

# Four Seasons Flowers

*Flowers For All Occasions*  
*Weddings, Parties, Funerals*

**0161 338 4227**

**07595 937 046**



Fsf fourseasonsflowers



fourseasons655866@yahoo.com

29 Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge SK15 2JN

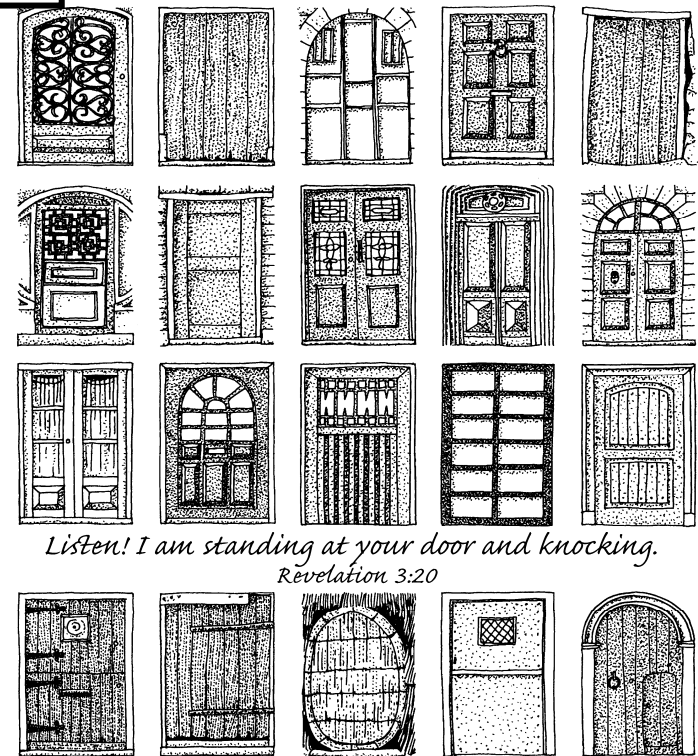
# St George's Parish Church Stalybridge



Diocese of Manchester

THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

35p



*Listen! I am standing at your door and knocking.*  
*Revelation 3:20*

**January 2017**

# St George's Church Stalybridge



## Clergy

**Vicar** Revd Philip Brierley 0161 338 2368

**Wardens** Mr Derek Redeyoff 0161 338 4779

Mrs Janet Vidler 0161 303 7689

**Deputy Wardens** Mrs Rose Hayward 0161 303 1731

Mrs Gillian Cotton 0161 303 2787

**P.C.C. Secretary** Mrs Lynn Moon 0161 338 5773

**Treasurer** Mr Michael Davies 0161 338 5998

**Magazine Editor** Mrs Linda Hurst 0161 330 0518

**Room Hire** Mrs Janet Vidler 0161 303 7689

email: stgwarden@hotmail.co.uk

## Worship

### Sunday

8.30 a.m. Holy Communion (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays)

10.30 a.m. Sung Communion and Junior Church  
(4<sup>th</sup> Sunday – Family Service)

18.00 p.m. Occasional Special Services as  
announced

### Tuesday

10.30 a.m. Holy Communion

To receive Communion at home when you are sick or housebound, or to have the name of a departed friend or relation entered in the Book of Remembrance, please contact Philip or one of the Wardens.

**For Baptisms, Marriages or Funerals please phone Philip (Vicar) on 0161 338 2368. Baptisms are usually conducted at 12.30 pm on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.**

## From Our Book of Remembrance

1 Jan	Ezekiel Lomas	1941	18 Jan	George William Catlow	2000
2 Jan	Edward Cooper	1980		Marian Hulme	2002
	Ernest Bramall	1982		Reginald Hewitt	2008
	Marjorie Day	1982	19 Jan	Mary Eastwood	1989
	David Cotton	2007	20 Jan	Raymond Jack Clarke	1983
3 Jan	Ivy Marshall	2006		Katherine Devlin	1988
4 Jan	William Parkinson	1943		Jean Ollerenshaw	2012
	Phyllis Peck	1981	21 Jan	Heather Alwyn Clarke	2012
	Barry Aldred	1999	22 Jan	Thomas Howard	1964
5 Jan	Joseph Hibbert	1957		Harry Walton	1967
	Hugh Shepley	1987		Eliza Emma Sidebottom	1988
	Gertrude Sullivan	1998	23 Jan	Jesslyn Tonge	1991
6 Jan	Harry Walton	1988		Neil Hadfield	2011
	John Barratt	1996	24 Jan	Henry Howard	1981
8 Jan	George Leonard Eakins	1981		Rhoda Hancock	1989
	James Norman Kelday	2000		Harold Spencer	1962
	Fred Harris	1979	25 Jan	Agnes Smith	1975
9 Jan	Sarah Clews	1994		Carol Hyde	2010
	Susan Ann Maud Barnfield	1953	26 Jan	Edith Emma Clinton	1987
10 Jan	Tom Sidebottom	1979		Nellie Wood	1987
11 Jan	Jesse Horsefield	1984		Eric James Chorlton	2001
	Drinda Jefferson	1990		Margaret Slack	2007
	Evelyn Barlow	2003	27 Jan	Fred Kay	1968
	James Watson	2014		Bridget Bower	1994
12 Jan	Ethel Battersby	1992		Ronald Bower	2000
13 Jan	Kathleen Thwaites	1992		Geoffrey Phillip Brown	1995
14 Jan	Robert Nicholson	1988		Abraham Newton	1983
	Eva Helen Ollerenshaw	1989		Veronica Quinn	1997
	Kyle Martin Cropper	2004	29 Jan	Fred Holt	1939
	Ramsden			Eddie Holden	1990
15 Jan	Norman Council	2014		Karen Jane Bradbury	2007
	James Ireson	1990		Mildred Bradshaw	2014
16 Jan	William Gudger	1963	30 Jan	Alice Saxon	1997
	Minnie Schofield	2012	31 Jan	Alice Ann Priestley	1955
17 Jan	David Lees	2011		John Robert Stanley	1990
18 Jan	William Frederick Ireson	1962		John Patrick Higgins	2006

+++++

## BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE



To have the name of a loved one entered into this special book, and remembered in our intercessions for their anniversary please have a word with one of the wardens or Philip.

The cost for the special inscription is £10 per entry

## From the Registers

### Baptisms

*We welcome into the Lord's family*

#### **4 December**

Jennifer Jane Allen, Hanover Street, Stalybridge  
Maison Michael Mayers, Church Walk, Stalybridge  
George Oliver Mayers, Church Walk, Stalybridge

### Wedding Blessing

*God is love, and those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them*

#### **3 December**

Zoe and Cliff Ibbetson, Hope Street, Ashton-under-Lyne

### Funerals

*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*

#### **6 December**

Phyllis Kershaw (aged 92 years) Springs Lane, Stalybridge  
David Paul Stewart (aged 47 years) Springs Lane, Stalybridge  
*Interment of ashes*

#### **18 December**

Verena May Moore (aged 92 years) Stamford Court Nursing Home,  
*Interment of ashes* Stalybridge, formerly of Blandford House, Stalybridge

#### **20 December**

Brian Clifford (aged 82 years) Stamford Drive, Stalybridge

#### **24 December**

Winifred Mary Jones (aged 85 years) Salisbury Drive, Dukinfield  
*Interment of ashes*



If anyone would like to take up the bread and wine at the offertory—to celebrate a special occasion, in memory of a loved one or just to take part, please have a word with one of the wardens for any Sunday this year.

Dear Friends



Of the many gifts that you probably received at Christmas, which would you say was the most precious? One of the most precious gifts that we can give and receive is the gift of time, but to each one of us, time can mean very different things.

For a child, time takes forever. Time just drags by, moving at the pace of a snail. For a teenager and young adult time is endless. It seems to be never-ending, where everything is challenged and nothing is feared, and one has all the time in the world. As we age, the sands of time seem to move more quickly. For the elderly, time is a collection of precious memories, fond recollections and sometimes very serious regrets. For the elderly, too, time holds a fountain of wisdom giving them the ability to focus more clearly on the present moment.

Time is what we celebrate on the first day of a New Year. We hope that this day will be the start of a new period filled with promise and fresh hope. It is a day that marks our transition from what was, to what we hope will be. We imagine the start of a new year will afford us endless possibilities.

The Blessed Virgin Mary used time to treasure and reflect in her heart on all that God had done for her and how God had given direction to her life. Her example should speak to us now, for we also need to take the time to treasure and reflect within our own hearts, what God has done, is doing, and what He is calling us to do.

At Christmas, we heard the angels announce the gift of peace, as they proclaimed the birth of the Saviour. But peace can be elusive. Our hearts often prefer to push peace aside and seek other ways of gaining our desires. At the beginning of another New Year, as we reflect on the presence of God in our lives, we need to realise that without our individual commitment, the gift of peace could easily become nothing more than empty words.

The promise of peace calls us to become peacemakers. It calls us to make peace with those from whom we are

estranged. It calls us to build bridges to those who have become our enemies instead of our friends. To be bearers of peace means to learn that, without forgiveness, peace has little chance of survival. To be a channel of God's peace is to be willing to make the first step in bringing harmony and forgiveness to our relationships. If we wait for the other person to do that, we will probably wait forever. The peace that God seeks in our lives and in the life of his world depends not just on the action of others, but on our own actions and our own initiatives.

As people who know and believe that all time ends in an eternity of time, and who seek to prepare for that eternity by what we say and do now, may we learn from Mary to become more attentive to God's presence in our hearts. Mindful of that presence, may we use the gift of time to bring peace to our families and friends, so that the world itself may grow in love and harmony. May the proclamation of the angels for "Peace on Earth" take root in our hearts at the beginning of this New Year.

With best wishes for a peaceful 2017.  
Philip

#### **New Year Prayer 2017**

Lord of the		Years,
At the start of this	+++++	New Year we ask for
your presence,		protection and guidance
for every minute of every day of every month ahead.		
Thank you that we do not go into this New Year alone. Thank you for loving us so much that you gave us Jesus to lead us to you.		
May we commit ourselves afresh to serve you, to love you and to share your love with those who don't yet know you.		
May we make a difference for your Kingdom in 2017.		
In Jesus name.		
Amen		

#### **GUIDING SUCCESS**

Recently, two of St George's Brownie Leaders received their Long Service Awards from the Stalybridge District

## *H. REVELL & SONS LTD.*

**A Family of Funeral Directors since  
1888**

*Pre-payment Plans arranged*

**96 Stamford Street  
Stalybridge**

**0161 338 2520**

***Proprietors: N.T. Revell  
K. Revell BA (Hons)***



## PC WIZARD

*'Is YOUR PC RUNNING SLOW ? 'WORRIED ABOUT SECURITY ?  
'SPYWARE, VIRUSES, AND TROJANS ... REMOVED.*



**\*NO CALL OUT FEE\***

**FOR RELIABLE, FRIENDLY SERVICE**

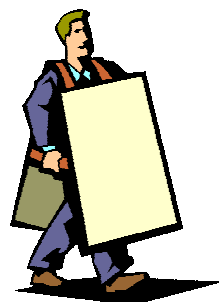
**TEL: 07729910077 OR: 01613037689**

## *Carr's*

THE BAKERS  
*of Stalybridge*  
*Wholesale and Retail*



Est.1922  
44-46 RIDGEHILL LANE  
STALYBRIDGE  
0161 338 2177  
164 MOSSLEY ROAD  
ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE  
0161 330 1341



**Want to advertise your local  
business?**

**We still have some advertising  
space available.**

**Full page £40 for 12 issues.  
1/2 page £25, 1/4 page £15**

**Help yourself, help your business and  
help St George's.**

**For more information see church wardens or  
ring the editor on 0161 330 0518**

Commissioner, Mrs Heidi Booth.

Heather Lees, our Brownie Leader, received her award for 30 years' service and Jean McManus, one of our Assistant Leaders, received her award for 20 years' service.

We congratulate them both and thank them for the time and effort they give each week to the girls in our Brownie Unit. Well done!

## CAROL SINGING AROUND THE PARISH

During December members of our choir and friends visited some of the streets in the parish to sing carols. This tradition had lapsed over the last few years but seemed to be well received

+++++

by many people.



In addition, as usual, the choir sang in Heyrod Village Hall at the end of their Christmas Party and were well rewarded with hot refreshments.

Holme Lea Care Home was also visited on 27th December and the residents and staff were really appreciative and sang along.

The picture shows John Schofield on his beautifully bedecked motor scooter who accompanied the singers on one of their evenings

## If God does not exist

An outspoken atheist went on a tour of a local monastery during his vacation. At the end of the tour, he remarked sarcastically to the monk who had been his guide, "Imagine, if God doesn't exist - and I believe He doesn't - you will have wasted your whole life here in this place." The monk replied: "If I am wrong, I shall have wasted only 60 to 80 years. But if you are wrong, you will waste eternity."

Need some odd jobs doing?  
Can't get round to finishing the decorating?

Then call  
**Brian Allsopp**  
on  
**0161 338 6834**



Leaking taps  
Curtain rails  
Wooden Flooring  
Professional Painter and Decorator



No job too small

Free estimates



## My Feet

MOBILE Chiropody & Podiatry  
Foot care at home

Nail care,  
Corns,  
Callus,  
Fungal infections,  
Ingrowing toe nails.  
Footwear advice  
Insoles, and other  
foot related problems.

**Janette McLean**  
BSc (Hons) Podiatry

Tel: 0161 338 8950  
Mobile: 07961 583 668



HPC registered Podiatrist



"The vicar's hoping providing a really strong mobile signal will attract more young folk to the church."

## CHURCH FINANCES

### October 2016 Weekly Giving

Date	Sunday	Open Plate	Envelopes	Total	Monthly Shortfall
04 Dec 2016	Advent 2	£60.21	£449.91	£510.12	
11 Dec 2016	Advent 3	£60.30	£447.50	£507.80	
18 Dec 2016	Advent 4	£86.37	£559.50	£645.87	
25 Dec 2016	Nine Lessons & Carols, Christmas Eve & Christmas Day	£190.40	£690.00	£880.40	
Standing Orders etc			£864.00	£864.00	
<b>Monthly Total</b>		<b>£397.28</b>	<b>£3010.91</b>	<b>£3408.19</b>	<b>-£3192.81</b>

\* Assuming £13 per adult per week needed for running the church this means we need £6,601.00 per month

+++++

### 200 CLUB

The 200 Club winners for November 2016 are:

1st Prize	£25	3	Ivan Foster
2nd Prize	£15	73	Mike Vidler
3rd Prize	£10	15	Kathleen Redeyoff

The cost is £12 per year per number. There are still some spare numbers available and new members are always welcome.

If you would like to join please see Rose Hayward or ring 303 1731.

+++++

An atheist is someone who believes that what you see is all you get. - Anon

## Smile Lines ....

### Are you taking a mid-winter break?

If you are preparing to take off for foreign climes, do keep an eye out for signs that have English words... but perhaps not an English meaning! In hotels and train stations and airports all over the world there are polite little signs that will bring a smile to the lips of even an exhausted traveller. For instance, how about these:

Switzerland: We have nice bath and are very good in bed.

Romania: The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret you will be unbearable.

Russia: If this is your first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it.

Italy: If service is required, give two strokes to the maid and three to the waiter.

Spain: Our wine list leaves you with nothing to hope for.

Denmark: In the event of fire, open a window and announce your presence in a seemly manner.

Canary Islands: If you telephone for room service you will get the answer you deserve.

With thanks to 'Lost in Translation: Misadventures in English Abroad' by Charlie Croker

**And some**                    ++++++                    **awful one liners ...**

What did the raspberry say to the blueberry? Breathe, breathe!!!

A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I.

A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired.

Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.

In democracy your vote counts. In feudalism your count votes.

A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.

"Most cars on our roads have only one occupant, usually the driver." (Carol Malia, BBC Anchorwoman)

## Readings and Psalms for January 2017

<b>Sun 1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2nd Sunday of Christmas</b>
10.30	<b>Isaiah 63.7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2.10-end; Matthew 2.13-end</b>
Tues 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10.30 1 John 2.29-3.6; Psalm 98.2-7; John 1.29-34
<b>Sun 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Epiphany</b>
8.30	Isaiah 60.1-6; Matthew 2.1-12
10.30	<b>Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.10-15; Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12</b>
Tues 10 <sup>h</sup>	10.30 Hebrews 2.5-12; Psalm 8; Mark 1.21-28
<b>Sun 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>2nd Sunday of Epiphany</b>
10.30	<b>Isaiah 49.1-7; Psalm 40.1-12; 1 Corinthians 1.1-9; John 1.29-42</b>
Tues 17 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 Hebrews 6.10-end; Psalm 111; Mark 2.23-end
<b>Sun 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>3rd Sunday of Epiphany</b>
8.30	Isaiah 9.1-4; Matthew 4.12-23
10.30	<b>Isaiah 9.1-4; Matthew 4.12-23                    <i>Worship For All</i></b>
Tues 24 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 Hebrews 10.1-10; Psalm 40.1-4,7-10; Mark 3.31-end
<b>Sun 29<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)</b>
10.30	<b>Malachi 3.1-5; Psalm 24.7-end; Hebrews 2.14-end; Luke 2 22-40</b>
Tues 31 <sup>st</sup>	10.30 Hebrews 12.1-4; Psalm 22.25b-end; Mark 5.21-43

+++++

## Saint of the Month - 17 January

### Charles Gore, Bishop, Founder of the Community of the Resurrection, 1932

Born in Wimbledon in 1853, Charles Gore was educated at Harrow (where he first encountered and adopted for himself Catholic spirituality and practice) and Balliol College, Oxford. He was elected to a Fellowship at Trinity College, Oxford in 1875 and ordained the following year. He initially served a curacy in and near Liverpool before returning to Oxford as Vice-Principal of Cuddesdon in 1880, then as first Principal of Pusey House in Oxford, which for six years he combined with a canonry at Westminster Abbey. In 1902 Gore was consecrated Bishop of Worcester, being translated first to Birmingham in 1905 as the first bishop of the new diocese, then to Oxford in 1911. He resigned in 1919 to devote himself to a life of preaching, lecturing and writing.

In 1892, while at Pusey House, Gore founded the Society (later the Community) of the Resurrection with the aim of adapting the religious life for men to the changed circumstances of the modern world. In 1898 the community moved from Oxford to Mirfield, near Huddersfield, which became its permanent home.

Gore was the author of numerous books, though perhaps the most influential and best remembered was *Lux Mundi*, which he edited in 1889. It reflected the views of the growing liberal wing of Anglo-Catholicism and was attacked by traditionalists whom he shocked by breaking with the more conservative views of the Oxford Movement. But this enforced demarcation allowed Gore to distance himself from the past and to give new direction to Anglo-Catholicism.

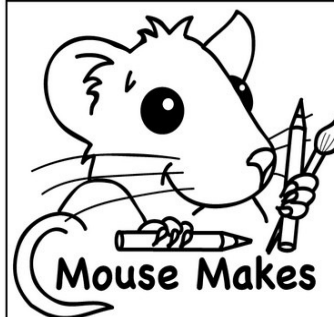
His achievement was to unite Anglo-Catholicism with a critical approach to the Scriptures and to give it a wider social conscience. Above all others Gore made Anglo-Catholicism 'respectable' and began the process by which a more peaceful and less extreme form of it became acceptable to a much wider constituency, capturing the middle ground of the Church of England and making it the normative expression of Anglicanism in the first half of the twentieth century.

On Gore's death in 1932, Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham, and never one to bestow praise lightly, paid him this tribute:

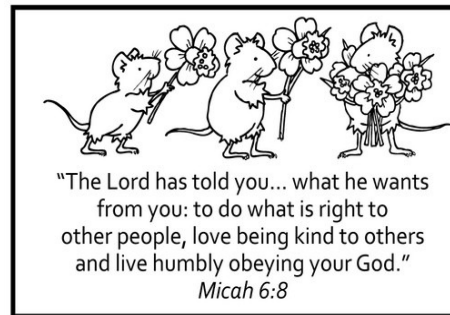
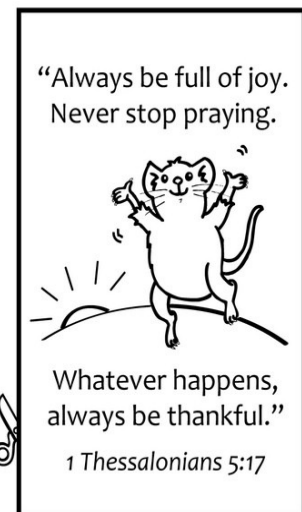
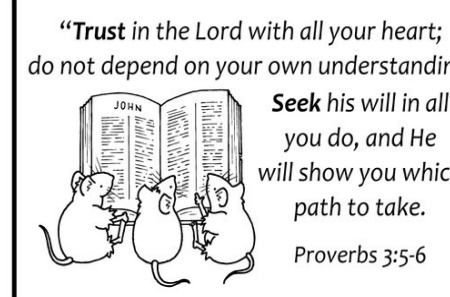
'I judge him to have been the most considerable English churchman of his time, not the most learned, nor the most eloquent, but so learned, so eloquent, so versatile, and so energetic that he touched the life of his generation at more points, and more effectively, than any of his contemporaries.'



## Children's Page



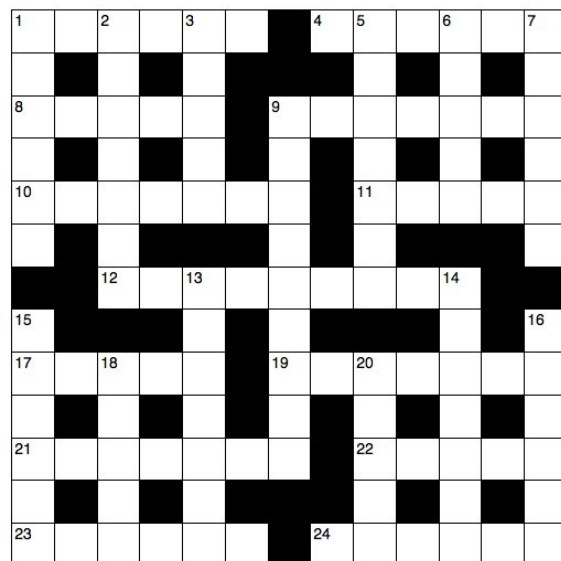
"Oh, Teach us  
to live well!  
Teach us to live  
wisely and well!"  
*from Psalm 90:12 MSG*



Cut out these Scripture  
verse cards to remind  
you this new year of how  
God wants us to live.



## January Crossword



### Across

1 Protective covering  
 8 Tenth-century Bishop of Augsburg for 48 years, who became the first saint to be canonized by a pope (5), 9 'Do not — what is evil but what is good' (3 John 11) (7)  
 10 Reading desk in a church (7), 11 'He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like — walking around"' (Mark 8:24) (5), 12 One of the qualities that Paul exhorted Timothy to pursue (1 Timothy 6:11) (9), 17 One of the meaningless pleasures acquired by the Teacher (Ecclesiastes 2:8) (5), 19 'Like — babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation' (1 Peter 2:2) (7), 21 Jesus said that Moses allowed this only because men's hearts were hard (Matthew 19:8) (7), 22 Girl's name (5), 23 Most sagacious (Judges 5:29) (6), 24 How Stephen, the first Christian martyr, died: after being — (Acts 7:59) (6)

### Down

1 A Jew whom Paul met in Corinth, whose wife was Priscilla (Acts 18:2) (6), 2 For example, turning water into wine, feeding the five thousand, walking on water (John 7:21) (7), 3 Abram's relationship to Lot (Genesis 14:12) (5), 5 'Jesus answered, "It is —: 'Man does not live by bread alone.'" (Matthew 4:4) (7), 6 'Peace I — with you; my peace I give you' (John 14:27) (5), 7 'May the Lord deal with me, be it — — severely, if anything but death separates you and me' (Ruth 1:17) (4,2), 9 Lack of knowledge (Acts 17:30) (9), 13 This woman 'followed Paul and believed' after his words to the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:34) (7), 14 Or noise (anag.) (7), 15 'Even though I walk through the valley of the — of death, I will fear no evil' (Psalm 23:4) (6), 16 ' — Christian soldiers, marching as to war' (6), 18 Saver (anag.) (5), 20 'Unless a grain of — falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed' (John 12:24) (5)

### December Crossword Solution

**ACROSS:** 1, Lame. 3, Obtained. 8, Omit. 9, Merchant. 11, Burdensome. 14, Crafty. 15, Please. 17, Blacksmith. 20, Splendid. 21, Tier. 22, Singeing. 23, Hand.

**DOWN:** 1, Look back. 2, Main road. 4, Breast. 5, Accomplish. 6, Near. 7, Date. 10, Pestilence. 12, Basilica. 13, Tethered. 16, Action. 18, Asa's. 19, Clan.

## Some dates for your diary - January 2017

Sun	1st	<b>2nd Sunday of Christmas</b>	
		10.30a.m.	Parish Eucharist
Tues	3rd	10.30a.m.	Holy Communion
Thurs	5th	9.00a.m.	Time 4 Fun (0 to 5yrs)
		7.30p.m.	Tameside Community Voices Practice
Sun	8th	<b>EPIPHANY</b>	
		8.30a.m.	Holy Communion
		10.30a.m.	Parish Eucharist & Junior Church
Tues	10th	10.30a.m.	Holy Communion
		7.45p.m.	Social and Fund Raising Meeting
Thurs	12th	9.00a.m.	Time 4 Fun (0 to 5yrs)
		7.30p.m.	Tameside Community Voices Practice
Sat	14th	2.00p.m.	to 4.00p.m. Fair Trade Afternoon Tea
Sun	15th	<b>2nd Sunday of Epiphany</b>	
		10.30a.m.	Parish Eucharist & Junior Church
		12.30p.m.	Baptism x 3
Tues	17th	10.30a.m.	Holy Communion
		7.45p.m.	Parochial Church Council Meeting
Wed	18th	7.30p.m.	Deanery Safeguarding Meeting at St John, Hurst
		<b>Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18-25 January</b>	
Thurs	19th	9.00a.m.	Time 4 Fun (0 to 5yrs)
		7.30p.m.	Tameside Community Voices Practice
Sat	21st	2.00p.m.	to 5.00p.m. Lancashire Afternoon for the over 65s
Sun	22nd	<b>Third Sunday of Epiphany</b>	
		8.30a.m.	Holy Communion
		10.30a.m.	Worship For All
Tues	24th	10.30a.m.	Holy Communion
		2.00p.m.	to 3.00p.m. Councillor Adrian Pearce - Surgery
Thurs	26th	9.00a.m.	Time 4 Fun (0 to 5yrs)
		7.30p.m.	Tameside Community Voices Practice
		7.30p.m.	D.M.P.C. Meeting at St. John, Hurst
Sat	28th	8.00p.m.	Quiz
Sun	29th	<b>Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)</b>	
		10.30a.m.	Parish Eucharist & Junior Church
Tues	31st	10.30a.m.	Holy Communion

For more information please go to our website [www.stg.org.uk](http://www.stg.org.uk)



## 6 January Epiphany – so, where did the Wise Men come from?

On 6 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. 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 believe they might have come from what was then Arabia Felix, or as we would say today, southern Arabia.

Certainly 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.

Another interesting fact 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'.

## ... and what about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

The story of the coming of the Magi grew in the telling. By the 6th century they had acquired names: Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. By medieval times they were considered to be kings. Whoever they were, we do know from Matthew that they brought three gifts to Jesus.

What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? While we cannot know for sure what was in the minds of first century Magi, one Victorian scholar has offered a possible explanation as to the significance of their gifts. He was the Rev John Henry Hopkins, an American Episcopalian minister, who in 1857 wrote his much-loved Christmas carol: 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'.

Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king. Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as their worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold because he was King of the Jews, with frankincense because he was to be worshipped as divine; and with myrrh, because he would also become a sacrifice and die for his people.

The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had! They travelled for months over difficult terrain, they never saw any evidence of Jesus' kingship, his divinity or his sacrificial death. They worshipped him through faith in God's promises about him. Isaiah foresaw this response to Jesus: 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.' The Magi's eyes of faith saw clearly and far into the future.

Compare that with the High Priest and religious leaders whom the Wise Men saw in Jerusalem when they first arrived. These head priests knew all about the prophecies of their own coming Messiah, but NOT ONE Jewish religious leader travelled to look for him in Bethlehem. And it is only six miles down the road!

+++++