

CORNERSTONE

The Magazine of
WITNEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



In Him the whole fabric is bound together, as it grows into a temple,
dedicated to the Lord (Ephesians 2:21)

February & March 2020

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WHAT'S ON GUIDE

Witney Congregational Church offer a whole range of activities through which we seek to Worship, Work and Witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this community today

MINISTER

Vacant

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Rev Judi Holloway

WORSHIP

Daily Worship	9.30am	Mon-Fri	Short time of Prayer and Reading
Saturday Praise	11.00am	1 st & 3 rd	Saturday of the month
Sunday Services	10.30am		
	6.00pm	1 st	Sunday of the month

Communion is held twice during the month at the first Sunday evening and third Sunday morning services

PRAYER

The Church is open each morning for Prayer

STUDY & FELLOWSHIP

Tuesday	12.15pm	Light Bite Piece of the Word (1 st Tuesday of each month)
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YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Sunday	10.30 am	Crèche, Noah's Ark & The K.I.C.K. on Sundays
Monday	10.00 am	Noah's Ark – Infant Group for babies and pre-school children

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Tuesday	7.30pm	Monthly Deacon's Meeting
Thursday	10.00 am	Weekly Coffee Morning
Saturday	10.00 am	Weekly Coffee Morning
Sunday	12.00 noon	Bi-Monthly Church Meeting

SUNDAY LINK

Weekly bulletin for all Christians providing stimulating thought along with news and notices concerning our Church

St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday



01993 709429

09.00 am – 5.00 pm

CHURCH WEBSITE

For further information, please visit our website:

www.witneycongregational.org.uk

MAGAZINE EDITOR

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Further information can be obtained from the Church Office: 01993 709 992



Welcome to this the first edition to be published in 2020 and I hope that you all had a good Christmas and New Year, and that all your expectations were met.

The month of February brings us Lent and recalls the events leading up to, and including, Jesus' crucifixion by Rome and His resurrection



So much has happened over the last two months throughout the world; there have been large bush/forest fires in Australia, and notwithstanding they wished to have rain to help fight the fires, they are experiencing some torrential rain causing additional severe flooding and damage; earthquakes in Turkey; the shooting down of a passenger aircraft by Iran; the Coronavirus in China and the troubled Middle East – and there are more! Let us pray that this will soon be the end and everything will return to 'normal'

If you were at the Church meeting last Sunday, you will be aware that that magazine title has reverted back to the original name when the magazine was started by Anita & Graham Beechey back in the 1980s –

Cornerstone

So, on that note, I now turn to some of this month's contents: Pip Cartwright continues in the short history of our Church with Rev Dr Hubert Cunliffe-Jones BA; Judi Holloway gives us the Deacon's Letter; there is the continuation of Ken Lee's Bible Study and Lesley Barter gives us a reflection on the Advent Quiet Day, to name but a few

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition by either:

E-mail: terrypowlesland@uwclub.net

jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net

or, just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up

The next 2-monthly edition, covering April & May, is due on **Sunday 5th April**

Your Editor



BST starts on
29th March

It's all in the spelling...

G - God

R - ran

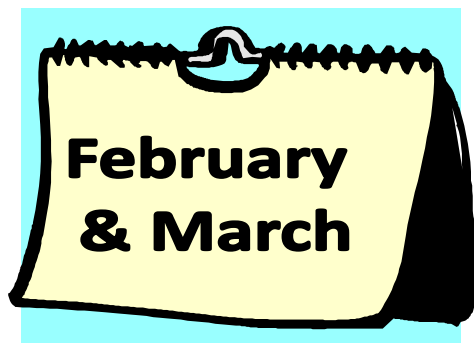
A - alongside

C - carrying

E - everything

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Daily Prayer Time:

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

Services

10.30 am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month

Feb

2 nd	am	Rev Dr Nick Pike	
	pm	Nanna Blackman	Communion
9 th	am	Rev Catherine Booton	
15 th		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
16 th	am	Rev Oliver Kinchin	Communion
23 rd	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
26 th	pm	Ash Wednesday	Kathy Shaw

Mar

1 st	am	Rev Michael Heaney	
	pm	Rev Michael Heaney	Communion
7 th		Creative Church	10.00am – 12.00pm
		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
8 th	am	Cafe Church	Rev Judi Holloway
15 th	am	Rev Mark Evans	Communion
22 nd	am	Mothering Sunday	Rev Judi Holloway
28 th		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
29 th	am	tba	
	pm	Madley Park Residential Home	3.00pm

Apr

4 th		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
5 th	am	Palm Sunday – Rev Elaine Kinchin	
	pm	David Kinchin	Communion

The following events are given for your particular attention:

Feb

4 th	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
5 th	Deacons' Away Day	10.00am – 4.00pm
8 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
12 th	CTiW Council meeting	7.30pm
16 th	What is Congregationalism?	12.0pm – 12.30pm
22 nd	The Witney Book Circle	10.45am
	Movie Afternoon – To kill a mockingbird	12.15pm
23 rd	What is Congregationalism?	12.0pm – 12.30pm
27 th	'Called to Follow' workshop	7.30pm
28 th	Look What's On – Quiz Evening	6.00pm
29 th	'Called to Follow' workshop	2.00pm

Mar

1 st	What is Congregationalism?	12.0pm – 12.30pm
3 rd	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
6 th	World Day of Prayer – Holy Trinity, Woodgreen	10.30am
8 th	What is Congregationalism?	12.0pm – 12.30pm

14 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
18 th	Bible Study – Kathy Shaw	6.00pm & 7.30pm
21 st	The Witney Book Circle	10.45am
25 th	Bible Study – Kathy Shaw	6.00pm & 7.30pm
26 th	Lent Quiet Day	10.00am – 4.00pm
28 th	SWMA Assembly – Sherston CC	10.00am – 4.00pm
29 th	Church meeting	12.00pm
Apr		
1 st	Bible Study – Kathy Shaw	6.00pm & 7.30pm
7 th	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacons' meeting	7.30pm

Rotas

WELCOMING TEAM

Feb	02	Beryl Cartwright & Irene St Clair
	09	Terry Powlesland & Joan Currie
	16	Lesley Barter & Susan Wass
	23	Lesley Barter & Pat Smith
Mar	01	Lesley Barter & Judi Holloway
	08	Beryl Cartwright & Pat Brent
	15	Lesley Barter & Joan Currie
	22	Nanna Blackman & Susan Wass
	29	Lesley Barter & Judith Bungey
Apr	05	Lesley Barter & Irene St Clair



COMMUNION

Feb	02 pm	Beryl Cartwright	
		Preparation	Beryl Cartwright
	16 am	Lesley Barter & Nanna Blackman	
		Beryl Cartwright & David Kinchin	
Mar		Preparation	Rita Hayes
	01 pm	Lesley Barter	
		Preparation	Lesley Barter
	15 am	Lesley Barter & Terry Powlesland	
		Beryl Cartwright & Judi Holloway	
Apr		Preparation	Irene St Clair
	05 pm	Lesley Barter	
		Preparation	Lesley Barter



FLOWERS

Feb	02	Beryl Cartwright
	09	Joan Currie
	16	Rita Hayes
	23	Pat Brent
Mar	01	Judi Holloway
	08	Jacqui Powlesland
	15	Beryl Cartwright
	22	Mothering Sunday
	29	Joan Currie
Apr	05	Rita Hayes



SUNDAY COFFEE

Feb	02	Pat Smith
	09	Pat Brent
	16	Sue Birdseye & Susan Wass
	23	Pat Smith
Mar	01	Pat Brent
	08	Cafe Church
	15	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	22	Pat Smith
	29	Pat Brent
Apr	05	Pat Smith
	Reserve – Jacqui Powlesland	



THURSDAY COFFEE

Feb	06	Pat Smith
	13	Beryl Cartwright
	20	Pat Brent
	27	Pat Smith
Mar	05	Beryl Cartwright
	12	Pat Smith
	19	Pat Brent
	26	Beryl Cartwright
Apr	02	Pat Smith
	We would be extremely grateful for other people to join	



SOUND SYSTEM

Feb	02	Terry Powlesland
	09	Nanna Blackman
	16	Terry Powlesland
	23	Nanna Blackman
Mar	01	Terry Powlesland
	08	Terry Powlesland
	15	Nanna Blackman
	22	Terry Powlesland
	29	Nanna Blackman
Apr	05	Terry Powlesland



**For ALL the Rotas, every effort has been made to meet individual circumstances.
However, if the dates are not convenient for you, please change with someone else**

Feb	02	Andrea Hooper
	04	Elaine Beechey
	08	Pat Brent
	13	Judi Holloway
	16	Leah Cotton
	22	Dave Wesson
	24	Marian Kew



Mar	08	Joan Currie
	11	Lesley Barter
	19	Beryl Cartwright
	22	Peter Sellman
	28	Wendell La Fortune

Deacon's Letter

Retirement is a funny thing given that it is supposed to give you more time to do the things you thought you wanted to do when you finish your working life or at least have the energy to do them. It turns out that what others are saying is actually true – where did I find the time to go to work – I'm busier than ever!

Having said that, I know that this busy-ness is short lived at least as far as the church is concerned. We have been focussing for several months now on what sort of Minister we would like for the next season of Witney Congregational Church and also on what sort of church we are.

We have had several meetings, several pieces of paper have been produced and reviewed and I feel that we are hopefully turning the corner and be able to advertise the position in the foreseeable futures.

We have no idea how long this process will take nor who will be the next Minister of Witney Congregational Church. What we can be assured of is that God has already seen and is preparing that person. My prayer is that we have the eyes and the wisdom to see the person God has prepared for us.

I am certain that this verse of scripture is for us as a church – Isaiah 43 18-19 - God is telling us not to remember the former things nor consider the things of the past – behold I am doing a new thing. God is doing a new thing not just in our church but many churches around Witney.

The church is already changing with many new people coming into the church and enjoying worship with us not just on a Sunday but they are enjoying other activities in the church – the coffee mornings, the bible study/lite bite, dressmaking classes, etc. We are growing together and looking forward to the future. I do feel it a tremendous privilege in being able to serve you not just on a Sunday morning but in

other ways too – I led the Christmas gathering for the Springfield school when around 35-40 children attended with several staff members and our own members. They must have enjoyed it as I have had requests to take two Assemblies in the coming months at the school. I have been asked to lead the World day of prayer preparation. I have also been visiting the sick and offering communion when requested as have other members of our church. We aim to ensure that people are always looked after and always feel welcome. Thank you all for your support – we are a team.

Every blessing

God bless

Judi Holloway
Associate Minister

The following article has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

Granddad & the Computer

The computer swallowed Granddad,
Yes honestly, it's true.
He pressed 'control' and 'enter'
And disappeared from view.
It's devoured him completely
The thought just makes me squirm.
Maybe he's caught a virus
Or been eaten by a worm.
I've searched through the recycle bin
And files of every kind.
I've even used the Internet
But nothing could I find.
I asked Jeeves in desperation
My searches to refine.
The reply from him was negative
Not a thing was found online.
So, if someday in your 'In Box'
My Granddad you should see.
Please 'Scan', 'Copy' and 'Paste' him
In an e-mail back to me.



PRAYER LETTER No 193

Who, where and what is Love?

The word **LOVE** is used in so many ways and situations and is bounded about to describe people, places, things, food etc.

e.g: I love a certain person/s.....
I love the taste of.....
I love the smell of.....
I love the sight of.....
I love the sound of.....

Love encompasses our senses and emotions, so what does the word LOVE mean to you?

This month on February 14th people of all nationalities celebrate Saint Valentine's Day. Valentine was a Roman Christian priest in the 3rd century AD who was executed for his Christian faith and for helping and supporting other Christians also being persecuted because of their faith in God and Jesus. Claudius was the Roman Emperor at that time and was notorious for executing many people particularly those of this 'new faith' Christianity. Legend has it that when Valentine was imprisoned he healed the Jailors daughter. The night before his brutal execution, he wrote her a letter and signed it 'from your Valentine.' Centuries later Valentine was made a Saint of the Catholic Church.

In the UK Valentine's Day named after Saint Valentine is usually celebrated by people sending cards, flowers or chocolates to a particular person they love; Red is predominately the colour of the cards and flowers representing the colour of the heart. The heart is the lifeblood of our bodies. Without the heart pumping our blood to our vital organs we would die.

We are reminded in the Bible that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to die that we may have eternal life. Jesus Christ was crucified, shed blood, as a Redeemer for us so that we could be re-united with God.

Many songs and hymns express love in many different ways. Christine Rossetti's poem '**Love came down at Christmas**' was set to music and continues to be a popular carol at Christmas time. John Stainer's hymn '**Love Divine all loves excelling**' is another popular hymn describing our love towards God and Jesus. The secular song 'Where is love?' from the musical 'Oliver' is a real tear jerker.

There are many examples in the Bible of God's **love**. When Nicodemus, a member of the ruling Jewish Council came to Jesus asking many questions. Within Jesus' long reply in John Chapter 3, Jesus said 'God so **loved** the world that he gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

The Pharisees questioned Jesus about which was the greatest commandment. Jesus replied saying 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it.' Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

A very famous passage in Paul's letter to the Corinthians Ch 13v 4-8 (which is often read in Marriage Services) explains quite clearly what **LOVE** is

Love is patient Love is kind Love does not envy
Love is not rude Love is not self seeking Love is not easily angered
Love does not keep a record of wrongs Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the
truth Love always protects Love always trusts Love always hopes
Love always perseveres Love never fails

How do you show your love to your family, friends, acquaintances, strangers?

My Grandson asked what I was writing about. When I replied 'love' he said. 'Love' is like giving away the last piece of cake!!

God sent His Son in Love. Jesus gave His life for Love. The Holy Spirit sends us and helps us show that love to others in the ordinary things of life, the physical and mental as well as the spiritual.

The 3rd verse of Christine Rossitti's poem 'Love came down at Christmas' could be a summary of Jesus' commandment in Matthew

**'Love shall be our token
Love be yours and Love be mine
Love to God and all men
Love for plea and gift and sign.'**

Love and Blessings

Beryl

Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Beryl (703717)

Congratulations to:

Norline Martin & Wendell La Fortune on their wedding on 14th December 2019 in Kingston, Jamaica, and the service was conducted by Rev Norman Francis



The following article has been submitted by Pat Brent

Great rejoicing at the end of last year the new clinic, now has a roof, a floor and the walls have been rendered.

On the lorry which left Kent early December and is due to arrive in Malawi later this month, (weather and customs allowing), equipment for the clinic donated by two hospitals, one in Manchester and one in

Holland; they have donated beds, walking frames, crutches, and a wheelchair. There were also new shelves for the library and books for the students to use.

Request: If anyone has an unused CD/Cassette player, at the back of a cupboard, preferably with headphones or ear-pieces but they must be battery operated no electricity in the outback!

These are for the use of the Pastors and students studying for the Ministry. I can arrange for them to go on the next lorry, hopefully in June

The following article, written & submitted by Pip Cartwright, is a continuation from the last edition, and is entitled:

The Growth of WCC

At this point in our history I thought it would be appropriate to say we have had some eminent Ministers and academics in our Church, many from overseas. The Rev. Dr. Graham Twelfthree is at present Acting Principal of the London Bible College (London School of Theology) brought up in Australia and he was our student Pastor in 1975-1977.

In 1933-1937 we had another eminent Minister the Rev. Dr. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, also from Australia. Here is his story:

Rev. Dr. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones B.A. (1905-1991)

Hubert Cunliffe-Jones was the minister of our church here in Witney between 1933 and 1937. He researched the history of our church and wrote a small booklet "History of Witney Congregational Church 1662-1935". The account was first published in "The Witney Gazette" on June 8th, 15th and 22nd of 1934. These articles were most popular and so they were later reprinted and published as a small booklet.

Although I did some research myself in the County Archives, his booklet was invaluable to me and to a great extent I relied on it when writing my own articles upon our church history in our Church Magazine some years ago.

As regards his life, I gained information from the internet and especially from Rev. Alan Argent's book 'The Transformation of Congregationalism 1900-2000.'

According to Alan Argent he was "one of the few notable theologians produced by mid-twentieth century Congregationalism".

After studying theology at Yorkshire United Independent College in Bradford, Hubert's father, Walter Cunliffe-Jones, emigrated to Australia with his wife Maude.

Hubert was born in Strathfield, now a suburb of Sydney, New South Wales, on 30th March 1905. He was educated at Newington College (1917-1921) and read for his B.A. degree at Sydney University (1922-1925). He went on to study theology in Melbourne and Sydney. Between 1928 and 1929 he was minister of

Warrmambool Congregational Church, Victoria and from 1929 to 1930 he was the travelling secretary for the Australian Student Christian movement.

In 1930 he came to the United Kingdom and began research at Mansfield College, Oxford. For three years he was on the executive of the World Student Christian Federation.

In 1933 he married Maude Edith Clifton and in the same year took up his ministry in our Church in Witney until 1937. It was during this time that he researched our history and wrote the booklet I spoke of earlier.

In 1937 Hubert moved on to become theological tutor at the Yorkshire United Independent College in Bradford where, previously, his father had studied before emigrating to Australia. Later in 1947 Hubert became the Principal of the College.

His reputation grew.

In 1956 Edinburgh University awarded him an honorary D.D. as did Chicago Theological Seminary. In 1957-1958 he was chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (C.U.E.W.). It was during this year that his college merged with the Lancashire Independent College to form the Northern College. In 1958 the College moved to Manchester where Hubert also lectured at the University. In 1966 he was appointed to the new chair in the History of Doctrine at Manchester University so he resigned from the Northern College.

From 1968-1973 he became the Professor of Theology at Manchester University and when he retired he was Professor Emeritus.

He was remembered for many innovations in ministerial training and influenced many young ministers during his time at Yorkshire College. He wrote a number of books and commentaries which showed his wide ranging theological interests. During the 1960s he was involved in the discussions which led to the basis of the union of the CCEW and the Presbyterian Church of England.

In August 1989 his wife died and 18 months later he followed her (January 3rd 1991) leaving his family of two daughters and two sons.



Pray in 2020 on the 20th of each month at 20:20 for 20 minutes. Pray... that God will give many opportunities to speak about Christ (Colossians 4:3 NLT).

This is the invitation from HOPE Together to Christians of all denominations. Through Prayer 2020 we are asking God to work through all that is done in 2020 – personal witness; church outreach plans in villages, towns and cities; stadium events – evangelisation in all its many forms. 2020 is such a significant year and Prayer 2020 is a key part of the year.

To CTiW:

INVITATION TO PRAYER 2020 - 20TH OF EACH MONTH AT 20.20 FOR 20 MINUTES

On the evening of the 20th of each month join together with other Christians from the town to pray. Rain or shine or snow, come to the **Market Square at 20:20** (that's 8.20pm) and pray for our town for 20 minutes.

If you can't be there maybe set a reminder and pray wherever you are - joining with thousands of others around the country praying for our towns and cities and this nation. Hope to see you there.

Thursday 20th February 2020

Lord Jesus, thank you for your amazing love. We pray for every evangelist sharing your good news of eternal life. May they be given humility, grace and boldness to clearly invite all they meet to believe in and follow you (John 5:24).

Friday 20th March 2020

Abba Father, thank you for gift of the Bible, your living word to us today. Give us the confidence to give your word to those who don't yet know you so they can hear you speaking to them. Help us to read it with them and help them to know you for themselves (John 6:35).

Monday 20th April 2020

Risen Jesus, we rejoice in your resurrection. Help us to live today embracing the gift of life and hope that you have made available to everyone. We pray for those who don't yet know you, that we would be powerful witnesses to the great hope of resurrection for all (John 11:25).

Wednesday 20th May 2020

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Help me to pray for five people who don't yet know you. Please work in their lives to open their hearts and minds to your love and truth shown to us in Jesus. Help me to speak to them about you. May they be led by the Holy Spirit to repent and follow you (John 15:1).

Saturday 20th June 2020

God of all generations, we thank you for every young person that has put their trust in you. We pray that they would be given confidence and boldness to share their story with their friends. Give them support through family, friends and youth leaders to enable them to follow in your ways (John 14:6).

Monday 20th July 2020

Gracious God, thank you for the Hope Spaces giving people who don't know Jesus a chance to experience his love and hope for themselves. We pray for all who visit, write prayers and engage, that they will discover the answer to their prayers is in coming to know Jesus (John 15:7).

Thursday 20th August 2020

Living Lord Jesus, thank you for the festivals, Bible weeks and summer missions run by Christians from different denominations. May the impact of us all working together in unity continue through churches in every community so that many people will put their trust in Jesus Christ (John 17:20).

Sunday 20th September 2020

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all those people who will be joining groups to learn more about the truth of Jesus this autumn. We pray for questions to be answered, for fears to be removed and for healing to be experienced, as they encounter more of your grace and truth (John 10:7).

Tuesday 20th October 2020

Lord Jesus, we bring to you today all those who are feeling far from you, whether through choice or life circumstances. We pray that you will bring people alongside them to bring comfort and give them the courage to come to you for help (John 7:37).

Friday 20th November 2020

God of compassion, thank you for coming to seek and save the lost. Help us in all that we do to look out for those in our communities who are living on the margins. May we always seek to bring your love and justice (John 10:14).

Sunday 20th December 2020

Gracious Father, thank you for sending Jesus into our world to bring hope for all. We ask for the light of your love to reach into many hearts this Christmas season and draw those we have been praying for to put their trust in you (John 3:16).

Space left to put your thoughts:



The following article, written by Canon David Winter, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

25 February –Shrove Tuesday: Who’s for pancakes?

Why do we have pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Day, as we call it today? And what is Shrove Tuesday? And why do thousands of people feel it rewarding to race along a street somewhere tossing pancakes from their frying pans as they go?

Well, the answer to the first question is that it is the day before Lent begins and for well over a thousand years that has meant it was the last chance to enjoy meat, fat and other tasty dishes until Easter Day. The ‘Lent Fast’ was widely and strictly observed. The food in the larder wouldn’t keep for six weeks so it had to be eaten. With all these rich foods no wonder the French call it ‘Fatty Tuesday’ – Mardi Gras.

So, what have pancake races got to do with all this solemnity? ‘Shrove’ is an old word for ‘forgiven’ and in those days to prepare for the rigours of Lent people would want to confess and seek forgiveness – not quite what you want at a party. The answer is quite simply enjoying yourself while you can! So, on Shrove Tuesday this year let’s have some fun and make it last as long as possible.

The most convincing (and amusing) of the explanations of pancake races is of outwitting the Sexton who rang the curfew bell that marked the start of Lent. He was reluctant to do it while the race was unfinished. So, the revelry caused by dropped pancakes, postponed the inevitable.

Since the Reformation it has not been so rigorously observed in Britain, but still people will resolve to ‘give up something for Lent’. Six weeks is about right as duration and Sunday has always been

exempt but make the most of those pancakes. They may well not reappear until April 12th!

The following article has been written & submitted by Lesley Barter, and is entitled:

Reflection on the Advent Quiet Day: What’s in a Name?

Does God need a name? Do we demean Him by craving one and thereby reducing Him to human level? Does this somehow make Him smaller and containable? The Almighty, Lord, Yahweh, Ancient of Days, Jehova...

Why do we need to do it? Probably for the many reasons not to: It is hard to love an all-seeing, disembodied entity – everywhere, all around us. We find the concept creepy and our limited vision causes us to fear what has no human characteristics. That is why Jesus makes such a difference. We can visualise God in human form, we can see His good works. We can admire them and relate to Him on a personal level

Would it be possible to love God without the existence of Jesus? We could fear Him and we could worship Him – but *love* Him? Let us look at the Old Testament to see whether the Israelites loved or simply venerated God. In Psalm 112 David says ‘*Blessed is the man who fears the Lord*’. Psalm 128 ‘*Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord*’ and yet it is from the Old Testament that we get the overarching commandment to love the Lord God with all our hearts, souls and minds.

So, if it helps us to communicate with a God who we now know as ‘The Father’ let us embrace it and do so. After all, Jesus himself said ‘*He who loves me will be loved by my Father*’ John 14 v 21.

The following article has been written & submitted by Clare Ellis, and is entitled:

Advent Quiet Day: A Personal Reflection

What's in a name?

At the start of the day (led by Revd Joy Hance) approximately 13 of us gathered together at Witney Congregational Church. We were invited to consider the importance of names and their meanings.

We began of course with the meaning of the name Jesus, which means 'Saviour'. We also thought of some of the other many names that our Lord is known by, for example: Abba, Father...

Then we learnt some of the meanings of the names of people in the Bible whilst considering how people, who followed the Lord, were sometimes given a new name to represent this change.

Each of us was then handed the commonly held meaning of our name and asked to consider it. Did we like our name? Did it suit us? Had we been given nicknames along the way? What kind of names had been used to describe us?

We then considered the old nursery rhyme: "Sticks and stones may break our bones but names will never hurt us" and how we all know that to be untrue!

We went to our own quiet space to consider, and respond, in our own way. Perhaps to pray, to draw, write or colour.

I considered the truth of my own name.

Bright

I thought, well I can say I am a 'bling' type of person; I enjoy the bubbles and sparkles of life.

Clear

...well, my motives are always straightforward if sometimes misguided! I would be a hopeless politician or diplomat. However, I am very truthful (a very double-edged blessing if ever there was one) and I am usually enthusiastic.

Clear: I reflected. My life has felt so unclear, so much difficulty, so much confusion. I found myself scribbling a dark tangle of colours.

Bright: Where is the light? I asked myself. Where is the clarity? Where is the hope?

Some bible verses drifted into my consciousness:

First, Ephesians, armour of God: "I am a lamp to your feet and a light to your path".

Here is the clarity! Praise the Lord! For our God is great. Between the word and our relationship with God, we will be guided during life.

"I am the light and the truth: whoever follows me will not die but live forevermore". I thought about my personal living death before I recognized my heavenly Father's call.

I felt sorrow for the wrong turns but I remembered everything is all in God's time, not our own, and when he is ready the Lord will use us, if we let him, how he wants to.

Then I thought about all of the names I have been called in my life-time: many not positive (sometimes deserved), but also this over-riding thought occurred to me: I *didn't* deserve to be called all those names, they weren't true! I felt indignant and a little surprised. Furthermore, I realised a large proportion of these names I had been called were cruelly used against myself! I felt sorrow for myself and to God for my omissions and sins and for the lack of kindness with which I had acted. After all I am of God's creation.

As suggested earlier I began to visualise the names that I didn't want, or no longer fitted, and began placing them into an imaginary basket. Well I soon got bored with this and, after a while, just scooped up handfuls of them and chucked them all in before unceremoniously dumping the lot into an imaginary stream!

Faith is believing in what we cannot yet see, but believe in, which brings hope. For who can face life, or death, without hope? Faith in prayer, faith in action, faith in the promises of our heavenly Father...

At this point I decided to take a break. I sat in the window seat; semi curled up, and soon nodded off to the sound of the heavy rain beating down against the window outside. After twenty minutes or so I was woken by a loud clear thought entering my mind. Although it was loud and clear enough to wake me from my sleep it also had lightness and a bubbling joy, within itself. It said:

"I delight in you"

Happy and incredulous I managed to stumble...

"and I delight in you, Father"

What a wonderful day. Thank you to all concerned.

Bible Study

In this edition, and with permission from Ken & Marjorie Lee's family, and in memoriam to Rev Ken Lee, a series of Bible Studies, written by Ken and first submitted back in 1999, will be re-produced and is entitled:

MEANDERING IN MARK

"Meander" means "To wander deviously or aimlessly". Perchance this is not too accurate a description of these studies; it is hoped that they are not too devious nor totally aimless. However, the term "meander" is used to indicate an approach which takes its time, stops as needful to let a thought, an idea, an insight develop - all with the purpose of seeing what the Lord has to say to his people. May He speak, and to Him be the glory.

13 Mark 5: 1- 20

The storm has been stilled; Jesus and his awestruck disciples arrive at the further shore of the Sea of Galilee. Mark's record has not made clear what was their intended destination other than it was the other shore from where they had set out. Now, however, he describes their landing place as in "the country of the Gerasenes". Mark (in v.14) creates the impression that the city is not far from the shore of the lake. However, the city of Gerasa, one of the more important of the semi-independent group of Graeco-Roman cities known as the Decapolis, actually lay some 50 kilometres to the south-east of the Sea of Galilee. Mark's geography is obviously somewhat unreliable although we may assume that he reported the location in good faith from the information he had been given.

Further, by naming a particular and fairly well-known region, Mark does make very strongly the point that this story about Jesus takes place in non-Jewish territory. The event Mark now records, the second of the four enacted parables, or acts of power recounted at this point in his Gospel, is set firmly among Gentiles.

Why had Jesus come to this place? Was it simply to get away from the crowds or was

there a deeper purpose? As Jesus disembarks from the boat he is met by a man with an unclean spirit. The narrative conveys a sense of expectancy, almost as though Jesus had come by appointment to meet with this man. He is a man in great need. Because of his particular disability, his possession, he is an outcast from society. Over the weeks, or months, or years since he became mentally unbalanced he has been forcibly restrained by his fellows, bound and chained. However, despite people's best efforts, no restraint has been able to hold him. His strength (and determination?) is such that he has broken every fetter and no one has been able to subdue him. Coercion has failed. Lost and lonely, unwanted by others and, no doubt, feared by many, the man has made himself a home in some nook or cave among the tombs, and spends his time in wandering abroad, bemoaning his fate and, in his despair, practising self-mutilation. Here is a picture of a person who does not fit a community's expectation as to how to live and behave. Everyone has given up trying to relate to him in any positive manner.

Now Jesus has come upon the scene. The man sees Jesus from afar and runs towards him. Can you picture the scene and the reaction of the disciples as this gaunt, partially clothed, ragged dirty figure bears down upon them shouting at the top of his voice? See the disciples shrinking back behind Jesus, their nerves still on edge from the terror of the storm. Yet Jesus had saved them from the storm; would he not also save them from this madman? As the man approaches Jesus speaks to him - or rather speaks to that evil which deranges him, which possesses him: "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." Nothing apparently happens! So far as cleansing the man of that which troubles him, these words of Jesus have no effect; more depth of relationship is needed to make this man whole. The man flings himself down before Jesus; he prostrates himself in an attitude of worship and supplication as he addresses Jesus by name. Here, once more in his narrative, Mark pictures the

demon-possessed as knowing who Jesus is.

Significantly, the title given to Jesus by this man is "Son of the Most High God". "Most High God" was a common term used in Hellenistic (Greek) cults and was often used by Gentiles as a title for the god of the Jews, especially when they wanted to flatter or placate a Jew. This demoniac was neither flattering nor placating Jesus; rather was he pleading with Jesus not to torment him. "I adjure you by God" he cries. The man is calling upon whatsoever god he as a Gentile and Jesus as a Jew may hold to be sacred to grant him help through Jesus. Somehow the man knows that this is the "crunch moment", this is his one and only opportunity to be made whole. He is determined not to let the opportunity pass and so seeks to bind Jesus by the power of God to take away his torment, a torment which is much worse at that moment as he comes face to face with the opportunity of deliverance. Such is one interpretation, yet these words "I adjure you by God" may also be seen as an attempt by the unclean spirit within the man to repel Jesus in whom it recognises a power greater than its own. Whatever the meaning, the scene is set for a decisive conflict which will decide the man's fate.

Jesus acts in order to deepen his incipient relationship with the man. He addresses that which troubles the man, the spirit which possesses him: "What is your name?" The unclean spirit has already been able to resist Jesus's call to come out of the man: has the man sufficient desire, sufficient control over that spirit within him to surrender his name to Jesus? If he does so, such was the common understanding of possession by evil spirits, he would be yielding power to Jesus, making himself vulnerable to control by Jesus. The evil yields before the good. "My name is Legion; for we are many" comes the reply. The man has revealed the depth of his problems. His whole being is controlled by an internal conflict in which he is being pulled this way and that way by conflicting powerful forces within, so many of them that he thinks of them as a legion - as many as six thousand

differing personalities. Those multitude of personalities are so real to him that in order for him to be free from them they need to be found an alternative home. He spies a great herd of swine nearby - another sign that the event is in Gentile territory for pigs were unclean to the Jews. "Send us into the swine" pleads the man. The man picks for himself the sign which he needs to be convinced that something real has happened to him, that he is indeed made whole. Jesus lets the man have that which he needed; he gives the evil spirits permission to enter the pigs. They leave the man. The pigs, possessed by the legion, rush down the cliff side and tumble over into the sea to perish. The man is made whole.

The destruction of around 2000 pigs a difficult event with which to come to terms. Surely Jesus could have found some other way of freeing the man from the evil which possessed him! Jewish readers of Mark's report would not have even considered the possibility of an alternative; pigs were such unclean animals that their destruction was an added bonus to the healing of the man. Gentile readers often question the event both because they regard the lives of the pigs as valuable in themselves and because they are conscious of the loss of valuable property experienced by the pigs' owners. Some commentators have even suggested that the verses regarding the destruction of the pigs are a later addition to the story designed to show how the presence of Jesus began to clear the Gentile land of uncleanness. Such an interpretation does however continue to regard pigs as ritually unclean animals which seems at odds with later Christian understanding such as that shown in Peter's vision recorded in Acts 10:9-16. So the problem remains. We can however note that Mark does not say that Jesus sent the evil spirits into the pigs but rather that "he gave them permission". "Legion" asked to enter the swine since it (they?) could no longer possess the man. The act of destruction of the swine can then be regarded as the last desperate act of defiance by "Legion" even though it was also an act of

self-immolation. An alternative interpretation is to make a value judgement along the lines that one whole man is worth more than 2000 pigs. Such a judgement is often rightly made in our world today where, theoretically at least, a human life is regarded as more valuable than property. Yet we might also ask how many people went hungry or even starved for the lack of 2000 pigs?

The story moves on: the swineherds, obviously upset by the loss of their charges and possibly also of their livelihood, rush off through the surrounding country to the town telling the news of what has occurred. A crowd of curious people rapidly gathers at the site. They find Jesus and his disciples together with the man "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind". Three startling things are here recorded. The man was sitting: gone was the rushing about, the feverish activity, the threatening attitude - he was in a position to receive from and to relate to others. The man was clothed: someone, possibly the disciples, had found him clothes and he was wearing them, behaving like a rational thinking being, conforming to the customary expectations of the society from which he had so long been excluded. And the man was in his right mind: there was something about his whole look and posture which told them that this was a man who was in control of himself, capable of facing life and making sound and sober judgements; here was a man to be reckoned with but in a totally different way from heretofore. "They were afraid." So Mark records. Previously they had been afraid of the demoniac but now they were just afraid. Afraid of what? They heard the story of what had happened and "began to beg Jesus to leave their neighbourhood". Their fear was of what Jesus might do, of the power that they recognised must dwell in him. They recognised that Jesus would be a far more disturbing and challenging presence than ever the demoniac had been and so they brought what verbal pressure they could to bear upon him, to get rid of Jesus from their midst. Jesus, as always, then and now, when not wanted, prepares to depart.

Again we can picture the scene with Jesus stepping into the boat as the disciples prepare to push it out onto the sea while the crowd watches from higher up the shore. But see also, the erstwhile demoniac hanging on to the boat, begging Jesus to be allowed to come with him. Jesus refused to let the man come with him. The Greek word here used is *ἀφένε* which can also be translated as "let go" but is most commonly translated in the New Testament as "forgive". The refusal of Jesus is a refusal to allow the man to escape from the past with all its suffering and wrongs.

Instead he calls upon the man to let go of these things, to forgive the wrong done to him, to forgive the way he has been treated by those who were supposed to be his friends and neighbours. It is as though Jesus says "Don't run away from the past but carry its redemption into the future." Jesus then gives to the man a charge quite different from that given to any of those whom he has healed previously - he tells the man to go home to his friends and tell them what the Lord has done and the mercy which has been shown to him. Whereas those healed by Jesus in Jewish territory, in the area where Jesus may be expected to travel himself, have been told not to tell of what has been done for them, here in a Gentile land, this man is given the task of proclaiming what he has experienced of God at work through Jesus. His brief is very wide for the phrase usually translated as "friends", or "family" bears the meaning of "all your people". The man accepts his charge and goes forth throughout the whole area of Decapolis to tell what Jesus has done. What is proclaimed is what Jesus has done. And, so Mark records, everyone was amazed. Thus these Gentiles are faced with the question to answer for themselves: Who is this Jesus? Meanwhile Jesus together with his disciples, who are no doubt seeking to answer the same question following this further mighty act, set sail again across the Sea of Galilee.





The following letter, from Lendwithcare, has been received & submitted by David Kinchin

Dear Witney Congregational Church
As 2019 draws to a close I want to briefly report on our successes

This year you have loaned over £5.5 million to almost 20,000 entrepreneurs and I would like to thank each and every one of you. This takes the total since Lendwithcare began ten years ago to £26 million, giving 126,000 small business people hope and opportunity

Thank you so much again for all the loans you've made and the lives you've changed. We could not reach as many entrepreneurs around the world without the support of lenders like you

I am excited to see what challenges and opportunities 2020 will bring for us all

Don't forget to tell your friends and family about the impact Lendwithcare is having so we can grow to support even more entrepreneurs next year



Happy New Year,
Tracey Horner,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Horner'.

Head of Lendwithcare

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Oswald of Worcester: The saint for Leap Year

There is a saint for Leap Year: He is St Oswald of Worcester, who died on 29th February 992. His family story was extraordinary, and full of some surprising 'leaps', all by itself. It provides a tantalising glimpse of what happened to at least one of those pagan Viking warriors who settled in Anglo-Saxon Britain.

For Oswald's great-uncle had come to England c 865, as part of the 'Great Heathen Army' of Viking invaders. But his son, Oswald's uncle, Oda, forsook paganism, and not only converted to Christianity, but actually ended up as Archbishop of Canterbury. From there, Oda was in a position to help his nephew, Oswald, which he did.

Oda sent young Oswald to be educated at the abbey of Fleury, then a great centre of learning. There Oswald absorbed the Benedictine ideals which would guide his later life and work. Back in England, he became bishop of Worcester in 961, and with the support of King Edgar, eagerly joined in major reforms of the Anglo-Saxon church. In 972 Oswald was made Archbishop of York, and seems to have taken a great interest in renewing the church in the Danelaw. He founded Ramsey Abbey, which became one of the great Fenland monasteries.

Oswald was popular as an archbishop, and always washed the feet of the poor every Lent. On 29th February 992 he had just completed this service at Worcester when he collapsed and died. In later years, Worcester adopted both him and Wulfstan to be its two chief saints: they flank the tomb of King John, which is before the high altar in the cathedral.

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Nigeria named as key Christian persecution hotspot in 2020

As late last year Islamic State released a video claiming to show the killing of 11 Christians in Nigeria, persecution watchdog Release International named Nigeria as a country of special concern for 2020. Other persecution hotspots are likely to include Iran, Iraq, China and India.

A splinter group of Boko Haram produced the video claiming to show the beheading of 10 Christians in Nigeria and the shooting of an eleventh. The video was produced by the terrorist group, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Its release on December 26 appeared to be timed to coincide with the Christmas celebrations.

ISWAP claimed the hostage murders were in revenge for the death of IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who killed himself during an attack by US forces in October.

Voice-over commentary to the video stated: 'This message is to the Christians in the world. Those you see are Christians and we will shed their blood as revenge.'

The latest murders came as persecution watchdog Release International named Nigeria as a key country of concern for 2020.

Tens of thousands of Christians are being driven from their homes by the ongoing persecution in Nigeria. Nigeria's government appears to lack the will or the power to prevent the killings.

Christians in Nigeria are being targeted by three Islamist terror groups: Boko Haram, its offshoot ISWAP, and heavily armed Fulani militia who are killing thousands and taking over their villages.

Archbishop Ben Kwashi, says: "Across the north, the mainly Muslim Fulani have been taking land from predominantly Christian

farmers by force and occupying their villages.

"They attack, typically, in the middle of the night while people are sleeping. They shoot in the air and create panic to drive the villagers out. When the people flee from their houses into the darkness, the Fulani lie in wait with their machetes and cut them down. Again and again. And the government seems powerless to stop them."

Writing in a recent book, *Neither Bomb Nor Bullet* (Lion Hudson 2019), Archbishop Kwashi warns: "Nigeria has become the largest killing ground for Christians in the world today."

How do you feel about sharing your faith?

Perhaps you have been 'gossiping the gospel' for years? Maybe you even lead a small group, or are passionate about community outreach?

Or – perhaps you feel a quiver of panic at the very thought of talking about your faith. Society seems to be hostile, and so you struggle to know how to engage with people who think very differently from you.

If you struggle, then here is good news: Bible Society is keen to help you. It has recently launched a new website called Lumino (<https://lumino.bible/>) to do just that.

Lumino aims to support Christians who want to share the good news. It explains the different types of people you are likely to encounter, and their attitudes to the Bible and Christianity. Bible Society has found from research that "an estimated 20% of the population is open to the Bible, open to faith and interested in knowing more. What an exciting opportunity..."



‘Called to Follow’ – a new musical by Witney resident Heather Houghton

Who are you following? Who is your anchor? Can you help challenge others about who they are following? Come and see how you can get involved in this exciting venture for the end Sept/Oct 2020.

Two workshops/taster sessions at the Congregational Church Witney, OX28 6JF:

- **Thurs Feb 27th 7.30pm or**
- **Sat Feb 29th 2pm**

We need musicians (bring instruments), singers, dancers, actors and all type of practical and technical gifts: children and adults. Contact Judi Holloway

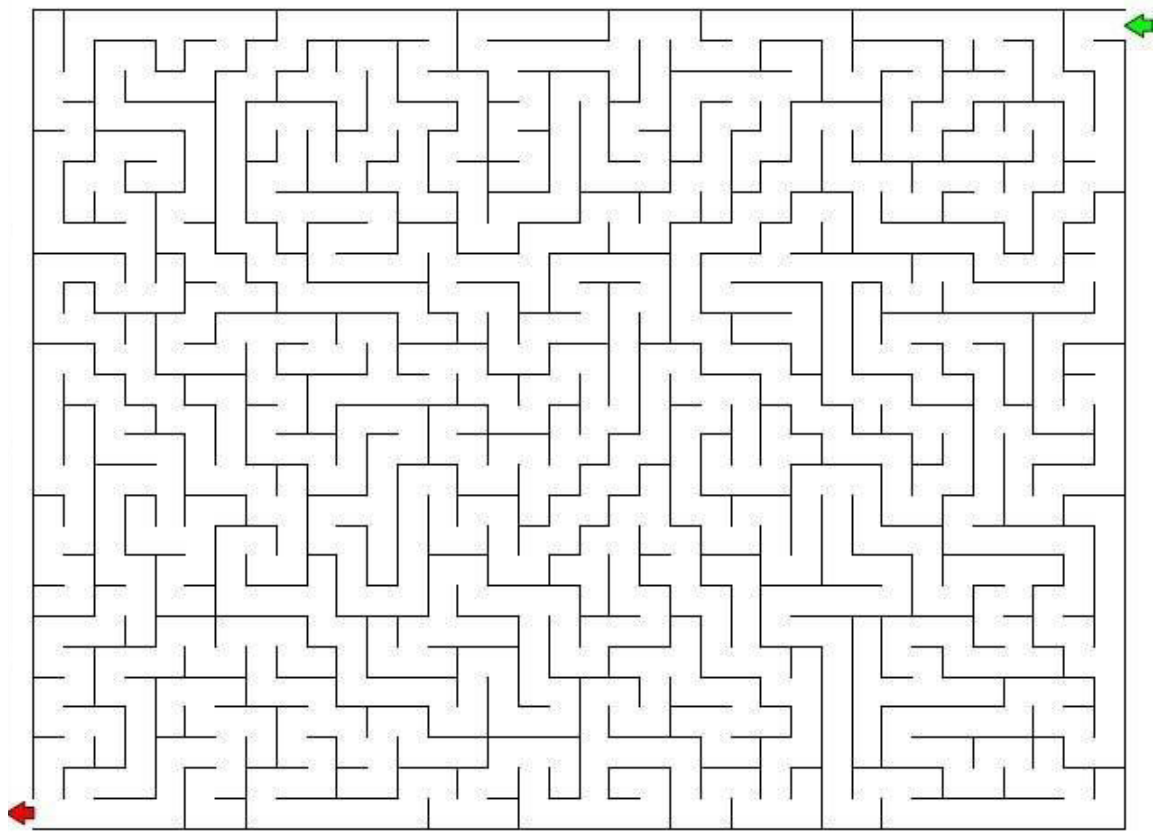
judi.holloway49@gmail.com

YouTube video at <https://youtu.be/9vOr3j1c2dE>

The work comprises 18 new songs that relate how Jesus called his 12 disciples to follow Him. Accompanied by the women, they learn more and more from Jesus and later, anointed by the Holy Spirit, go out into the world to encourage others to follow Jesus themselves. The drama is set in Galilee using the Bible accounts and is anchored around the family of Zebedee and his wife.

“Nazereth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip. Jn 1:48

www.christianmusicals.co.uk or www.heatherhoughton.co.uk



O	I	I	D	O	E	E	R	B	I	I	C	I	R	P
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Forty
 Days
 Baby
 Boy
 Public
 Appearance
 Mary
 Jewish
 Mothers
 Temple
 Jesus
 Purified
 Present

Presentation
 Light
 World
 Candlemas
 Simeon
 Nunc
 Dimittis
 Office
 Evening
 Prayer
 West
 Lord
 Festival