Mali is a country we don't hear much about in west Africa. Sadly, it suffers from much conflict and is vulnerable to climate change and economic hardship. It is overwhelmingly Muslim.



The Bible Society had been running a trauma-healing workshop for single mothers which later expanded to all women in crisis.

One lady married at 16 but her husband died when she was 22. She was so sad, she decided to remain single. However, she remarried at 24 but that husband died when she was 27.

Everyone started saying she was a witch and that was why her husbands had died. She couldn't stay within her community and began wandering round the city. As she contemplated suicide a voice told her, "No, don't do that, go for a walk."

As she walked, she bumped into the lady running the Bible Society project, which she attended. There the lady learnt not only about Christian faith, but how to generate an income and develop skills to help her be independent.

She became a Christian and at 31 a Christian man asked her to marry him. She asked her pastor what she should do. She prayed about it and decided it was right for her to marry.

Although happily married, she found it hard to forgive her family and men in general at first, but the Bible based trauma-healing process eventually enabled her to forgive.

Based on an article from Bible a Month magazine and sent by Brian Dickens.

# New Hope in Bethlehem

While HGUCC was celebrating its wonderful tree fest on 6th December, another very significant tree was illuminated.

For two years during the Gaza war, all public celebrations for Christmas were cancelled in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank

But after the recent ceasefire, the holy city decided that this year the festivities would return as symbolised by the lighting of its traditional, giant Christmas tree.

Bethlehem's mayor, Maher Canawati knew that the idea of resuming celebrations was not without controversy, as suffering continues in Gaza – Including for those in its tiny Christian community, many of whom have relatives in Bethlehem but they need tourism and it has been absent for a long time.



"This is where it all started, so this is where we can send the message to the world of what really Christmas should be about. And this year, if Christmas is peaceful, then I hope it will bring a nice message for the whole world." said a local jewellery designer. "We're very happy to have the tree, first thing, and to see foreigners in Bethlehem and to be able to celebrate Christmas in its true spirit," Thousands of people attended, including Christians and Muslims, and many who travelled from throughout the West Bank and Israel and some from even further afield — to enjoy the festive spirit return.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11 KJV

# THE JOY OF TYPOS.

This morning, a friend sent me a screen grab of a TV news programme that was running a feature about education. Next to an earnest-looking presenter ran the caption: 'School two easy for kids'. As someone has pointed out, School One must have been hell.

The episode has inevitably reminded me of the many typos I've encountered over the years. Many of the best examples can be found in online comments in response to an article or video. Beneath one popular magazine's round-up of the best perfumes a reader proceeded to wax lyrical about a particular 'eau de colon' that her boyfriend wears. Worse, she went on to enthuse over how she could still smell his 'colon' on her pillow every morning.

This is a worthy runner-up to the advert on a well-known online marketplace for a 'Baby bath plus poo' – both, it continues, in 'excellent condition'.

One committed by Nasa in 1962 led to the crash of a probe that was to deliver invaluable data on Venus. A missing hyphen in the agency's coding is said to have caused the craft to malfunction within minutes of its launch. It was subsequently described as 'the most expensive hyphen in history'.

Of course, very few of us have managed to escape a typo in a text message or email. One dog groomer sent a notification to a pooch's owner with the words 'Dexter is dead now', only realising minutes later that their autocorrect had inexplicably substituted the word 'ready'.

Another woman, wishing to confide in a friend that she needed a hysterectomy, sent instead news of a 'hissy ectectomy'. Realising the mistake, she tried again, telling her friend she was booked in for a 'hipster recipe'. Better that, perhaps, than another

An article by Susie Dent taken from Saga Magazine and forwarded by Val Crocker

woman's lament about her insomnia to her husband with the text message: 'I think it's related to the "men's pants"'. She wanted to say 'menopause'!

Menus are a notorious source of mistakes.

I still remember the ITV canteen offering 'dips and crudities', while a friend's local restaurant regularly offers 'Scissor salad'.

Mind you, it helps if the proprietors have a sense of humour. On one takeaway menu spotted in the wild, the names of Cantonese dishes had been lovingly translated into English – until the writer clearly ran into difficulty. Under one item it read: 'I can't find it on Google but it's delicious'. In a similar vein, another restaurant menu is said to have offered 'stir-fried Wikipedia with onions'.

Road signs seem to attract typos like no other. One of my favourite examples is the Welsh signpost that intended to say 'No entry for heavy goods vehicles. Residential site only'. Given that signposts in Wales need to be bilingual, the text was duly sent to a translation office, and the sign was completed with 'Nid wyf yn y swyddfa ar hyn o bryd. Anfonwch unrhyw waith i'w gyfieithu'. So far, so good, except this text translates as 'I am not in the office at the moment. Please send any work to be translated'.

You might think that in these days of multiple spellcheckers and autocorrect our communications would be faultless. The reality is that we need to be pretty good at spelling to rely on technology.

Just ask the shop owner whose computer autocorrect resulted in the sign: 'We apologise for any incontinence'. Or indeed the website that once asked visitors a fundamental question before they closed the page: 'Are you sure you want to exist?'

## Wanted – Eco-Champion!

In 2019 Hall Green United Community Church gained a silver Eco-Church Award

The scheme has changed since then and we now need to make a fresh assessment about how we're doing in caring for the environment as a Christian community.

A few people have already had a look through the questionnaire but we now need somebody to take hold of this and help the church to move things forward.

If this is something that you're passionate about, and would like to be involved with then please speak to either Mark Meatcher, Brian or Blair about it and they will explain a little of what's involved and we'll get started!



**There are 30 books of the Bible in this paragraph. Can you find them? It has been in The Magazine before but June thought it was worth repeating to occupy us during the Christmas break.**

This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket, on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much, he passed it on to some friends... One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot.

That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalised. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new record. The local paper, the Chronicle, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, "The books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mad exodus, there really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph, waiting to be found.

God Bless

The minister of a city church enjoyed a drink now and again but his passion was for peach brandy. One of his congregants would make him a bottle each Christmas. One year when the minister went to visit his friend hoping for his usual Christmas present, he was not disappointed but his friend told him that he had to thank him for the peach brandy from the pulpit the next Sunday.

In his haste to get the bottle he agreed and left. So the next Sunday the minister suddenly remembered that he had to make a public announcement that he was being supplied with alcohol by a member of the church. That morning his friend sat in church with a grin on his face waiting to see the minister's embarrassment.

The minister climbed into the pulpit and said, "Before we begin, I have an announcement. I would very much like to thank my dear friend, Joe, for his kind gift of peaches... and for the spirit in which they were given!"

# A Christmas Poem

by Helen Steiner Rice

and sent by Edna White from a Christmas card

I have a list of folks I know, all written in a book  
And every year when Christmas comes, I go and take a look,  
And that is when I realise that these names are an important part  
Not of the book they are written in, but of my very heart.

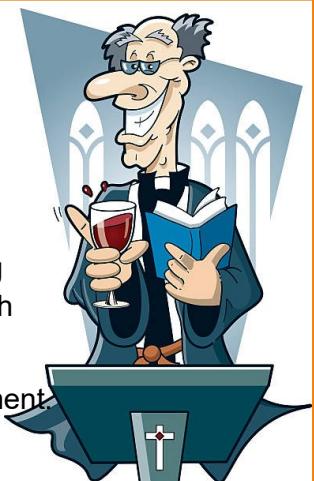
For each name stands for someone who has crossed my path sometime,  
And in the meeting they've become the rhythm in each rhyme  
And while it sounds fantastic for me to make this claim,  
I really am composed of each remembered name.

And while you may not be aware of any special link  
Just meeting you has changed my life a lot more than you think  
For once I've met somebody, years cannot erase  
The memory of a pleasant word or of a friendly face.

So never think my Christmas cards are just a mere routine  
Of names upon a Christmas list, forgotten in between,  
For when I send a Christmas card that is addressed to you,  
It is because you're on the list of folks I'm indebted to.

For you are a total of the many folks I've met,  
And you happen to be one of those I prefer not to forget  
And whether I have known you for many years or few,  
In some ways you have a part in shaping things I do.

And every year when Christmas comes, I realise anew  
The biggest gifts that life can give is meeting folks like you.  
So may the spirit of Christmas that forever and ever endures  
Leave its richest blessings in the hearts of you and yours.



# Bob's Diary

I had the most amazing day on the 6th of December at the tree fest. I had never been to one before, but Linda took me and we went round a whole number of trees. Just inside the door was a pan tree with lots of knitted fruit and vegetables, and opposite was an enormous tree with a very hungry caterpillar which was made by children who come to Baby and Co. One tree was made from toilet rolls which was called a lavatree, and the Friendly Corner Cafe had a tree full of goodies like the delicious food you would find on here on Tuesdays. I lent my apron to the fairy on the top of the tree. I was tickled pink to see a tree the same size as me!

With all the colours, lights and clever ideas, Father Christmas was there to welcome the children, and me—a happy, happy bear.



Doris made a wonderful Recycling Christmas Tree

This Recycling Christmas Tree is made entirely from reused materials, turning everyday waste into something bright and meaningful. Flattened cans, aluminium rings and curled metal strips create a shimmering structure, while soft yarn pom-poms add warmth and colour. At the base, three handmade dolls represent the Three Wise Men, with two white knitted flowers for Mary and Joseph. A small brown-yarn cradle holds a simple paper-drawn baby Jesus, giving the tree a gentle nativity touch. This project encourages residents to recycle creatively—protecting the environment, caring for the earth, and cherishing our shared land. Bible references:

- Matthew 1:18–25 – The birth of Jesus
- Luke 2:1–20 – The manger and shepherds
- Matthew 2:1–12 – The visit of the Wise Men

*Merry Christmas to  
you all from Bob*

Thank you to Keith and Linda for the photographs.



Jackie and Brian wish Mark and Melanie and all members of HGUC a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.



"Val Crocker would like to wish everyone at HGUCC a very happy Christmas and all the best for a healthy and peaceful New Year. Love Val xx



Margaret Glover sends her love and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to her friends at HGUCC.



May the love and peace that Jesus gives be with you this Christmas.  
Brian & Val



Elaine and Kenneth send their love and Best Wishes for a peaceful Christmas and Happy New Year



**With all good wishes for a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year. Sherley & Vic Newton**



"  
Sending you bright and warm wishes from Doris and Sang



Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year to all our friends at Hall Green from Dilys and the Leominster Moravian Church



Linda and Ram wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a joyous New Year.



Peace, hope, light and joy to all at HGUCC from Ali, Mark and Joe Raybould xxx.



Christine and Peter send their Christmas greetings to all their friends at HGUCC. God bless you all.



Wishing you all a peaceful and happy Christmas and New Year. I will be giving a donation to the Church this year, rather than sending Christmas cards. With love, Trish



"Nina wishes everyone at HGUCC a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year. Love from Nina"

# NOTICES

## DigiKick Tea & T'internet

12 week FREE internet course, 2 hours a week.

Starting January Tuesday 13th 10am—12pm.

Over 50's everybody welcome, come learn new skills in a relaxed comfortable environment

FREE tea, coffee & biscuits.

Covering topics from basic use of the device, online safety, scams, emails, web search etc. Any further information please contact Hyacinth

## Christingle Service

Sunday 21st Christingle Service  
led by Rev. Mark Meatcher  
followed by Hunger Lunch



You are invited to our Christmas service

on 16th December at 11am.

Led by Revd Mark Meatcher.



(This is our last cafe of the year. We will reopen on 6th January  
Thank you to everyone who has supported us in 2025.)  
We have given to 18 charities this year and made donations totalling £3550 thanks to your support.

All the volunteers would like to wish you  
a very Happy Christmas and a healthy, peaceful 2026



The Methodist Church



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

To worship God  
To know Jesus  
To serve others

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