

# St George the Martyr Shirley



**Christ in the Community**



**December 2025**

**50p**

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The Book Reading Group offers a monthly opportunity to look at faith-based writing and swap your thoughts with others. See Book Reading Group section of church website and page 10.

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marybrown250@gmail.com

### Climate Crisis

What can I do?

- Learn the facts YES
- Speak up for change YES
- Work with others YES
- Reduce my own carbon foot-  
print YES
- Resign myself to the worst  
NO

### Slimming World

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**St George's Church Hall:**  
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Cheryl  
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### Spring Park Residents Association CHRISTMAS FAMILY QUIZ TRAIL

**Sunday 7 December: Start 4 pm at West Wickham and Shirley  
Baptist Church: Follow Wickham Road to Crown Pub—where  
Santa and Civic Mayor will be waiting. ENTRY FREE.**

# Services at St. George's Church

**Sundays 10 a.m. Sung Eucharist. Most Wednesdays 11 30 a.m. Said Eucharist.** The Sunday Eucharist will also be available via live-streaming. See website or newsletter for access to the on-line option. There are shared worship opportunities throughout the week. Please see centre pages. for details. We aim to avoid any changes, but illness, etc, may change things..

**Priest in Charge: The Reverend Jennifer Walpole** 2 The Grove,  
West Wickham BR4 9JS 07947 585 326  
020 8654 8747 rev.jennywalpole@gmail.com (Her main day off is Friday.)

**Hon. Curate: The Reverend Hilary Fife** 19 Greenview Avenue, Shirley, Croydon  
CR0 7QW 07931 761320

**Reader: Mr Ray Wheeler** 88 Palace View, Shirley, Croydon CR0 8QN  
020 8777 5271

**Reader: Mrs Liz Bebington** 79 Shirley Way, Shirley, Croydon CR0 8PL  
020 8777 4840

**Website:** [www.stgeorgeschurch.co.uk](http://www.stgeorgeschurch.co.uk)

**Parish Office:** [parish.office@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:parish.office@hotmail.co.uk) ZQQART



## A View from the South side : Liz Bebington

There's a lot of truth in the expression 'Those who fail to prepare, prepare to fail' but it does of course mean that you have to know what to prepare for. Here we are, early in December again, and looking around at the shops and adverts, it is obvious that Christmas is coming and we are being urged to get ready, to prepare, so that on The Day all will go well. Decorations and cards, Christmas food and suggestions for gifts we might like to give or receive abound. There often seems to be an assumption that we will all be spending Christmas surrounded by friends and family; with luxurious food and drink. But we know that is not the case and many of us will spend Christmas much more quietly, perhaps alone, with something special to eat, or watch on TV. Christmas is not a loud joyful time for everyone – some will be remembering someone who is no longer here with us to share the joy; others will be struggling to find the money to buy the gifts and food they wish. If this is you or someone you know, why not join us on December 21 for our Blue Christmas service in the Lady Chapel: peaceful and reflective.

Soon houses and front gardens will begin to be decorated with coloured lights—particularly in Pinewood Close off Shirley Church Road, where there are again plans to collect donations for charity from those who go to watch their light displays. (No cars please.) But in church we try to wait till Christmas Eve to hold our biggest celebrations and fully decorate the church itself. We prefer to keep early December as Advent - a time of preparation with reflection, of waiting in the darkness, knowing that if we wait, the joy of Jesus' arrival can be even greater. Celebrating Jesus' birth doesn't just bring physical light to the physically dark winter world, the Christmas story also brings the light of hope and love to the abstract darkness's of despair, greed, loneliness and grief, violence and selfishness that seem to prevail so easily. When we are able to rejoice in displays of colour and light, share good food, offer carefully chosen gifts, spend time with family and friends, give thanks to God in church and elsewhere, remember the story of the birth of a precious baby in a stable among strangers, far away from his mother's home.

I, and everyone at St George's, wish you a Happy and Blessed Christmas, when, however you celebrate, you can rejoice in God's light and love shining in the darkness.

*Christmas Greetings in St George's Languages**"Nollaig Chrìdheil."* (Scottish Gaelic)*Beannachtaí na Nollag ort:* " (Irish Gaelic)*"Que la paz y el amor de la Navidad te acompañen siempre."*  
(Spanish)*Meilleurs vœux pour un joyeux Noël!* (French)*"Fröhliche Weihnachten!"* (German)*"Wesoły Świąt Bożego Narodzenia"* (Polish)*Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda!* (Welsh)*"Krismasi Njema."* (Swahili)*"Felicem Natiuitatem"* (Latin)*"இனிய கிறிஸ்துமஸ்"* (Iniya kiristumas In Tamil)*"ප්‍රීතිමත් නත්තලක්"* (prītimat nattalak In Siingalese)*"E Ku Odun"* (Yoruba)*"Chag Molad Sameach"* (Hebrew)*"Krismus a di bess time fi share love"* (Jamaican)*"Καλά Χριστούγεννα!"* (Kalá Christougénna) (Greek)

□□□□! (yē dàn kuài lè!) — Happy birthday, Jesus! (Chinese)

*"Izwi rasarukwa Kristu Ruzhinji!"* (Blessed Christmas) (Shona)*"Mbote ya sikukuu"* (Lingala)*"Mukwai wa Bwino na Lesa Amona."* (Bemba)*"Veselé Vianoce a Stastny Novy rok"* (Christmas & New Year)  
(Slovak)

สุขสันต์วันคริสต์มาส (Sùk-sǎn wan krít-mâat) (Thai)

*I miei migliori auguri per un Natale pieno di amore*

(My best wishes for a Christmas full of love) (Italian)

*"Soh Alaha d'Yomadha"* (Joy of the Birth of Christ) (Aramaic)*Christmas Greetings continued**Ndikukufunirani mafuno abwino a Christmas ndi chisangalalo  
Cha Chaka chatsopano, Tchuthi chanu chikhale chodzadxa ndi  
Chikondi ndi Chimwemwe ndi chikombutso chabwino* (Wishing you a  
merry Christmas and a joyful new year. May your holidays be filled with love and  
laughter and wonderful memories.) (Chichewa)*Ngilifu-  
sela ukhisimusi omuhle lomnyaka moutsh olemtokozo, lama-  
langa okuphumula agcwele ngothando, injabulo lezikumbuzo  
ezinhle* (English as above) (Ndebele)*Ek  
wens jou'n geseende Kersfees en'n vreugdevolle nuwe jar toe  
Mag jou vakansie gavel wees met liefde en lag en wonderlike  
herrineringe.* (English as above) (Afrikaans)*Re le lelakaletsa Keresemose e Botes le ngwaga o moswa, A  
maikhhutso a lena a dale Leratole Lethabo le megapolo e  
mebotse.* (English as above) (Sotho)*聖誕快樂* (sing6 daan3 faai3 lok6) -(Merry Christmas) (Cantonese)*Vă doresc bucurie și pace!* (Wishing you joy and peace) (Romanian)*Jwaye Nwel"* (pronounced zhwah-yeh noo-eh!) (Guyanese Creole)*"Salamat Natal"* (Chinese/Malay) (Singapore)*Artweye akweke!* (Christmas gladness) (Aboriginal -(Australian)*Kia tau te rangimarie o te Kirihimete* - May the peace of Christmas be  
with you (Maori—New Zealand)

The term "St George's Languages" includes everyday languages; birth/family/partner/place of birth languages; country of origin languages; study languages; professional/business/work languages; worship languages. You can't worship at St George's without encountering, and indeed using, Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, Greek, and quite probably Shona: "Jesu tawa pano". The Maori and Aboriginal greetings reflect New Zealand and Australian St George's links,



## A Christmas Music Quiz

### Who wrote:-

1. I'm dreaming of a white Christmas?
2. Christmas Oratorio?
3. Baby, it's cold outside?
4. All I want for Christmas is you?
5. It's the most wonderful time of the year?
6. Let it snow?
7. Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer?
8. Wonderful Christmastide?
9. Have yourself a merry little Christmas?
10. Little Drummer Boy?
11. O Holy Night?
12. O Christmas Tree?
13. Twelve Days of Christmas?
14. Silent Night?
15. When a child is born?
16. Mistletoe and wine?
17. Saviour's Day?
18. The Nutcracker?
19. Carol Symphony?
20. L'Enfance du Christ?
21. A Ceremony of Carols?



## Overseas Missions and Postage Stamps and Christmas Cards

The long St George's tradition is that those who attend the church and who want to "send" a Christmas card to someone else who attends the church can put the card in a box in the church porch. No stamps required. The matching St George's tradition is making a donation to Overseas Missions (USPG) in recognition of the postage savings. This can be cash or cheque in a marked envelope; or an on-line donation to Overseas Missions through the church machine. This way you can combine a very local exchange of greetings with world-wide Christ activity.

## Churches Together in Shirley

St John's with All Saints

St George's

West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church



Our Lady's

Church of God Apostolic

Shrublands Christian Fellowship

Shirley Methodist

## Churches Together

in Shirley

**Unity Week Service: Sunday 18th January: 5 p.m. at St George's**

CTIS Prayers (hopefully with a Zoom option) at 7 30 p.m.  
at Shirley Methodist Church on Wednesday January 7th 2026  
at West Wickham And Shirley Baptist Church on Thursday March 12th  
followed by CTIS AGM

A CTIS prayer leaflet will be circulated for those months when we do not meet physically. If you would like to meet on Zoom to use the prayer leaflet together, let Brian McGinnis know before the end of the previous month.  
dunaigh2@btinternet.com

For further CTIS information, see the Churches Together in Shirley website  
**You can access details of Christmas services at the various churches via the CTIS Shirley (Croydon) website**



## The heart of Christmas: Friends, Family, Church and Love

Yvette Oburu

Christmas is more than bright lights, presents, and decorated trees - it is a season filled with love and togetherness. It's a special time when friends and family come together to share meals, laughter, and precious memories. Whether it's baking treats, watching movies, or simply talking around the table, these moments remind us of how important the people we love truly are.

Church also plays a beautiful role in Christmas. Many families attend services to celebrate the birth of Jesus, sing joyful carols, and reflect on kindness and gratitude. The peaceful messages shared in church bring hope and remind us to spread love to others, especially those who may be lonely or in need.

Above all, Christmas is a season of love - giving it, and receiving it, and showing it in small but meaningful ways. When friends support each other, when families gather with open hearts, and when communities come together in faith, the true spirit of Christmas shines the brightest,

### Peace, perfect peace.....

In the Old Testament, the primary Hebrew word for "peace" is *shalom* (*wholeness*), and it refers to relationships between people ([Genesis 34:21](#)), nations ([1 Kings 5:12](#)), and God with men ([Psalm 85:8](#)). A familiar friend (literally, "friend of my peace" in [Psalm 41:9](#)) is one with whom you would be at ease, a trusted companion. "Peace" was the standard greeting ([1 Samuel 25:6](#)), and is still used in many cultures today.

In the New Testament, the primary Greek word for "peace" is *eirene*, and it refers to rest and tranquillity. A key focus of peace in the New Testament is the advent of Jesus Christ, as announced by the angels in [Luke 2:14](#) ("Peace on earth . . ."). Isaiah had predicted the Messiah would be the Prince of Peace ([Isaiah 9:6](#)), and He is called the Lord of peace in [2 Thessalonians 3:16](#). It is through Christ's work of justification that we can have peace with God ([Romans 5:1](#)), and that peace will keep our hearts and minds secure ([Philippians 4:7](#)).



## Some notes for you to note

- ♥ **Deadline for the January magazine, Sunday December 21st**
- ♥ **The Bible Reading Group: Monday evenings 7 30 p.m. To 8 10 p.m. On Zoom.** See notes on the parish website. We are reading the Book of Revelation.. Tom Wright's "Revelation for Everyone" commentary available for everyone who would like to join us. Regular and occasional new members both welcome.
- **Book Reading Group:** The current reading list is: Divine Windows by David Gregory, Reflected in Nature by Claire Gregory, Donkey Roads and Camel Treks by Gemma Simmonds, Attentive to God by Tony Horsfall, and Dreaming of a Green Christmas by Olivia Warburton. Why not join us in exploring this rich variety of books?

## Artificial Intelligence without Limits

A recent BBC Radio 4 programme on artificial intelligence included AI to choose and book the concerts you attend—presumably to avoid those long queues to book the more popular concerts. It also envisaged AI choosing and buying your Christmas presents for friends—to avoid the hassle of making choices, and of going out to shop if you are still not doing everything on-line.

It struck me that all this is well short of the full AI possibilities. Going to concerts is itself a hassle, so why not get the robot to choose the concert, book the concert, *and go to the concert?* You can get the robot to feed back to your easily bored friends on what the concert was like.

As regards Christmas presents, the hard work is not just the choosing, getting and sending. It is also the deciding to whom presents should be sent, followed by reading and responding to the thank you letters..... Letters which inevitably enquire after your health and activities—even if the friend is not all that curious about either. So, *why not get AI to choose both the presents and to whom they go, and to do it as from the robot?* The recipient will be spared sending a thank you letter; and will have no temptation to enquire after the robot's welfare.

## Palestine and Israel: Rights and Wrongs



Last month, 36 people from various Christian denominations shared a Christian Aid webinar on Gaza etc. Two things stuck in the mind: 1) the Lord's Prayer being said in Arabic as we toured the displacement and devastation of Gaza; 2) the comment that Gazan children had been "un-childed". 700,000 Palestinians were expelled in 1948 when the UK and partners in effect re-created the Israel that had been effectively destroyed almost 2,000 years earlier, to host Jewish exiles scattered and persecuted all over Europe..and indeed the world—particularly Holocaust victims. (About 6 million Jews died in the Holocaust.) Assyrians and Babylonians had exiled Jews in the 8th and 6th centuries BC. It is easy to find Bible quotes to support the view that God gave Palestine to the Jews. Look a little harder, and find that God gave all created beings a created world to share.

## Yvonne Sussex



Yvonne died in CUH at the end of October. More recent members of St George's will not have met her, but may have sat on the seat dedicated to her husband Frank, by the memorial bed. An older generation will remember her work for the child clinic that was once hosted at St George's. Her two children (Elizabeth and Jonathan) attended St George's Sunday School, and Yvonne herself was a faithful attendee at our (then) 8 a.m. Holy Communion. She greatly valued the continuing contact with children grandchildren, and great grandchildren that enabled her to stay happily

in her own Ash Tree Way home until her last few weeks. We are grateful to her for her many years at the heart of the St George's community: a quiet but active part in who we are and what we do for very many years. We pray for her and her family, as she faithfully prayed for us. She kept doing so much despite increasing frailty: blessing and being blessed.

## Bee Trees

If your New Year resolution was to plant a tree, keep in mind the UK's 270 bee species (often under threat from habitat loss, climate change, and pesticides). The RHS recommends a number of bee trees - including **Tetradium danielli** (sometimes called the Bee-bee Tree); **Arbutus unedo** (the Strawberry Tree); **Tilia tomentosa** (Silver Lime); **Prunus avium** (Wild Cherry); **Acer platanoides** (Norway Maple); **Tilia cordata** (Small-leaved Lime); **Crataegus monogyna** (Common Hawthorn). As well as servicing bees (which service us), they look good and smell good. The Strawberry Tree is a late in the year flower producer. You can google for tree height etc details, or visit a nursery.

If a new tree is not on your "to do" list, think about the environmental benefits of a **log and/or branch pile** (beetles, fungi, maybe hedgehogs).



**Poetry Page: Mary's Lullaby: Tonight you are mine: Bertha Kleinman**

*All mine in your loveliness, Baby, all mine;  
 All mine in your holiness, Baby Divine.  
 Sing on, herald angels, in chorus sublime;  
 Sing on and adore, for tonight you are mine.*

*The wise men are coming to worship their king.  
 The shepherds are kneeling, their homage to bring.  
 Out yonder, the star over Judah will keep;  
 No harm can befall thee, then sleep, Baby, sleep.*

*Oh, let me enfold thee, my baby, tonight;  
 While legions are singing in joyous delight.  
 A new star has risen to hail thee divine,  
 For you are a king, but tonight you are mine.*

*Away, spectered future of sorrow and plight.  
 Away to the years that must follow tonight.  
 The pangs of Gethsemane, let them be dim;  
 The red drops on Calvary, not, Lord, for him!*

*Oh, let me enfold thee, my baby, tonight;  
 While legions are singing in joyous delight.  
 A new star has risen to hail thee divine,  
 For you are a king, but tonight you are mine.*

*All mine in your loveliness, Baby, all mine;  
 All mine in your holiness, Baby Divine.  
 Sing on, herald angels, in chorus sublime;  
 Sing on and adore, for tonight you are mine.*

**That odd business of praying: Number 171:  
Teaching children to pray**

Bible Reading Fellowship Ministries says: One of the Key Tools is Chat and Catch, equipping children to chat to God and catch his replies back. Because of course, God DOES answer back! In fact, he's often initiating the prayer conversation, inviting us in to chat with him. For children that can often feel like a fact they *know* rather than a thing they *experience* and delight in. If we can help them discover how to have a conversation with God that's just as normal as a conversation with dad in the car or grandma on Facetime, we

give them the gift of being able to connect with their heavenly Father whenever they want to.

BRF's Parenting for Faith offers much more detailed help. Have a look at the website if you want to explore further. Maybe you find that a set time and position and routine helps, but children (and adults) should not get stuck on the idea that God only listens if you are kneeling by your bed at 7 45 p.m. with eyes shut and hands clasped together; and using proper prayer words. Nor should they get trapped in what seems to be the adult conviction that praying is rattling of a string of requests to God, never giving God a bit of silence in which to reply.

Never tell a child that "God isn't interested in that sort of thing", or "God has more important things to think about". God is very ready to hear about how your day has been, and about what matters to you—even when parents find themselves a bit too busy or pre-occupied to give the child's concern priority. And God is very happy to hear the child's thoughts when the child's words fall short of requirements. If you think God really doesn't want to know when a child is angry about something, you must be questioning why we have preserved the angry Psalms for about 3,000 years! Better to shout at God than to shout at your friends: God can turn the anger into something more useful.

## New Year Resolutions

If you want to start the new year with your resolution, you probably need help now rather than in the January magazine. If I had started making lifetime new year resolutions at age 5, I would now be checking on how well I had managed (at least) 82 separate resolutions. So the list that follows consists of one-off resolutions, not on-going resolutions. One of them might appeal to you.

*Plant something unusual in the garden or window box*

*Write a letter to someone you have not been in touch with for some time*

*Buy a new Bible*

*Read St Luke's Gospel (maybe with commentary)*

*Say hello to someone you often see but never speak to*

*Try a new fruit or vegetable*

*Start a savings jar or savings account to fund an unbudgeted appeal*

*Say thank you to someone you normally take for granted*

*Learn how to say hello in their native language to someone you know*

*Learn about your local MP*

*If you don't already have a favourite good cause, research one*

*If you have a parent or grandparent whose "story" you don't know, ask*

*Learn the name of a tree or bush or flower or creature you know but can't name*

*Find out about why "small boat" people come here*

*If you don't already know, research the meaning of your family/friends first names*

## CHURCH DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2025

► Morning Prayer:

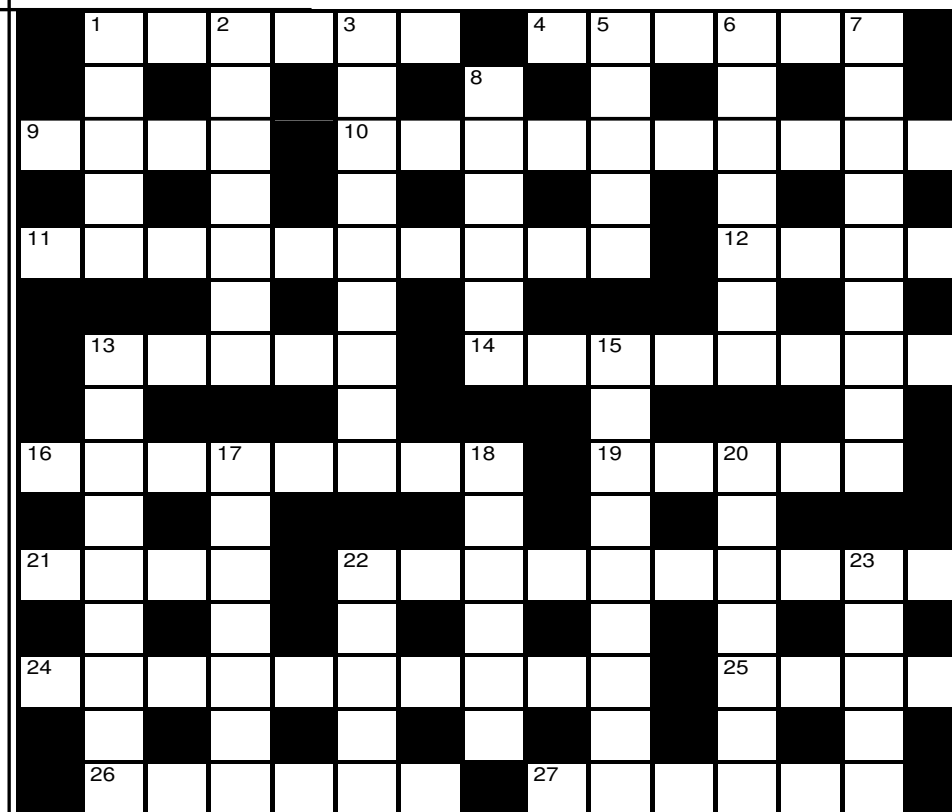
Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri 9.00am Zoom only

	► Mon 1 Dec	► Tue 2 Dec	
	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 9.30-11.30am Little Dragons 7.30pm Bible Reading Group 7.30-9.00pm Advent Course	Yvonne Sussex funeral 11 30 a.m.	10 10 Co 11 Ch
Sun 7 Dec ADVENT 2	► Mon 8 Dec	► Tue 9 Dec	
10.00 All-Age Sung Eucharist 5.00pm Deanery Confirmation	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 9.30-11.30am Little Dragons 7.30pm Bible Reading Group 7.30-9.00 Advent Course	Brownies and Choir at Peter Kennedy Court 6 15 p.m.	10 10 Co 11 Ch
Sun 14 Dec ADVENT 3	► Mon 15 Dec	► Tue 16 Dec	
10.00 Sung Eucharist 5.00pm Carol Service	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 9.30-11.30am Little Dragons 7.30pm Bible Reading Group 7.30-9.00 Advent Course		10 10 Co 11 Ch
Sun 21 Dec ADVENT 4	► Mon 22 Dec	► Tue 23 Dec	
10.00 Sung Eucharist 5.00pm Blue Christmas Service	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 7.30pm Bible Reading Group 7.30-9.00pm Advent Course		11 Ch 3. 11
Sun 28 Dec FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS	► Mon 29 Dec	► Tue 30 Dec	
10.00 Sung Eucharist			11 Ch



**ates for your Diary: Sunday January 18th - CTIS Unity Week Service 5 p.m. at St George's**

▼ Wed 3 Dec	▼ Thurs 4 Dec	▼ Fri 5 Dec	Sat 6 Dec
0.00am Church Cleaning 0.00-11.30am Advent course ..30am Eucharist - Lady chapel			Debbie Simpson's Wreath Making: Church Hall
▼ Wed 10 Dec	▼ Thurs 11 Dec	▼ Fri 12 Dec	Sat 13 Dec
0.00am Church Cleaning 0.00-11.30am Advent course ..30am Eucharist - Lady chapel		7.30pm Georgettes Christmas Social	
▼ Wed 17 Dec	▼ Thurs 18 Dec	▼ Fri 19 Dec	Sat 20 Dec
0.00am Church Cleaning 0.00-11.30am Advent course ..30am Eucharist - Lady chapel			
▼ Wed 24 Dec CHRISTMAS EVE	▼ Thurs 25 Dec CHRISTMAS DAY	▼ Fri 26 Dec	Sat 27 Dec
..30am Eucharist - Lady chapel 0.00pm Crib Service 0.00pm Midnight Mass	10.00 All-Age Family Service		
▼ Wed 31 NEW YEARS EVE			
..30am Eucharist - Lady chapel			



Solon 191

**Across**

- 1 Almost exact summary (6)
- 4 Old governor returns some arsenic (6)
- 9 Initially some petty argument that! (4)
- 10 Leaving a group working in Germany (10)
- 11 Senior religious figure, one with links to preferences (10)
- 12 Evil society with one leaving mixed bar (4)
- 13 Score for background actor (5)
- 14 Doubt Aga can become a nomad (8)
- 16 Dairy farmer not mad gets cooker (3,5)

**19** Island dish lacking something at first (5)

- 21 Third man sounds up to it (4)
- 22 Got rid of unseen senile dementia (10)
- 24 Between ends, Australian native, by the way, receives husband in military transport (10)
- 25 Unpleasantness in slug lying about (4)
- 26 Trouble vessel in good condition (6)
- 27 Plug opening - it's coming! (6)

**Down**

- 1. Daily issue (5)
- 2 East goes west for picnics (4,3)
- 3 Pretend Solon is against a railway (9)
- 5 Helpers may have mixed ideas (5)
- 6 Call club back for opener (4,3)

7. Bill wraps mis-shapen insulation (9)
- 8 Graduate leader is hot (6)
- 13 Where to have a Scottish tattoo (9)
- 15 Paid no heed when detectives were left out (9)
- 17 Babbles about the Spanish blokes (7)
- 18 Nearly lifting the fruit (6)
- 20 A résumé could be standard (7)
- 22 Stand for changed lease (5)
- 23 Style found in returned dental cement (5)

Thanks to Solon for puzzles  
For questions or help, contact Solon at  
Solon1across@gmail.com

### Answers to November puzzles:- Crossword:

**Across:** 1 Vintage, 9 Apple pie, 10 Legible, 11 Re-export, 12 Rabbit, 13 Inglorious, 15 Seed, 16 Sports car, 21 Evil, 22 Chainsawed, 24 Ersatz, 25 Boundary, 27 Athirst, 28 Reassess, 29 Slither. **Down:** 2 Ice water, 3 Twin beds, 4 Gelatinous, 5 Apse, 6 Elixir, 7 Apropos, 8 Dentist, 11 Right away, 14 Occidental, 17 Red shift, 18 Distaste, 19 Iceberg, 20 Natural, 23 Nudism, 26 Rust.

**Sudoku:** 648713259/  
527694183/ 193852647/  
915278364/ 386541972/  
274369518/ 762435891/  
431986725/ 859127436

5					3	1		
7			9				2	
8	6				7			
2	7	1						9
9						3	7	1
			1				3	5
	8				2			6
		6	5					2

### Talking

*Intelligence is like a river: The deeper it is,  
the less noise it makes.*

*Kindness has influenced more people than  
eloquence.*

*Take a tip from nature: your ears aren't  
made to shut, but your mouth is.*

### Talking

*Did you ever notice how often a nar-  
row mind and a wide mouth go to-  
gether?*

*As a man grows older and wiser, he  
talks less and says more.*

*We expect God to listen, so.....*

# Bible Bite

## A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in  
Luke chapter 2 verses 8 to 20

Shepherds were paid to look after the flocks  
out on the hillside. Uneducated and rough,  
they were usually avoided, or overlooked.



## Bible Bites Comments: Why Shepherds?

The cartoon commentary notes that shepherds were outsiders. They couldn't keep the Sabbath rules, for example. They may not even have been Jews, but Bedouin. The outsider theme is to the fore in the Christmas Gospel story. Joseph was going back to his home town (at least in terms of ancestry), and might have expected family hospitality. Apparently, he didn't get it - either despite or because of his wife's pregnancy. The inn could only offer a stable, not a double en suite room. (Recent NHS reports on inadequate maternity facilities would give a stable a "Don't even think about it!" rating.) After the shepherds, the next recorded visitors were [Persian?]. Closely followed by soldiers—perhaps foreign mercenaries sent by the mixed race Herod.

When the Holy Family escaped from Bethlehem/Nazareth, they went about as foreign as you could get: to Egypt, back to where their ancestors had lived in exile until the Exodus. (Though it is highly improbable that all the Jews left Egypt....and of course only two of those who did leave actually made it back to live in the Promised Land.)

All this emphasis on outsiders in the Christmas story is entirely deliberate. The Old Testament tells the very complicated story of the fight for acceptance that "God loves the Jews" is only part of the much bigger reality that "God loves all of us". With God, there are no outsiders. In the words of the New Living translation of Psalm 87: "Everyone enjoys the rights of citizenship in Jerusalem".

The Christmas message that God really isn't interested in nationality and national boundaries isn't much of a problem for readers of this magazine, in principle. The tough bit comes when we try to apply that principle to all the challenges to the inclusiveness of our church, our community, our nation, our culture. The opt-out is often the belief that God values our differences as an essential part of valuing us. To take this to its extreme: God is entirely happy that some of us live naked, in isolation from the rest of the world, getting one poor nutrition meal a day if we are lucky, never seeing a health professional, or a teacher, and dying at age 30; while others of us.....

Self-centred faith is totally inconsistent with God-centred faith. No outsiders!

## Making things easy?



*Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves*

If you belong to a Chess Club, you expect to have to learn the rules of chess. If you belong to a Football Team, you expect to have to learn the rules of football. If you belong to a Church.....? Every time someone new to a particular service in a particular church sits in the front row, he or she probably wishes they had sat further back—so they could copy others. [Welcomers take note!] All churches would claim to be welcoming, but in most churches there is a temptation for the regulars to expect newcomers to "fit in": doing what we do when we do. I have mentioned before the Scots Presbyterian who was

very irritated by English visitors (probably C of E) who insisted on kneeling for prayers instead of sitting.....and it has to be said that the seating arrangements made kneeling very difficult.

Now churches are not clubs for those who are "good at that sort of thing". They are, by definition (if not in reality) places where everyone should be welcome—irrespective of age, ability, and even attention span. The original rules for the original Temple excluded disabled/ differently-abled people, and indeed excluded non-Jews. They didn't exactly welcome women. The Jesus Church needs to mirror Jesus, and make things as easy as possible. There have to be some rules, of course: the man turning upon Christmas Eve, already drunk, and with a bottle in his hand, had to be advised to come back some other time: to avoid excluding other people from sharing in the Midnight Service.

We need to make things as easy as possible for newcomers and regulars alike; to guide gently; and to be tolerant where someone, maybe someone very old or very young or very different in some ways, just can't get it quite right. The Early Church had its struggles with folk whose ambition was a church community of "people exactly like me". God isn't exactly like me!

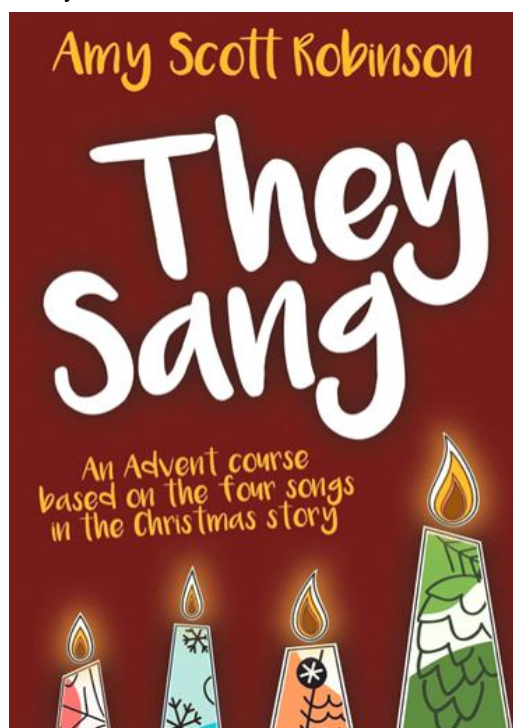


## ADVENT OPPORTUNITIES

### They Sang: Amy Scott Robinson

This year we are going to use 'They Sang' - an Advent course, based on the four songs in the Christmas Story. One group will be hosted by our Reader Liz on Monday evenings at her home—79 Shirley Way. The group will be meeting at 7.30pm to 9 p.m. on 1st, 8th, 15th & 22nd December. The other group, led by Rev Hilary Fife, will meet on Wednesdays in the Lady Chapel at 10 a.m. to 11 30 a.m. As regards 'They Sang': -

Have you ever wished the world was more like a musical, with characters burst-



ing into song at the slightest provocation? In the nativity story, there are four sudden, Spirit-filled songs from the heart, and they're all still used in the rhythm of liturgy: Zechariah's song (the Benedictus - Luke 1 68-79)) Mary's song (Magnificat - Luke 1 46-55) the song of the angels (Gloria in Excelsis - Luke 2 14) and Simeon's song (Nunc Dimittis - Luke 2 29-32). In 'They Sang', Amy Scott Robinson uses four Advent studies to guide small groups to explore these ancient poems of praise and prophecy, and a fifth invites you to discover your own song. Containing work from artist Clare Howard Weiner.

The St George's Advent Leaflet offers a wider range of suggestions for keeping a good Advent. Sing out if you want a copy but don't get one.

## Maybe a Smile

**True story:** The nativity play was going as planned and Joseph and Mary were going from 'house' to 'house' knocking on the doors and asking if there was any room for them. As they continued to get 'no room' answers, a little voice called from the back of the church: "You should have booked!"

**Who was the Real Virgin?** A ten-year-old, under the tutelage of her grandmother, was becoming quite knowledgeable about the Bible. Then one day she floored her grandmother by asking, "Which virgin was the mother of Jesus? The virgin Mary or the King James Virgin?"

**What Are the Three Gifts?** While participating in a church Christmas pageant many years ago, I was delighted to be chosen as the narrator. Each rehearsal went off well and then on the night of the show, I announced, in a loud and penetrating voice, the gifts of the Magi as being "gold, Frankenstein and myrrh."

**That well known pilot** At Sunday school, the younger children were drawing pictures to illustrate a biblical story. The teacher was startled to see one little boy was drawing an airplane. "This is the Flight into Egypt," the little boy explained. "See, here is Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. And this," he said, pointing to the figure in the front of the plane, "is Pontius. He's the Pilot."

**The Wrong Gift** A young couple began to assemble a special Christmas gift they had bought for their children. They had bought a kit for a tree house, but it didn't make sense. Then they realised that the materials were for a sailboat, so they wrote to the company to complain. The company's reply was brief: "While we regret the inconvenience this mistake must have caused you, we are more concerned about the man who is out on a lake somewhere, trying to sail your tree house."

### Actual children's versions of Christmas Carols:

"...sleep in heavenly peas" "Joy to the world, the Saviour rains!"

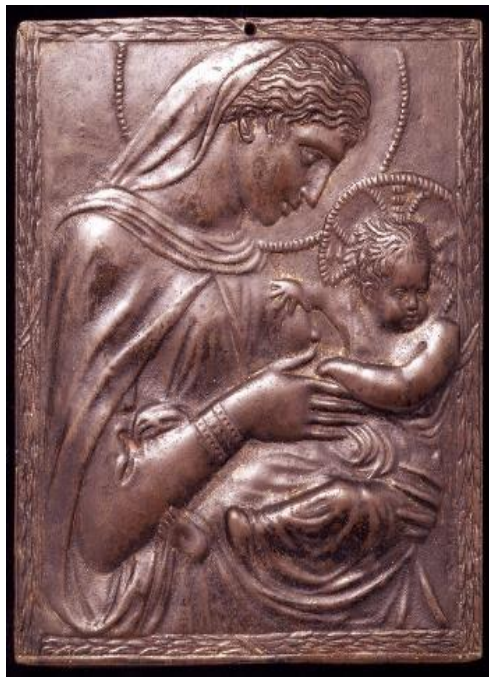
"Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plane..."

"While shepherds washed their socks by night..."

"Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly..." "We three kings of porridge and tar..."

"On the first day of Christmas my tulip gave to me..."

**Know what?** As we were putting out cookies for Father Christmas one Christmas Eve, I accidentally dropped one. I picked it up and dusted it off before placing it back on the plate. "You can't do that," argued my four-year-old. But I assured him that Father Christmas would never know. He shot me a dubious look. "So, he knows if I've been bad or good all year, but he doesn't know if you dropped his cookie on the floor?"



### Donatello: Mother and Child Rev Michael Burgess

Our Lady is depicted in classical profile with flowing robes and wavy hair, but the mood is one of tenderness as she cradles the Christ-Child. She holds His left hand in hers, while He looks down at something that has caught His attention. Perhaps it is a noise at the stable door or the sound of an animal in the Bethlehem night. Perhaps it is St Joseph getting everything ready for the Holy Family to leave. We don't know, but it is another special moment of revelation caught in this little plaque. It may not be by Donatello himself, but we sense the master overseeing the creation of this work.

At Christmas we ponder the mystery of infinity caught in a little space, the cradle at Bethlehem, just as the mystery of love, maternal and divine, is caught in the little space of this plaque. Margaret Rizza's carol, 'Jesus is our joy' captures the mood of wonder, joy and hope as we open the stable door to see the love of a mother and her new-born baby expressed here and at the heart of the Christmas gospel:

'Lovely in your littleness,  
longing for our lowliness,  
searching for our meekness....  
Held in Mary's tenderness,  
tiny hands are raised to bless,  
touching us with God's caress.  
Joy then in God's graciousness,  
peace comes with gentleness,  
filling hearts with gladness.'

### Please remember by name in your prayers the following people for whom prayers have been requested...

Andrea Cordery	Jay & Louise Tuggey	Rev Jon Ward
Mike & Chris Wareham	David Lawn	Sonia
Jean	Sue Moore	Pam Purkiss
Chris Reynolds	Poppy	Yvette Oburu
Gloria & Livingston Dallas	Alan Williams	Pat Barrett
Margaret Ziolek	Brian	Alison Stiff
Andy Hamilton	Christine Lutman	Stephen Dhonau
Ann Hobbs	Pauline Russell	Jean Wells
Dave & Shirley Ashdown	Verity Johnson	Joyce & Arthur Edgar
Arthur	Jill Hollamby	Mike Wilkins
Eric Webb	Lindsey Morgan	Ellen Maden
Brian Jacobs	Bill Gibson	Heather Orton
Doreen Offergelt	Paul & Mark	Garth Smith
Elizabeth Lovell	Sheila Dennis	Shirley
Louise Maurer	Debbie Bell	Steve Barrett

*May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ child. Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever.*

*May we find light in the darkness, peace in the business, comfort in distress, hope in despair, strength in weakness, fullness in emptiness, relief in pain, companionship in loneliness, forgiveness in hatred, and presence in absence, and Christ in all.*



## Winter Visitors

We, in Shirley, are likely to get a number of birds as Winter visitors. These include birds from other countries that we tend to see only in Winter; birds from other countries which are a type of bird we see all year round and usually can't recognise as "foreign visitors"; and birds which have fed in the countryside during the warmer weather but try our garden bird feeders in harder times. Most human beings in this country nowadays don't have to, and don't choose to do, seasonal movement. Other people at other times in other places knew all about seasonal migration.

The bird migration instinct is fascinating. It means that, in what we talk about disparagingly as "bird brains", there is the instinct to recognise "time to go", "place to go", "route to follow". The place often is exactly the same place as last Winter. And most birds are very short-lived compared with most humans, so it isn't like "We've been going to Broadstairs in July for 40 years: so it comes naturally". (Pause to reflect that Broadstairs and Shirley change over the years—probably not for the better in bird terms.)

Here are the two Winter species Winter visitors you are most likely to see in Shirley. They tend to come (often together) from Scandinavia, Russia or Iceland:-

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)



Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)



Both these members of the Thrush family like berries. You can help them if you plant holly, ivy, hawthorn, cotoneaster, pyracantha..... as the church has.

*Footnote: 32 species of birds seen in/from a Shirley garden in 2025. Beat that?*

## Organisations

### St George's Table Tennis Club (in the Church Hall)

Tuesdays 8—10 p.m. Doubles Table Tennis. £3 per evening, including refreshments. New members welcome. Contact Ron 020 8656 9176, Ken 020 8654 3233.

### Whist Drive (in the Church Hall)

Wednesdays 7 45p.m. *Inquire in Hall Wednesday 7 - 7 45 p.m.*

### Medau (in the Church Hall)

Tuesdays 1.30-3.00p.m Mrs Gammon 01689 815646

### Shirley Neighbourhood Care Scheme

020 8662 9599

info@shirleyneighbourhoodcare.co.uk

**Your Local Councillors and Safer Neighbourhood Police Teams** The dividing line between Shirley North and South Wards is roughly the Wickham Road, but some roads at the Croydon end on the south side of Wickham Road (St John's parish) are in Shirley North Ward

**Shirley South Ward - Councillors:** Jason Cummings (020 8651 2575) and Scott Roche (07783 152370) **Police Contact:** Phone 0208 721 2469 Email SNMailbox.ShirleySouthSNT@met.police.

**Shirley North Ward - Councillors:** Sue Bennett (0208 768 0561), Richard Chatterjee (07710 183564) and Mark Johnson (07716 092484). Surgeries 3rd Saturday of every month except December 10-11 a.m. 49A Longheath Gardens

**Police Contact:** Email SNMailbox.ShirleyNorthSNT@met.police.uk Phone: 0208 721 2474. **URGENT 999** (Other crime reports 101)

### Heaven

*People are guided to heaven more by footprints than by guideposts*

*The distance from earth to heaven is not so much a matter of altitude as of attitude*

*Crown-bearers in heaven were cross-bearers on earth*



## Organisations

### St George's Church Hall Bookings -

Mrs Jan Payne 020 8776 0185

### Overseas Missions Committee

Mr Brian McGinnis, Ms Pauline Russell 020 8654 6190

### Georgettes

Contact Mrs Jan Payne 020 8776 0185

**Beavers** Boys and Girls age 6 to 8 approx. Mr Darren Hawken 07903 399185

Wednesdays 5-6.15 p.m. 31stcroydonscoutgroup@gmail.com

**Cubs** Boys and Girls age 8 to 10.5 approx. Mr Darren Hawken 07903 399185

Wednesdays 6.30-8.00 p.m. 31stcroydonscoutgroup@gmail.com

**Scouts** Boys and Girls age 10.5 to 14.5 approx. Mr Darren Hawken 07903 399185

Thursdays 6.30 - 8 p.m. 31stcroydonscoutgroup@gmail.com

*Beavers, Cubs and Scouts are currently meeting at Pinewood Scout Activity Centre*

**Rainbows** (Church Hall) Girls age 5 to 7

Tuesdays 5 - 6p.m. Mrs Ruth Clery 020 8651 4116

07702 870030

**Brownies** (Church Hall) Girls age 7 to 10

Tuesdays 6.15-7.30p.m. Miss Sheila Fenner 020 8655 0023

fenner240@btinternet.com

**Guides** (in the Church Hall) Girls age 10 to 16

Fridays 6.00 -7 30p.m. Mrs Ruth Clery 020 651 4116

07702 870030

**Pop In** (in the Church Hall)

Mondays 10.30-12noon Mr Ron Bright 07972 607823

**Little Dragons** (in the Church) Toddlers 0-5

marylbrown250@gmail.com

Mondays 9 30a.m. -11 30a.m. Mrs Mary Brown 07704311523

## Heaven

*The main object of religion is not to get people into heaven, but to get heaven into people*

*You can't cash cheques on heaven's bank without first making a deposit*

## St. George's Church Directory

**Churchwarden:** Mrs Jan Turner 020 8654 6552

### Members of the PCC

Mr Alexander Baldwin-Smith, Mrs Jan Payne, Mrs Susan Wheeler, Mrs Katie Francis, Mr Steve Westray, Mrs Elizabeth Birchenough, Mr Owen Whalley, and those office holders who are PCC members.

### Hon. Secretary PCC.

Mr Eric Baldwin-Smith

### Treasurer

**Deanery Synod Representatives (also on PCC):** Mr Ray Wheeler Mrs Helen Aylward, Mrs Fay Westray

### Electoral Roll Officer

Mr. Owen Whalley 020 8655 1349

### Organist and Choir Mistress

Mrs Sophie Clayton-Wareham 07703554159

### Safeguarding Representatives

Mrs. Susan Wheeler. 020 8777 5271

Dr Toyin Magbagbeola

### Church Flowers

Mrs. Marion Sheehan 020 8777 7308

### Environment (ECO) Group

Mrs Jan Turner 020 8654 6552

### Magazine Editors

Mr. Brian McGinnis 31 Woodmere Avenue, Shirley CR0 7PG 020 8654 6190

Mrs A L Clayton

### Accounts

Mrs. Janet Fitt 020 8777 7823

### Adverts

Janet Fitt or Brian McGinnis

## ADVERTISING DIRECTORY

### Making friends with your Bible

The Monday Evening Bible Reading Group offers you Zoom joining in, or notes to support your own personal Bible reading. See Bible Reading Group section of church website and page 10.

### Shirley Neighbourhood Care

St George's Church

Elstan Way

The Glade

CR0 7PR

020 8662 9599

info@shirleyneighbourhoodcare.co.uk

Weekday mornings 10 a.m.—12 30

### Phone Sockets/Broadband

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**Have you ever thought of writing a piece for the magazine? If not, why not? Choose your topic - within reason!**

### Gifts to share?

if you feel that St George's is not doing something it should be doing, or that you have a gift to offer/ share that is not being used by St George's, please do not keep your mouth shut!

### Prayers on weekdays

Tuning into God doesn't require a minimum number of people: one to One is fine.! But if you want prayer company, there are Zoom prayers at 9 a.m. Monday to Friday. All are welcome.

### TV Repairs

Need a Repair, Installation or User Training, Then phone Peter your local TV Engineer on Telephone: 078855 09319

### Look

Do you want to know a secret? Join Croydon All Year Bowls For FREE Taster call 020 8688 0659

*+ Following Christ + Serving Community  
+ Welcoming All +*



### St George the Martyr

Elstan Way, Shirley, Croydon. (off the Glade)

parish.office@hotmail.co.uk

www.stgeorgeschurch.co.uk

(Charity Number: 1134140)