



# January Newsletter

We would like this monthly publication to be something that will lift your spirits and be thought provoking too! So there are articles, jokes and puzzles to keep you amused and smiling at this difficult time. Printed copies will be available in Lady St Mary Church and can be picked up at the 10am service and taken to people who do not have the internet and so if you can share it by posting a copy to a neighbour, being careful to practise all necessary precautions, please do so.

## News from the Ministry Team ...

Befana was very house proud and could usually be found cleaning or polishing or sweeping or tidying in her house. Befana also loved to welcome visitors to her home - despite the extra cleaning and tidying it meant she would have to do afterwards. So one morning early when three strangers rode into the village looking for somewhere to stay everyone directed them to Befana's house.

Befana was surprised when she found on her doorstep men wearing fine robes, and looking almost as though they might be Kings. They told her that they were travelling by night, following a star, and that they needed somewhere to sleep the day away. Befana invited them in. She sat them around her scrubbed wooden table, served them a meal and as they ate the men told her more about their journey; how they were following a star in the hope that it would lead them to a baby King who would one day be the saviour of the whole world. The men finished their meal, Befana showed them to their bedrooms, and as she cleaned and tidied the mess of the meal, she thought about what they had said. "Who was this king?" "Why was he so important?"

The men slept the day away. They woke as it started to get dark. Befana served them another meal, asking them the questions that had come to her mind, and then she waved them on their way. Just as they were leaving one of the men turned to Befana and said "You seemed very interested in our journey, why don't you come with us?"

Befana thought. It was a very tempting offer. But then she remembered the messy bedrooms upstairs that needed tidying, the laundry that needed doing,

and the mess of the meal to tidy once again. “Thank you” she said, “but no - I have too much to do here I can't come with you.” And so the men left.

Befana spent the evening cleaning her house and took herself to bed. But she couldn't sleep. By the time daylight arrived she had decided. And so, putting a few small gifts in her pockets, she set off after the three men in the hope of also finding the baby king.

Befana never did catch up with the wise men or find the baby Jesus; and to this day on January 5th children in Italy will put their empty shoes at the end of their beds because Befana, still looking for the baby, leaves a few sweets at every house where there is a child, in case they are the one that she is looking for.

Jesus still offers all of us the chance to meet with him. Let's not be like Befana and miss that chance when it presents itself.

Wishing you all a new year that is filled with hope. Hilary

## **January Bible Book Club - Jonah**

Last month's meeting of the Bible book club was thwarted by a power cut across Wareham at the exact time we were due to meet and so it had to be postponed. So now we will be studying the book of Jonah on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January, at 3.00pm. A Zoom link will be sent out in advance.

Jonah is a much-loved story and one that is very popular with young and old alike, but it is also very challenging and raises many questions. What sort of book is it, and what particular genre does it come under? Is it history, prophecy, wisdom or a mixture of all of these. What sort of example does Jonah give? The book ends with a big question from God to Jonah about whether he was right to be merciful or not. How might we interpret that today?

We will be following the Bible Society notes ([www.biblesociety.org.uk](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk) then look up Bible Book Club – Jonah). However, if you do not have access to the internet, or would prefer a hard copy of the notes and questions, please contact the Office. It would be good to have you join us.

Simon Everett

# Homegroups

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews wrote ‘Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.’

One of the ways we can spur one another on in our faith is by meeting together in small groups, such as home groups, where maybe half a dozen or so Christians study the Bible together and share things they would like prayer for. We already have 6 homegroups in our churches, some of which have spaces for more people to join, and I am also planning to start a new group in the New Year, to meet initially on zoom until we can all meet safely in person at my house. The time and day of this group will depend on the availability of those wishing to join it. You don’t need to be able to pray out loud, or to know lots about the Bible, or to read out loud: all are welcome and no questions are too silly to ask.

If you are not already in a homegroup, please ask God if this is something you should be doing, and if you are interested in joining a group please contact me at [curate@warehamchurches.org.uk](mailto:curate@warehamchurches.org.uk) or on 01929 288845. Helen.

## Could you help a family in need in our community?

Safe Families is a Christian charity which offers support, hope and belonging to improve the lives of families in local communities.



They link children, young people and families with local church volunteers who can offer them help and support. We are exploring how we could work with Safe Families to support families in our area, through things like befriending and practical help.

**“Safe Families is a fabulous body to encourage church members to become involved with. It demonstrates God’s love and care to those who are vulnerable and in need. It is a place for building caring relationships that can transform lives. Brilliant training and support are given.”** (Rt Reverend Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham)

If you would like to know more about what it would involve to become a volunteer, please speak to Stuart or Helen. You can also visit the Safe Families website at: <https://safefamilies.uk>

## A Will to do Good

On the twenty-seventh day of June eighteen hundred and six, the last will and testament of Mr Stephen Bird was published. In the overall scheme of things this was not exactly a notable event, there were plenty of other more memorable happenings that year, including the state funeral of Admiral Lord Nelson. However, for the parish of Wareham, the will of Stephen Bird would have a lasting impact, especially for the poor and disadvantaged.

Stephen Bird was a cordwainer, which means he made shoes (as opposed to a cobbler who repaired them!). At the time Wareham was a prosperous town with a thriving shoe making industry, Mr Bird would have been one among a number of manufacturers (by the mid nineteenth century there were twelve!). Obviously, he made a good living from this and was a man of means who thought carefully about what should happen to his estate when he died.

In his will he asks that the executors, collect all the debts owing to him and then for all his money to be placed in securities, with the interest of these being distributed annually to some named individuals, including his servant Amelia Bryant. When their lives had run their natural course, the money was to be kept in securities and the interest to be distributed by the minister and wardens of Lady St Mary church, to *'the poor inhabitants of every sect and denomination ... residing in the borough and town of Wareham'*. This was to happen on the 26<sup>th</sup> November every year. However, there was one proviso and that was that the last will and testament was to be read in church every three years, and if it did not then the money and benefits would be transferred to the parish of Portsmouth Common!

I am delighted to say that this has been carried out in Lady St Mary church every year, in order that it is not overlooked. (Although I am not altogether sure who checks up!) The money now sits in a charity called the 'Wareham Relief in Need and Sickness Charity', and thanks to some recent generous legacies and the good investment of the trustees, it continues to distribute gifts to anyone in need, who resides in the ecclesiastical parish of Wareham.

With the hardships brought about by the recent pandemic lockdowns the charity has been able to donate nearly £2000 worth of food to the Wareham foodbank as well as carpets, cookers, fridges, and help with payment of utility bills. It works closely with the CAB and Wareham Church Family Blessing Fund and ensures that any in genuine need are given as much help as possible. If you know of anyone going through a hard time at present, please let one of the clergy know, or churchwarden Merville Gover who is at present Chair of the trustees, to see if we are able to help in any way. All requests are treated in complete confidence, the only stipulation is that the applicant must live within this ecclesiastical parish of Wareham.

It is amazing that one man's forethought and social conscience has been able to help and assist so many people over so many years. Thank you, Stephen Bird. **S.E.**

# Holy Days - Epiphany 6<sup>th</sup> January

On 6<sup>th</sup> January we celebrate Epiphany - the visit of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus. But who were these Wise Men? No one knows for sure. Matthew calls them 'Magi', and that was the name of an ancient caste of a priestly kind from Persia. It wasn't until the third century that they were called kings - by a church father, Tertullian.

Another church father, Origin, assumed there were three - to correspond with the gifts given. Later Christian interpretation came to understand gold as a symbol of wisdom and wealth, incense as a symbol of worship and sacrifice, and myrrh as a symbol of healing - and even embalming. Certainly Jesus challenged and set aright the way in which the world handled all three of these things. Since the 8th century, the Magi have had the names Balthasar, Caspar and Melchior.

## **Where did the Wise Men come from?**

Magi from the East - it isn't a lot to go on. The Magi had originally been a religious caste among the Persians. Their devotion to astrology, divination and the interpretation of dreams led to an extension in the meaning of the word, and by the first century the Magi in Matthew's gospel could have been astrologers from outside of Persia. Some scholars believe they might have come from what was then Arabia Felix, or as we would say today, southern Arabia.

It is true that in the first century astrology was practised there, and it was the region where the Queen of Sheba had lived. She of course had visited Solomon and would have heard the prophecies about how one day a Messiah would be born to the Israelites and become their king.

Matthew's gospel (chapter 2) is clear that the Magi asked Herod: 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' So it is possible that in southern Arabia the Queen of Sheba's story of how a Messiah would one day be sent to the Israelites had survived. Certainly, there are a number of other early legends that connect southern Arabia with Solomon's Israel.

To many people this makes sense: that the ancient stories of a Messiah, linked to later astrological study, prompted these alert and god-fearing men to the realisation that something very stupendous was happening in Israel. They realised that after all these centuries, the King of the Jews, the Messiah, was about to be born.

One more interesting thing that gives weight to the theory that the Magi came from southern Arabia is this: if you study any map of Palestine as it was during biblical times, you will find that the old Arabian caravan routes all entered Palestine 'from the East'.

# It shouldn't happen to a Vicar...

## On how to deal with your church's correspondence

The Rectory  
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

You may have had several years of intensive training on biblical interpretation, preaching and church history, but that doesn't cover the really important matters in parish life: how to evade disgruntled parishioners, run a brisk Summer Fete and, in your case at present, deal with correspondence, either by letter or email.

My regular practice, which I recommend to you as a New Year Resolution, is to read all the letters/emails you receive and then discard them. If the matter is truly important, you will receive a second message, to which you respond; more likely, the sender will either have forgotten all about his first letter/email after the second month or will write to some other cleric instead. In either case, you will be saved a great deal of trouble.

You only need two folders for your filing system, either for post or emails. The first is for complaints; they are to be filed and ignored, no matter how many duplicates you are sent. Should you be confronted personally, you simply say that the matter has been passed on to the bishop. Those truly dogged complainants who pursue the matter will eventually receive an episcopal reply saying he knows nothing of the matter, for which you then blame the postal system/spammed email. After letters and emails have ricocheted round the country for many months, the person complaining will either have lost energy to pursue the matter, or the will to live.

The second file receives all other correspondence/emails chronologically. The earliest letters and emails will be at the bottom of the pile and the most recent on the top. In my experience, the postal file only needs attention when it reaches a height of about two feet and becomes unstable. The practice then is to discard the lower six inches and allow it to continue its steady growth. If the stack is kept in the church vestry, then mice usually attend to the papers on the bottom of the pile.

Sadly, your own church, with its electronic systems for filing, sorting and retrieving correspondence and with your parish secretaries, removes all of these blessings at a stroke. You have therefore no excuses for not dealing instantly with every note that comes your way. As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

May I also remind you that not even St Paul, that unflagging letter-writer, ever ended one of his letters with a request for a prompt reply. Need I say more?

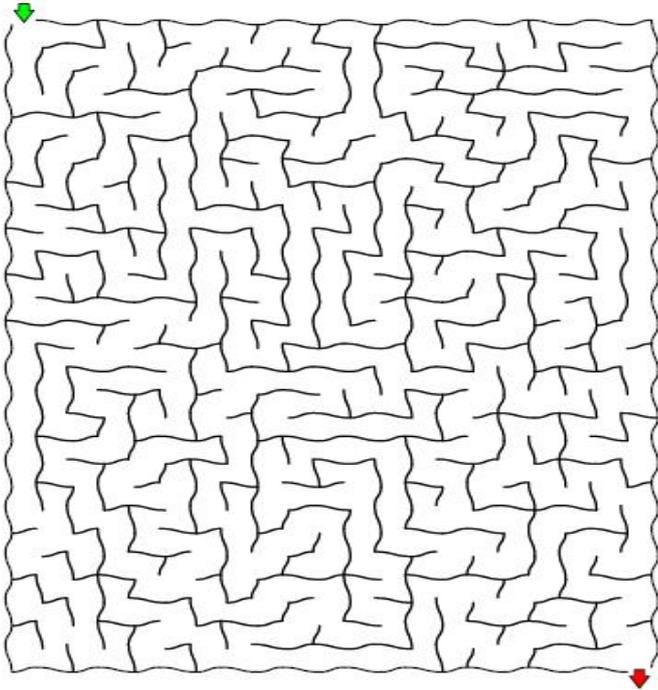
Your loving uncle,

Eustace

# Puzzle Page

The Maze

Sudoku



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	1						7	5
		8	9	5			3	
4	5			6				
				3			1	2
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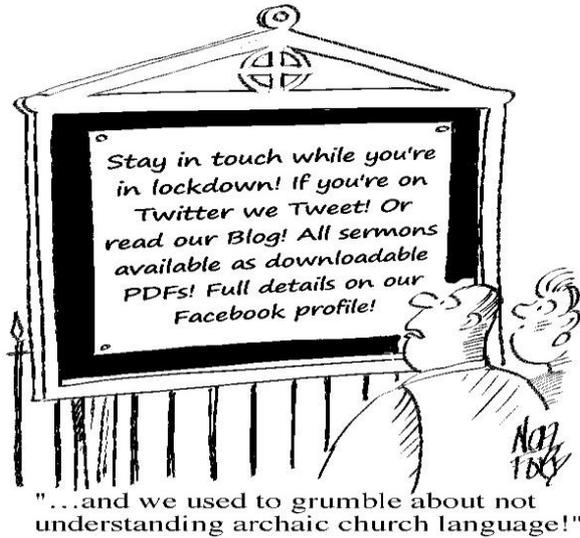
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Word Search

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

- Epiphany
- Wise
- Men
- Camels
- Baby
- Jesus
- Star
- Herod
- Worship
- Gold
- Frankincense
- Myrrh
- New
- Resolutions
- Bills
- Work
- Study
- Running
- Gym

# Something to make you smile!



## The cat

A vicar and his wife were going out for the evening, and carefully set the security lights and put the cat out. But when they opened the door to go to the taxi, the cat slipped back in and disappeared upstairs. Irritated, the vicar followed it.

The wife waited with the taxi driver. Not wanting him to know that they were leaving the parsonage empty, she said: "My husband is just upstairs for a quick word with my mother."

A few minutes later, the husband arrived, breathless. "Sorry I took so long" he said, "but she put up a fight! Stupid old thing was hiding under the bed and I had to poke her with a coat hanger and grab her by the scruff of the neck to get her out."

## Contact information

Members of the Team are available for confidential help, support and advice.

Please contact:

The Reverend Canon Simon Everett (Team Rector) Day off Friday 01929 289236

The Reverend Stuart Cocksedge (Team Vicar) Day off Friday 01929 550972

The Reverend Dr Helen Williams (Assistant Curate) Day off Monday 01929 288845

The Reverend Hilary Bond (Children's Worker and Pioneer Priest) Day off Friday 01929 551219

The Reverend Michael Young (Officiating Minister) Day Off Monday 01929 552582

The Reverend Brigid Barrett (Officiating Minister) Day off Tuesday 01929 553460

The Parish Office opening times are Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am – 1pm  
telephone: 01929 550905 or please do contact Debs Barclay any other time by Email:  
[parish.office@warehamchurches.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@warehamchurches.org.uk)