+ 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)

St George the Martyr Shirley





Christ in the Community



A Member of Churches Together in Shirley

December 2026 **50p**

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marybrown250@gmail.com

\if you are still looking for a Christmas good cause, consider Christian Aid in Ethiopia: caid.org.uk / Restore

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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.

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 nor being used by St George's, please do not keep your mouth shut!

Shirley Neighbourhood Care
Shirley Community Library
Wickham Road
020 8662 9599
info@shirleyneighbourhoodcare.co.uk

Weekday mornings except Wednesday 10 a.m.—12 30

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.

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For FREE Taster call 020 8688 0659

St. George's Church Directory

Churchwarden: Mrs Jan Turner 020 8654 6352
07786556149

Deputy Churchwardens : Mr Alexander Baldwin-Smith, Mrs A-L Clayton

Members of the PCC : Liz Bebington, Mrs Jan Payne, Mr Evan Russell, Mrs Helen Aylward, Mrs Elizabeth Birchenhough, Mr Owen Whalley, and those office holders who are PCC members.

Secretary: Mrs Jan Payne 07702 756913

Treasurer

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

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
Mrs Janet Fitt or Mr Brian McGinnis

Some promises are best not kept—often the ones that were best not made. But a word of explanation is a good way of keeping trust where you can't keep the promise.

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..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
Parish Office: parish.office@hotmail.co.uk



A view from the South Side - Liz Bebington

Back in 1997, our phone rang at 9 o'clock on Christmas morning. (Well, morning here but not in Australia from where our daughter was phoning). From 11,000 miles away, she told us of the fabulous but unexpected day she'd had, swimming in the sea (and seeing sharks), the standard Aussie barbecue on the beach, the glass of red wine in her hand. She'd been in Sydney for a few months, working in a hospital and staying in a nurses' hostel. One of those nurses asked her just before Christmas what she had planned and, on being told that she'd curl up with a good book and a few TV programmes, and phone us in London, the horrified nurse, promptly invited her to their family gathering at 'Grandmas'. She overrode Catherine's objections about intruding on a family event, so Catherine gratefully accepted, was made so welcome and had a wonderful time.

What a contrast with the welcome Luke tells us Mary & Joseph got - census time, maybe 100 miles away from home, Bethlehem crowded with people from David's 'house and line'. No room at the inn? There was barely room in the barn! Stuck in a corner, with whatever food they'd carried or could buy, they must have felt scared at how they'd cope, with a baby on the way, wondering how the census would be carried out; and then how, afterwards, they'd get back home. Hardly a warm welcome in Bethlehem and not the birth experience anyone would have planned or chosen. Being early December, many of us are already busy planning for Christmas – food, drinks, cards, gifts, visitors, concerts and church services – and some celebrations have already started - but will it all go as we expect? Might it be even better if we can find time to pause during Advent and reflect on what we are planning for, to expand our generosity to include a donation to charity or our plans to include an invitation and make welcome those who might be alone over Christmas, even though they don't want to be? Could we perhaps volunteer to help with Crisis, or a Christmas Day meal for those living alone?

Christmas celebrations in the UK now last much more than just one day, or even the traditional twelve days of Christmas – whatever you decide to do, we wish you all a wonderful time celebrating the birth of Jesus and what that means for us all today. The birth of a baby is not how people 2000 years ago expected God to arrive in our world – is that what we expect of God even now? But I hope that, as the carol says, we will make him welcome.
Have a blessed Advent and Christmas.

Organisations

St George's Church Hall Bookings -
Mrs Jan Payne 07702 756913
hallmanager@ctgeorgeschurch.co.ok

Overseas Missions Committee
Mr Brian McGinnis, Ms Pauline Russell 020 8654 6190

Georgettes
Mrs Jan Payne 07702 756913

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 (Church Hall) Girls age 10 to 16
Fridays 6.00 -7 30p.m Mrs Ruth Clery 020 651 4116
07702 870030

Pop In (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

Christmas love is about how you spend your time as much as about how you spend your money

The greatest gift you can give is yourself

.

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)

The way you spend Christmas is far more important than how much you spend

Keeping Christmas is good, but sharing Christmas is better

Christmas Peace is not given but made

OTHERS

O Lord, help us to think the best of others, to hope the best for others, to believe the best about others, and to see the best in others. Inspire in us these positive aspirations, as we long for all things to be the best they can be, for your name's sake. Amen. (A Bible Reading Fellowship prayer)



"Other" is an interesting word. Neutrally, it means "additional" or "extra". Emotionally, it can mean "different" - perhaps different to the extent of being "alien". When Tony Healey, reading a Bible passage with lots of rather complicated (male) names, gave up and said "All dem other folk", he was not in any way condemning the "others". When someone speaks of "white people and other people" (or "black people and other people"), they are sometimes making an unfavourable distinction. "Wholly other" is about something seen as unbridgeable difference. "The others" are often people who are not my sort of person: "Not one of us". In the Old Testament, some Jewish writers see all non-Jews as irretrievably "other": outsiders to the Jewish insiders. Sadly, in Christian history, some Christian groups have seen other Christians, who are not part of their group, as irretrievably "other".

In Jesus terms, all Christians are US, not THEM. But, since "God so loved the world.....", all human beings are US rather than THEM - not just those who have signed up to the Christian Creed(s). As human beings, we may be rather inclined to exclude. The Jesus message is INCLUSION. Yes, I know the Jesus quote ends with "those who believe in Him"; but it is clear that Jesus includes those long dead and those not yet born who **ultimately believed.**

Do it yourself parables (8): A little giving can do a lot of good

Davida's mother was not a thoughtful person. She tended to say things without thinking, and then forget what she had said. Davida knew about her rather unusual first name because her mother, out for a walk with Davida (and having no phone because that was being repaired after use in the bath), had stopped to talk to a neighbour,, The neighbour, though not really interested, had asked "Why "Davida"? " Mum had explained that she and her husband had wanted a boy, and chosen the boy's name, and been disappointed - "So, Davida was a sort of second best to what might have been". Davida heard and remembered: second best to a non-existent brother.

There was a toy shop just round the corner from where Davida lived. She quite liked the shop. Her main toy (a rather unusual rainbow-coloured teddy bear) had been bought for her in that shop by her father, who had received an unexpected bonus at work....and felt a bit guilty about spending it all on a new set of golf clubs. But since her pocket money fell well short of the sort of money needed to buy even the cheapest toy in the shop, Davida visited the shop as a tourist rather than a customer.... unlike many of her friends, as Christmas drew nearer.

A Ukrainian refugee family moved into a ground floor flat two doors away from Davida. Her parents didn't explain, beyond muttering to each other about "b..... Foreigners getting UK money". Davida's teacher talked to the class, and explained about Ukraine and Russia and bombs; and the children got the message about coming back from school and finding your home was a pile of rubble. (The English parents who picked the English children up after school were rather puzzled to be asked "Is home still there?")

As Davida and mother passed the ground floor flat, she saw a little fair-haired girl about her own age sitting on the front step crying. Since mother had her phone back, she didn't even notice Davida slip off and sit beside the crying girl. How Davida got the message "No toys", I have no idea; but she could understand that no home meant no toys..... and probably no dad. Davida caught up with her unobservant mother, ran upstairs when they got home; and came back with the rainbow teddy bear. Ran up the street and pushed it into the arms of the Ukrainian girl... And went home. Her mother saw nothing.

One person said: Answer to November quiz: Prince Philip

One person said the following . Who?

"In politics, if you want anything said, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman."
"Don't follow the crowd, let the crowd follow you."
"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it."
"If you set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you would achieve nothing."
"The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money."
"It is not the creation of wealth that is wrong, but the love of money for its own sake."
"Pennies do not come from heaven. They have to be earned here on earth."
"There is no such thing as society: there are individual men and women, and there are families."
"Disciplining yourself to do what you know is right and important, although difficult, is the highroad to pride, self-esteem, and personal satisfaction."
"Watch your thoughts for they become words. Watch your words for they become actions. Watch your actions for they become habits. Watch your habits for they become your character. And watch your character for it becomes your destiny."
"Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It's not a day when you lounge around doing nothing; it's a day you've had everything to do and you've done it."
"Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."
"The woman's mission is not to enhance the masculine spirit, but to express the feminine; hers is not to preserve a man-made world, but to create a human world by the infusion of the feminine element into all of its activities."
"I've got a woman's ability to stick to a job and get on with it when everyone else walks off and leaves it."
"

Let us never forget this fundamental truth: the State has no source of money other than money which people earn themselves. If the State wishes to spend more it can do so only by borrowing your savings or by taxing you more. It is no good thinking that someone else will pay - that 'someone else' is you. There is no such thing as public money; there is only taxpayers' money.

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

Linda Shuker	Ken	Verity
Paul Oates	Mark & Paul Hare	Steve Barrett
Pat Barrett	Shirley Hibbert	Pauline Russell
Andy	Christine Lutman	David Collingham
Mr and Mrs Brett	Anne	Pam Purkis
Heather Orton	Robin	

Please remember in your prayers the family and professional care givers known to you: Informal carers for partners, parents , siblings or children, or for other relatives or neighbours'; professional doctors, nurses, social workers, care staff. Not everybody can choose to "take Christmas off".

A Christmas Prayer for Family

O Light that dawned in Bethlehem's still night, shine now upon our gathered hearts; let every word we speak be warm with kindness, and every silence be filled with peace. Bless the hands that prepare and share our table, the voices that lift in laughter and song, the memories we cradle like fragile ornaments, and the hopes we hang upon the tree of tomorrow. Keep us mindful of the weary and the wandering, the empty chairs and the distant homes; let our love reach beyond these walls like candlelight spilling into the dark. May this day's joy root deep within us, so that when the season's glitter fades, we still carry its quiet miracle—Emmanuel, God with us—in every step, in every breath, in every bond of family.



Some more collectives

A murder of crows
A rookery of albatrosses
A crown of kingfishers
A museum of waxwings
A chime of wrens
A booby of nuthatches
A quilt of eiders
A quarrel of sparrows
A flamboyance of flamingos
A mischief of magpies
An asylum of cuckoos
A chattering of choughs



Would you like to try your hand at collective nouns for:

Teachers (an Explanation?)

Vicars (a Preach?)

Mermaids (a Splash?)

Shopkeepers (a Sell?)

Butchers (a Slaughter?)

Delivery Drivers (a Collision?)

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

We are aiming to meet monthly for half an hour of prayer together: 7 30 p.m.to 8 00 p.m., with a Zoom option where possible. A CTIS prayer leaflet will be circulated monthly for use, individually or collectively. Contact Brian McGinnis if you need details: dunaigh2@btinternet.com

Tuesday December 1st Shirley Methodist

Thursday January 7th West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church

Sunday 24th January Unity Week Service All Saints

.A Christmas Prayer: by Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father,
Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.
Close the door of hate
and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.
May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be thy children,
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Sunday Readings for December (Message Version)

Sunday December 6th: Advent II
Isaiah 40: 1-11: Her sin is taken care of—forgiven.
Psalm 85: 8-end: So they'll never again live like fools.
2 Peter 3: 8-15a: With God, one day is as good as a thousand years.
Mark 1: 1-8: Thunder in the desert.

Sunday December 13th: Advent III
Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-end: He sent me to heal the heart-broken.
Psalm 126: Go bring rains to our drought-stricken lives.
1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24: Be cheerful no matter what.
John 1: 6-8, 19-20: He came to show everyone where to look.

Sunday December 20th: Advent IV
2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16: Your royal throne will always be there.
Psalm 89: 1-8: I'll never quit telling the story of your love.
Romans 16: 25-end: The One who is strong enough to make you strong.
Luke1: 26-38: You're beautiful with God's beauty.

Thursday December 24th: Christmas Eve
Isaiah 9: 2-7: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.
Psalm 96: Take the news of his glory to the lost.
Titus 2: 11-14: God's readiness to give and forgive.
Luke2: 1-20: The time came for her to give birth.

Friday December 25th Christmas Day
Isaiah 52: 7-10: Announcing salvation.
Psalm 98: Round up an orchestra to play for God.
Hebrews 1: 1-12: You're God, and on the throne for good.
John 1: 1-14: The Life-Light was the real thing.

Sunday December 27th: John Apostle and Evangelist: Exodus 33: 7-11a, Psalm 117, 1 John 1. John 21: 19b-end.

Answers to November Female Saints Quiz

1, Mary Sumner 2. Catherine Booth 3. Catherine of Alexandria 4. Hildegard of Bingen 5, Clare of Assisi 6. Etheldreda 7.Elizabeth of Hungary 8. Elizabeth Fry 9. Florence Nightingale 10. Joan of Arc 11, Hilda of Whitby 12. Julian of Norwich 13, Monica 14. Helena 15. Mary Slessor 16, Fanny Crosby 17. Susanna Wesley 18. Mother Theresa 19, Gladys Aylward 20. Dorothy L Sayers



Jesus praying with girl by female artist Akiane Kramarik

Remembering Remembrance

Remembrance time 2026 will go down in St George's history as a very special "special time". Each of us has his/her own reflections. Collectively, we always remember in November those who died serving their country... or maybe our country and not their country (particularly in war time), and those who were victims of war, whether directly involved or not. In 2026, we had more than a thousand knitted poppies to focus our remembering. The ladies of St George's were inspired to create displays that will long be remembered: individuals working collectively as a group –so often the best way of doing things that change things.

One of the memorable (and maybe initially puzzling) features of a magnificent display was that the red poppies featured alongside white poppies, purple poppies, and black poppies. The red poppy presence dates back formally to formal adoption in 1921, and emotionally to 1915 and the sight of red poppies among graves in Flanders and France...in soil enriched by war. Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae (soldier and doctor) wrote the poem "In Flanders Fields". Moina Michael (American) and Anna Guerin (French) read the poem and started the wearing of red poppies. White poppies came to the fore in 1933 (women-inspired) with an emphasis on peace and on war's victims. Purple poppies were created in 2006 to remember the animal participants in and victims of war. Black poppies date back to 2010 as reminders of the huge contribution made in two World Wars and in other settings by people with black skins; often contributors who chose to support "us".



In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow In Flanders fields.

Some believe that in the 13th Century the Mongol wars stained the white poppies red with blood. White peace destroyed by bloody war.

Some notes for you to note

- **Deadline for the January magazine, Sunday December 20th.**
- **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 of perhaps the most challenging of all the Epistles/Letters: St Paul's Letter to the Romans. A commentary is available free for everyone who would like to join us. Regular and occasional new members both welcome. If you want to think about the Christian faith, this is your ideal companion.
- **Book Reading Group:** For December (Advent and Christmas) reading, try Tanya Marlow's "Treasures in the Straw—exploring the griefs and gifts of the Christmas story". There are daily readings which help the reader focus on the realities of the Christmas experience: good things and bad things. I thought I knew it all: this book kept me discovering "I didn't know that" or "I hadn't really thought about that". It is the Bible Reading Fellowship Advent Book. If you want to share with the Book Reading Group, you can have a free copy within a few days. Contact Brian McGinnis.
- Other BRG current choices include Malcolm Guite's 7 Sonnets on the Lord's Prayer—another challenge to re-visit what you might have thought you knew well enough to take for granted. And Tom Wright's "God's Home-coming": a big read, but a very worthwhile read. Again, if you wan a copy, just ask.

Christmas Cards to Church Members: If you use the traditional church box to send Christmas cards to church members - saving on postage - please consider a donation to Overseas Missions. You can use the paying machine or leave an envelope labelled "Overseas Missions". Thank you.





.Mixing It

It is a popular, and entirely understandable Christian demand "to put the Christ back into Christmas": the Jesus bit of Christmas can be crowded out by all the non -Jesus bits. I have actually heard someone saying that they might well have done the Christmas Day church attendance option but were a bit too busy. One year at St George's two policeman members of the congregation had to escort from the Christmas Eve service a gentleman who had squeezed us in between parties and was too drunk to take an appropriate part in the service. Jehovah's Witnesses downplay Jesus (from our perspective) but refuse to do the secular Christmas (no decorations, no turkey) because they get in the way of faith-based celebration.

BUT, while the name Christ Mass is Christian, the date and the celebrations were pinched from non-religious practices... And probably, for most of us, there is nothing wrong with enjoying both the Nativity Christmas and Father Christmas and everything else - within moderation, of course! However, as the cartoon reminds us, Father Christmas is about pleasure in giving, not taking/pinching!

Maybe a smile.....

Thanks

"Thanks very much for the beautiful jumper," said Charles, kissing his grandmother dutifully on the cheek.
"Oh, there's really nothing to thank me for," she murmured.
"That's what I thought, but Mum said I had to.", Charles responded.

Kick

Exasperated mother on Christmas Day: "William, why ever did you kick your little brother in the stomach?"
"It was his fault. He turned around."

Want

First man: "My wife doesn't know what she wants for Christmas."
Second man: "You're lucky. Mine does!"

The night before

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, except Papa's mouse.
The computer was humming, the icons were hopping,
As Papa did last minute Internet shopping.
The stockings were hung by the modem with care
In hope that St Nicholas would bring new software.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of computer games danced in their heads.

Over Christmas

I asked a friend of mine what he would be doing over Christmas. He said he reckoned he would be busy with "aqua-thermal heat treatment of ceramics, aluminium, and steel in a constrained environment."
I was astonished – and baffled. In further conversation, I learned that he would be washing the plates, pots and pans with hot water, under his wife's supervision.

No room

The Sunday School teacher was telling the story of the Nativity and had just finished the part about there being 'no room at the inn'. A small voice piped up: 'Well, I blame Joseph. He should have booked."

Messiah

A visiting choir was due to come and sing *The Messiah* at our church just before Christmas. When a big snowstorm postponed the performance, the minister put up a sign outside which read: 'The Messiah is postponed – due to snow.'

Challenges for Believers: 4. "God shows Himself to those who seek Him" - So why are so many believers not Christians?

I suspect, though I don't know, that the first disciple missionaries- once they had seen the light themselves - were fairly optimistic about converting first the Jewish world and then the whole world. This was despite a Jewish history which suggested that getting people signed up and keeping them signed up was not all that easy. You can see the logic: not just the perfectly understandable feeling that what is obvious to me must be obvious to others; but the conviction that if the Eternal God has chosen to reveal Himself fully in Jesus, He is not going to let anyone keep their eyes shut to that glorious reality. Judas was not alone among the disciples of Jesus in wanting Jesus to act in such a way that everyone would be FORCED to believe. Kick out the Romans, make the Temple the greatest light show of all time, turn the Twelve into Emperors.... And nobody would be asking "Who is this?". They would all know with absolute certainty.... Those who were still alive to appreciate the Undeniable Revelation. Actually, (a) Human history suggests that absolute certainty doesn't last very long. (b) *More important, there isn't such a thing as faithful belief where there is no room for doubt. God wants us to be able to choose...that implies the ability to refuse!*

The 2026 statistics are by no means fully guaranteed stats, but they are probably broadly right: 2.65 billion Christians, 2.5 billion Moslems, 1.97 billion Hindus, 15.8 million Jews (with perhaps some confusion between religion and ethnicity). Islam (Moslems) is of course a faith that developed when Christianity was already "on offer".... And some of us feel that things might have been very different had Mohammed, when exploring faith, encountered a more convincing Christianity. The challenge of the healthy existence of other faiths is that they comprise people who regularly - perhaps several times a day - turn to God and ask God to reveal Himself. Why doesn't God point them to Christ?

Of course there are conversions from other faiths to Christianity. But there are also conversions of Christians into other faiths. The three things I think I know are:- 1) There is the likelihood of encountering God in all the major faiths. 2) God listens to those who pray to Him other than as Christians. 3) When we get beyond the grave and gate of death, the God we encounter (as Christians, members of other faiths, or non-believers) will welcome us in Christ

Christmas Customs

One of the things a refugee family often notices is that the host family has customs/routines/norms that the refugee family does not share. The refugee family probably has customs that may or may not be sustainable in the host family's house. School exchange schemes may, over a shorter period, show up the same things...though, of course, the one visiting child doesn't bring whole family expectations with him or her, I remember staying with a German family, and being a bit surprised by family handshakes every morning...though relieved it wasn't hugs. (Come to think of it, they might have substituted hand shakes for hugs to include the stranger.)

Christmas customs also vary from family to family—sometimes including church going where this is not a weekly norm. Maybe the Christmas Tree comes down from the loft. Maybe lights are hung up, inside or outside. Maybe a crib appears. The King's Speech may be scheduled. There may be a Boxing Day walk. A lot of the customs are togetherness things; but some are available to people who (this year or for a long time) are celebrating Christmas alone. Some people who are missing someone at Christmas like to maintain the family tradition for the sake of familiarity and continuity. Others can't enjoy the custom without the missing person.

Some family traditions are very much out of the ordinary. Examples are; "camping out" under the Christmas tree; hiding special sweets around the house; reading out loud the first chapter of a Christmas book each day; watching TV together instead of five different TV's being on in 5 different rooms. There are also different norms about how long Christmas lasts! You might like to invent your own customs: e.g. Whoever does the special meal cooking DOES NOT do the special meal washing up; each member of the family is responsible for a different part of the special meal; you deliver an already-made meal to someone who is alone and can't get out; each family member, according to their resources, contributes to a collective donation to a night shelter.....



Old and Young

This is very much a Luke story. Luke loves personal details: real people having real life experiences. In the context of world-changing global events, little people are high-lighted, and we share their ordinary life stories. Here, two old people step out of the shadows onto the Baby Jesus stage, and they hold that baby. All those who have seen the interaction between grandparent figures and babies can appreciate these two brief encounters, The two elderly witnesses are not going to live long enough to know the adult Messiah; but they have lived long enough to encounter and recognise the Child Born To Be King.....and to testify (or at least hint at), long before anyone else, to the Crown of Glory being a Crown of Thorns.

Simeon and Anna are themselves; and, got what long and faithful lives "deserved". They also in a sense represent all old people who are "past it", but in God's good grace still very much part of His Plan. It is worth giving Simeon's Song in full :

English (Book of Common Prayer, 1662): Song of Simeon

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,

according to thy word.

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles,

and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Latin (Vulgate): Nunc Dimittis

Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace:

Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum

Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum:

Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.

These verses form Simeon's canticle in Luke 2:29–32 and have been used in Christian evening prayer since the 4th century.

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke 2 verses 22-38

God promised the Jews that when times were bad, He would send a Leader to save them. He told Simeon it would happen in his lifetime.



Poetry Page: : Christmas Bells By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

"I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

That odd business of praying: Number 183: Prayer—The Last Resort?



"We can only pray" is a familiar comment on situations where "we" feel helpless - either having tried everything else or reckoning that there is actually nothing that we can do to make things better. It might be where the NHS is not cracking it, or the other side is overwhelmingly strong, or the problem is several times the size of the available resources.. People who are not in the habit of praying sometimes turn to prayer in desperation—sometimes remembering all those miracles the Bible talks about where the prayer has come out on top despite all the odds being against them; sometimes on the basis of "It won't do any harm to see if there is a God and the God is listening".

Given that the Bible and history show believers being answered favourably despite their acknowledged unbelief, I can see nothing to condemn in an atheist's desperation prayer. Nor do I think God insists on checking out believing credentials before both listening and responding favourably. (There is a bit of the atheist in most of us!) While a lot of the pieces in this prayer series have emphasised that prayer is not just about asking, and not just for deployment in a crisis, God understands about desperation. (The Incarnation was experiencing not dressing up!) May you be spared desperation; but by all means pray if you do encounter it.

5 Restated - I retreated in disarray (10)
6 Vehicle may be stretched (4)
7 Robberies involving idiots we're told (8)
8 Be safe and be quiet! (4,2)
13 On start-up another program plays on device (3)
14 External computer device failing to start (5)
15 Runner may incite in Liverpool town, right! (10)
16 Broken place on the outskirts of Kampala (5)
18 Peculiar cagy hint to go under canvas (8)
21 Survey is a mean plan, oddly (3)
22 Threaten army champion (6)
26 Attempt, after Edgar Allan in rhyme (6)
28 At first, in Beckenham, I see sacred bird (4)
29 Champ has a scrap on the 2nd of September (4)
30 Adds young kids (4)
31 Use trees on the radio (4)

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

Answers to November puzzles:-
Crossword:

Across: 5 Itself, **7** Workaday, **9** Priority, **10** Versed, **11** Opera glasses, **13** Skater, **15** Yesmen, **18** Humanitarian, **21** Alarum, **22** Incoming, **23** Fearless, **24** Overdo.

Down: 1 Democrat, **2** Offing, **3** Travesty, **4** Madras, **6** Turnpike, **7** Waylay, **8** Ales, **12** Detained, **14** Remember, **16** Strumpet, **17** Undies, **18** Harare, **19** Tycoon, **20** Blue

Sudoku: 251847396/ 634952187/ 987136542/ 148579263/ 569328471/ 723614958/ 316485729/ 492761835/ 875293614

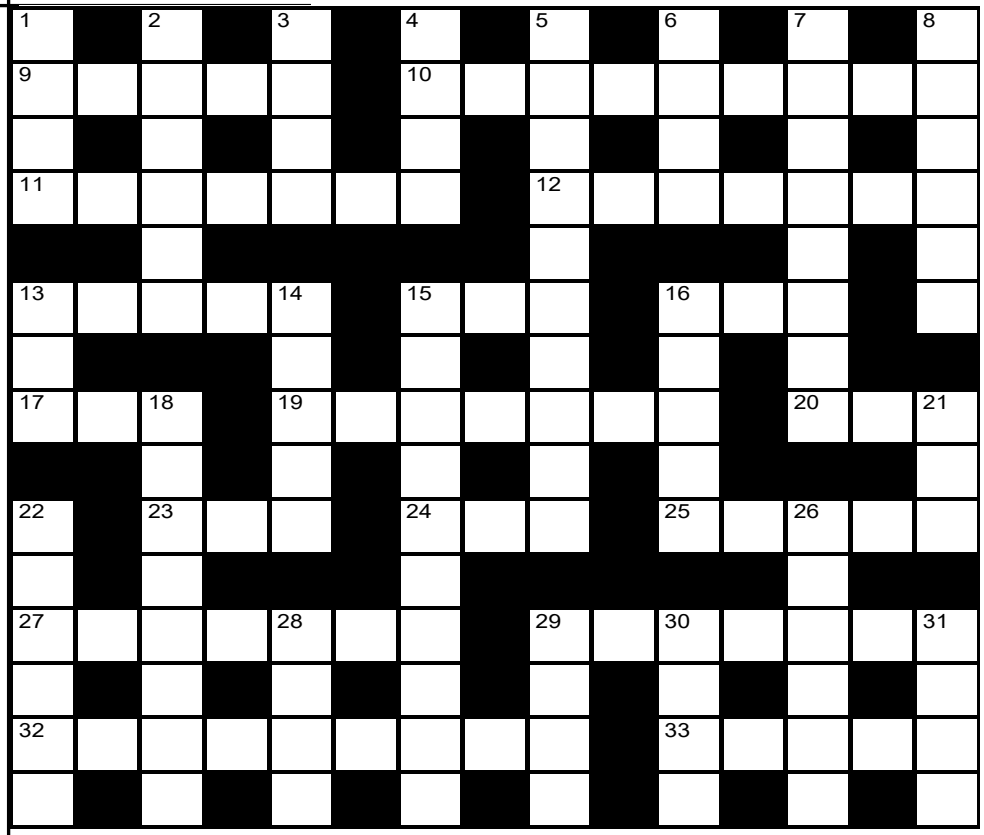
Christmas is:-
God becoming flesh, bringing salvation, hope, peace, and reconciliation to humanity .

That is the comforting thing.

The challenging thing is that you and I are invited to join in the Jesus process.

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

Heard on Radio 4 on November 12th: "We need to separate the two things together." OK, so??



Solon 203

Across

9 Endless jelly, note turned to stone (5)
10 Abundance occurs when ox leaves unexploited mess (9)
11 Ship that may collect digital waste (7)
12 However Thailand might be an idea (7)
13 Initially arguments gets George really overwrought with irritation (5)
15 Sheep may say say this locally (3)
16 Endless gentleness for the family (3)
17 Nosey when not at party (3)
19 Stew pot prepared for dance (3-4)
20 The total problem (3)
23 Scoundrel is almost brusque (3)
24 Directed to light source (3)
24 Directed to light source (3)
25 Supplement found in Kyoto puppeteers (3-2)
27 Zero is not hot in Germany (7)
29 Cricketer has unknown source of electricity (7)
32 Criminal has obscure visit to hospital department to obtain seasoning (9)
33 Confuse project? (5)

Down

1 Article wrapped in tender loving care maybe a bathroom inhabitant **(4)**
2 Handling dodgy racing (6)
3 May film rewound to see office worker (4)
4 Singular London football club will get a prod (4)

Christmas Twenty Questions: A Family Quiz

1. Who wrote "A Christmas Carol"?
2. Where is Christmas Island?
3. What rather unpleasant things happened there?
4. What (and when) was the Christmas Truce?
5. Who wrote "Father Christmas Goes on Holiday"?
6. Who wrote the line "Twas the night before Christmas..."?
7. Can you name 5 of Santa's reindeers?
8. Who was the real/first Santa Claus, and why?
9. Who wrote "The Nightmare Before Christmas"?
10. Who wrote "A Child's Christmas in Wales"?
11. Who wrote "The Grinch Stole Christmas"?
12. How many other names for Christmas can you list?
13. How many different language names for Christmas can you list?
14. Who gave their nephew for Christmas a toothpick, a 50p coin, a single tissue?
15. What does "Christmas" mean?
16. Was December 25th the day of Jesus' birth?
17. Is Christmas Day a universal public holiday?
18. Which plants/shrubs/trees are associated with Christmas?
19. Which do you think is the most popular Christmas carol?
20. Why "carol" rather than hymn?



December 2026 Saint George's Parish Magazine

CHURCH DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2026

◤ **Morning Prayer:**
Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri 9.00am Zoom only

Dates for your Diary:

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Churches Together in Shirley: Evening Service Sunday 24th January at All Saints.

		◤ Tue 1 Dec	◤ Wed 2 Dec	◤ Thurs 3 Dec	◤ Fri 4 Dec	Sat 5 Dec
		7.30pmCTIS Prayer – Shirley Methodist Church	10.00am Church Cleaning 11.30am Eucharist – Lady Chapel			Debbie Simpson's Wreath Making in Church
Sun 6 Dec 2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT	◤ Mon 7 Dec	◤ Tue 8 Dec	◤ Wed 9 Dec	◤ Thurs 10 Dec	◤ Fri 11 Dec	Sat 12 Dec
10.00 Sung Eucharist	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 9.30-11.30am Little Dragons 7.30pm Bible Reading Group		10.00am Church Cleaning 11.30am Eucharist – Lady Chapel			
Sun 13 Dec 3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT	◤ Mon 14 Dec	◤ Tue 15 Dec	◤ Wed 16 Dec	◤ Thurs 17 Dec	◤ Fri 18 Dec	Sat 19 Dec
10.00 All-Age Sung Eucharist 5.00pm Carol Service	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 9.30-11.30am Little Dragons 7.30pm Bible Reading Group		10.00am Church Cleaning 11.30am Eucharist – Lady Chapel 6.00pm OWPS Carol Concert			[redacted]
Sun 20 Dec 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT	◤ Mon 21 Dec	◤ Tue 22 Dec	◤ Wed 23 Dec	◤ Thurs 24 Dec	◤ Fri 25 Dec	Sat 26 Dec
10.00 Sung Eucharist 5.00pm Blue Christmas	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 7.30pm Bible Reading Group		10.00am Church Cleaning 11.30am Eucharist – Lady Chapel	4.00pm Crib Service 11.00pm Midnight Mass	10.00 All-Age Sung Eucharist	
Sun 27 Dec 1st SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS	◤ Mon 28 Dec	◤ Tue 29 Dec	◤ Wed 30 Dec	◤ Thurs 31 Dec		
10.00 Sung Eucharist			10.00am Church Cleaning 11.30am Eucharist – Lady Chapel			