

INSPIRE



THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR THE PARISH OF
ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, FROME

FEBRUARY 2025

The parish of Frome Selwood
in the Frome Local Ministry Group

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Flowers	Elaine Gilbert

February 2025

Welcome, Seamus!



The Churchwardens and Parochial Church Council
of Frome St John the Baptist
are delighted to invite you
to the Celebration for a new Ministry
of the Revd Seamus Hargrave
as Parish Priest
by the Rt Rev Michael Beasley,
Bishop of Bath and Wells
and the Ven Anne Gell, Archdeacon of Wells
on Monday 3 February 2025 at 7pm
in St John the Baptist Parish Church
to be followed by refreshments in the church.

The Vicar's view



In Scotland, there is a French poem that the Minister will always recite just before the moment of baptism. Part of it is this:

“For you Jesus Christ came into the world: for you he lived and showed God’s love; for you he suffered the darkness of calvary and cried at the last ‘it is accomplished’; for you he rose and ascended to reign at God’s right hand. All this he did for you.”

I have used this myself in all baptisms, because it captures something deep about our Christian faith: that Christ came, not that bishops might live in palaces, not that scripture might be weaponised, not that priests could be powerful, but to serve – to serve and to not be served. It is a truth that many religions have fought against, it is a truth that many people have found too impossible to bear, it is a reality that angels themselves have rebelled against: that the almighty God, who is all good, all powerful, incomprehensible, took flesh precisely so that he might wash our feet, share our lives, and die and rise again for us. I’ve heard the church reflect richly, and often, about the Christian’s duty of service to others, but very little reflection on Christ’s and the Church’s servant ministry to Christians. How often do we feel served? How often do we take time to just sit and realise that we each of us are so beloved, so treasured and cared for that God came to wait on us, to spread a table for us, to give his life for us?

It seems to me that the success or failure of any priest, church or Christian can be measured precisely by the ability to model the same servant love, servant ministry, that Christ gives to us. A church exists for the people, not the people for the church, and the purpose of the church is precisely so that people may have their nature as the image and likeness of God affirmed by the service they receive from the church, and then, seized by this overbrimming conviction in God’s love and purpose for them, go out to give that same love and service to others. “For herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us.” (1Jn 4:10)

I reflected on this in my leaving Mass with my now former parish, and I reflect on it here, with you, as we begin this new, uncertain, journey together. There is so much that I do not understand, there is so much that I have to learn, and there will be so, so many mistakes upon the way, but I truly believe, that if I, that if we, hold this guiding principle of service in our hearts, service given to our wider community in Frome, service received from the ministers and Church, then, though the road may be uncertain, and with more twists and hills than anticipated, its destination, ultimately, will be God’s Kingdom.

In the coming weeks and months, there will be new services, opportunities for us to be served by Christ at the altar, new opportunities for learning and community involvement, chances for us to grow in our understanding and depth of giving and receiving God’s service. I hope as many of you as are seeking will feel able to participate in these and will grow them with your own ideas, experiences and witness, for Christ has made each of us “kings and priests unto God”. (Rev 1:6) But, most of all, in all that is to come, I hope that we each of us will feel served, that we will feel and embody most fully that we are God’s image and likeness.

I look forward to serving as your Minister and am praying for each of you as we begin this new chapter together.

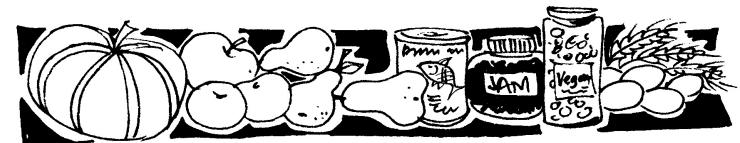
Yours in Christ,

Rev. Seamus Hargrave

St John’s Café and Mini Market – 11am to 2pm

The first Mini-Market for 2025 will be Sunday 2nd March

We would be delighted to receive nearly new items, unwanted Christmas presents, books etc. Contact Mandy (01373 467828) if you would like us to collect them from you.



Advent and Christmas

When I last wrote this as a heading for a piece for *Inspire* it was in October. Wow! Such a lot has happened since then. I wrote about the Men's Shed preparing the new Crib, about Alison assembling cardboard for the new figures and about the Cake and Craft group (and others) busily knitting angels. I wrote about hastily convened meetings in La Strada as Rosemary and I planned some of the Christmas services.

And now it is all over. I have just written the reflection for the third Sunday of Epiphany, and probably by the time you read this we shall have celebrated Candlemas and lit our Christingles.

I have written separate pieces about the angels and the new crib, but they were very much part of our Community theme during this Christmas season. Some of us joined the traditional early morning carol singing on the station platform before Christmas. We were supposed to coincide with three trains, but two of them were cancelled so the gathering commuters endured or enjoyed (they did give us a round of applause!) several more carols than usual. This year we not only sang *While Shepherds* to what David Brinn always assures us is the proper tune, *On Ilkley Moor*, but amazingly to *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*. It really does work!

Our monthly Church service at the Community Hospital took the form of carols and Christmas readings. We had our usual small group of people from various congregations (we do represent Frome Area Christians Together) and the McCormick Family Singers who, after the



main service, sang carols in each corridor of Marshfield Ward and in the main hospital reception area. Many knitted angels were distributed on that afternoon.

I have written warmly about our connection with the Men's Shed which led to several of them coming to our Carol Service to support Tony, who was one of our community readers alongside representatives of the Town Council, Fair Frome, Frome Focus Counselling, Cheap Street business community, St John's school and our Member of Parliament. St John's congregation was nobly represented by Edith, our youngest lesson reader.

The community supplied the readers, but it was very much an ensemble St John's effort: the music was, of course, superb, the sidesmen were energetic and enthusiastic before and after the service, the candle-lighters and snuffers were very efficient and all that seasonal refreshment –mulled wine, all those mince pies and sausage rolls –was very gratefully received.

One of the highlights of previous Christmases has always been Colin's Crib Service on Christmas Eve, and it was going to be a hard act to follow. Rosemary and I decided on a simplified, shorter version with everyone gathering on the nave sanctuary carpet as the story

unfolded. One of the McCormick dolls had their annual moment in the spotlight as the Baby Jesus, but on one of my excursions down the aisle during the last carol, to my great delight, I spotted a young Mum with a very new baby, who was pleased to come and join us for our final tableau, surrounded by adoring shepherds, angels and wise men. We all processed round the church at the end to the strains of *Walk in the light* led by the real, human family. Christmas really had started!

There had been a question mark over this year's Midnight service. At one point we really thought that we wouldn't have a priest to celebrate at this important service, but Bishop Rob Martin stepped forward to preside at what is obviously a significant service for many. I am used to people wandering in and out of this service, or getting up and leaving half way through, but it seemed to me that this year the large congregation stayed and joined in right to the end.

On Christmas morning we explored a final angelic theme as many of the congregation joined me on a walk round the church spotting St John's angels – in stained glass announcing the birth of John the Baptist, in the reredos in the Lady Chapel announcing the birth of Jesus, under the Rood screen where there is a surprising and usually unnoticed host of angels and finally at the crib where some sparkly angels formed part of the new decoration.

We are so grateful to our wonderful 'retired' priests who supported us throughout Christmas, as they have throughout the year: Father Ian, Father Kevin and Bishop Rob. We are grateful too to all the musicians so ably led by Rosemary, the sacristy and flower teams all of whom contributed to the beauty and splendour of all these services, and to everyone who shared in this wonderful festival. **Janet Caudwell**



A new crib for St John's

Frome Shed members Ian, Tony and Leon made the crib and delivered it to the church, where it was received by Lois and Terry Bushell on behalf of the congregation and was much admired.



To begin with the crib was empty, but as we drew nearer to Christmas, the familiar figures of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, together with the shepherds and wise men, were placed in it.

Another welcome addition this year was a set of nativity figures, accompanied by various animals and stars, which were created by students from

Hayesdown and St John's First schools and Frome Learning Partnership, all under the inspired direction of Alison Henderson.

One happy result of making contact with the lovely chaps from the Frome Shed was that Tony became part of the community team who read our lessons in the Carol Service.

The crib remained on display in the church every day throughout Christmas and Epiphany.

Janet Caudwell





Angels!

These delightful angels were distributed around the town in preparation for Christmas. Many of them were created by St John's Cake and Craft group, but

there were other friends, creative people, who generously gave their time (and wool!) to add to the heavenly host – and each one was different, distinctive. Some had twinkly halos, flowing hair, mischievous smiles; some were small and delicate; one was bright red (we gave that one to Raves from the Grave).

So where did the angels go? Some went to care homes with whom we have some connection, to local schools, to Fair Frome, to the Community Hospital, to the YMCA, to the Archangel Hotel (naturally), to individuals (Seamus, our new Vicar, Pat Lawless in Lincolnshire, the chaps who made the crib, two little boys who were baptised during Advent, one of our regulars who often comes into church for shelter, a young person involved in making our alternative crib figures) and to all our neighbouring shops (the people to whom we take a Well Dressing letter every year to warn them that we are going to be closing the road to traffic).

We can report that, without exception the angels were received with surprise, delight and gratitude. And occasionally with tears. Every angel had a label round their neck with the message:

'With love from St John's'

With grateful thanks to Kathryn, who had the original idea, to everyone who made the angels, including the Woodlands knitters and crocheters, but especially to the Cake and Craft group members who responded so enthusiastically to the original idea and were not fazed when I turned up just before Christmas 'needing a few more for the hospital'.

We had originally thought we were going to suggest 'bring your angel to



church for Christmas', but that proved beyond us. Although they did make several appearances at the Christmas Zoom service. Perhaps next year? The C&C group is already planning what to do for Advent 2025!

I thought I'd seen the last of the angels but I received one of my own at the January 'thank you' party – a Reader angel, complete with blue Reader scarf!

Janet Caudwell



Craft & Cake Wreath making afternoon

Christine Mytton very kindly kept up the tradition started by Kathy Yeaman by running a Christmas wreath making session for the craft and cake group and friends at the beginning of December. Christine's husband, Stewart, and Kathy Yeaman's husband, Norrie, did a great job of foraging greenery, and Norrie also donated some extra rings. Christine says: 'We were only expecting a small group but lots turned up. It was really cramped in the Randall Room, but everyone produced a lovely wreath and one person even made two! Of course, we missed Kathy enormously ... it was she who had prepared the boxes of ribbons and other kit.'



Fundraising at St John's

Thank you to everyone who helped with the fundraising effort in 2024.

We are pleased to report that we raised over £9,500 for general church funds through mini-markets, two candlelit concerts, the Autumn sale, Frome Festival flower displays and concerts, a coffee morning, and a hot chocolate stall at the Extravaganza at the end of November!

In addition we raised £1300 for the organ fund (through two concerts and the Festival Evensong), over £300 for the Bennett Centre through a coffee morning, and over £250 for the refurbishment of the children's corner – now renamed the 'Cosy Corner' – through the craft stall at the December mini-market.

We are hoping to be as successful in 2025! At a planning meeting on 25th January there was no hesitation in deciding to continue with the mini-markets on the first Sunday of each month from March to December. We already have another Breathe Music concert booked in for Friday 9th May, and the planning for Frome Festival events is well under way—the theme for this year's flower displays is 'Telling the story in fabric, glass and stone'.

We also plan to run an Autumn Fair on Saturday 18th October 2025, but with slightly different opening times from previous years: 10am to 2pm (instead of 9.30am to 1.30pm). A new idea to run a fashion show is being researched, and we are also hoping to have more concerts and coffee mornings. Any further ideas welcome!

As ever, we would be grateful for all offers of help with any of these fundraising ideas to spread the load. Even if you can only help at one mini-market, we would love to hear from you ...

Many thanks once again to everyone.

Mandy Crook and Elaine Gilbert

amandacrook@blueyonder.co.uk; elainegilburt@live.co.uk



Evensong at St John's

A monthly Service, with wide ranging prayer and music to ground us for the week ahead.



Every third Sunday of the month,
beginning on the 16th February
5pm at St John's Frome

Volunteers for our choir welcome
Contact: rosemarymccormick@hotmail.com



Music Notes

Tallis: Hear the voice and prayer

Rev. Seamus has asked the choir to sing this beautiful anthem as part of his licensing service on 3rd February. It was not one that I knew, and I have really enjoyed getting to know it.



The text, taken from 1 Kings 8:28–30 is part of a prayer spoken by Solomon at the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Hear the voice and prayer of thy servants,
that they make before thee this day.

That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day,
ever toward this place, of which thou hast said:

‘My Name shall be there.’

And when thou hearest have mercy on them.

The Temple was built to house the Ark of the Covenant, making it the most sacred place, the earthly dwelling place of God’s name: YHWH, and Solomon is asking that the prayers offered in this holiest of holy places might receive His closest attention! The Temple was destroyed many centuries ago, and the Ark was lost, but the words of Solomon are fitting for the dedication of any sacred space where we feel God’s presence, and they also have a powerful message for our new incumbent as he is officially licensed to lead us in our spiritual journeys.

Tallis is one of the truly great English Church composers whose career spanned some of the most challenging times for a church musician in this country. Born about 1505, probably in Kent, he was raised in the Catholic church, and his early works, such as the magnificent 40-part motet *Spem in Alium* are firmly rooted in the Latin polyphonic style of his European contemporaries such as Palestrina or Lassus. However, Henry VIII’s break with Rome meant that Tallis, the organist of the Chapel Royal, had to adjust his style to conform with the new style of liturgy. That Tallis succeeded in keeping his position as court composer (and also his head!) through the subsequent reigns of Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I suggests that he was very adept at

writing the sort of music they, each in their turn, wanted to hear.

This anthem was written around 1547–8, during the short reign of Edward VI, and it shows the influence of Cranmer with its clear word-setting and simple structure. There is little of the elaborate counterpoint that was a feature of his earlier works, as Cranmer believed the words should be clearly understood by all who heard them. The central phrase of the piece, ‘*My name shall be there*’ is sung in rhythmic unison so there can be no missing it.

Little is known about Tallis’s personal life, but it is likely that he was a humble, sincere man who earned the respect of the different monarchs he served. He died in 1585 and was buried in Greenwich where his epitaph bears the words:

As he did lyve, so also did he dy,

In mild and quyet Sort (O! happy Man)

Rosemary McCormick

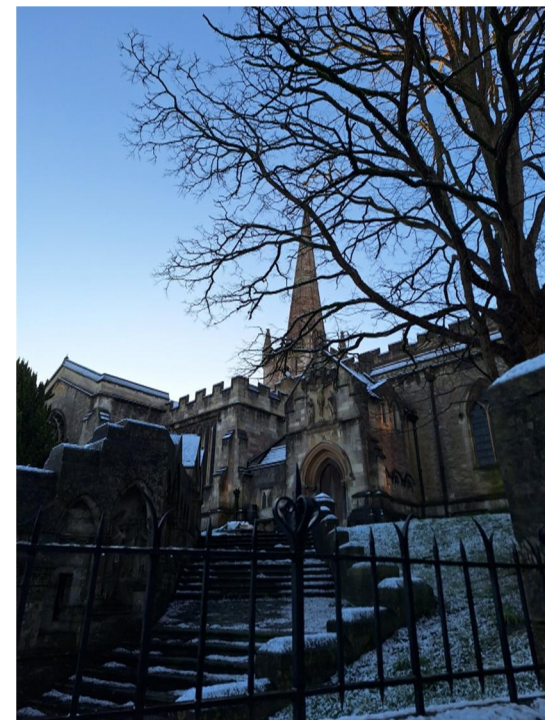
A snowy St John’s

Not a white Christmas, but a very cold January day!

I took this photo as I walked up the steps to the Church Office one morning. I loved the contrast of the bright winter light and bare branches.

Now, though, the snowdrops are appearing through the grass ... spring is coming!

Karolyn Curle



News from other churches

St Katharine's, East Woodlands

What a wonderful number attended both the Carol and Christmas Day Services. A huge thank you to Jon Benger who stepped in on Christmas Day as our organist, Diana, was unwell.

Prayers, Tuesday 25th February, 4pm with Rev. Jo Robinson and Janet Caudwell: Take 30 minutes out of your busy lives for a moment of quiet reflection in our beautiful church.

Steve Bainbridge

I have to report the very sad news that Steve, stalwart member of the PCC and a choir member for many years, has passed away. We will miss him so much, working quietly in the background to undertake tasks large and small in the churchyard and the church. As the choir's only full-time tenor, we already feel his absence.

He passed away peacefully on Monday, 13th January, having been visited earlier that afternoon by Rev. Jo Robinson, our organist, Diana Carrington, and our churchwarden, Lorna Wheeler. Gone but not forgotten. RIP Steve.

East Woodlands Village Hall

Friday 7th February, 7pm: Pop up pub

Saturday 8th February, 7pm: Illustrated talk by the Rev. Jo Robinson on her time as a missionary in China. Tickets £10.00 to include a glass of Prosecco and a pudding. Licensed paid bar plus tea and coffee available. Seating limited to 65 at tables. Jewellery made by the women Jo cared for will be on sale (cash only). For tickets contact Lorna 07824 808220 wheelerlj@icloud.com or Pam 07715 673991 friggetowers@gmail.com

Saturday 22nd February, 12 noon to 2pm: Soup and Pud lunch.

Pam Chapman




Frome Deanery Childrens & Youth Work - 0 to 19s

Are you involved or interested in childrens, families or youth ministry? Do you want to see Jesus change the lives of our young people across Frome Deanery?

Join us as we dream and plan how our churches might work together to impact 0-19s in our communities


7 for 7.30pm Wednesday 12 February
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community space for Frome

‘All that is required of us is to be joyful, keep the Faith, and do the little things well

These words, taken from the Welsh Patron Saint David’s last recorded sermon, were quoted recently by the Bishop of Chelmsford, Guli Francis-Dehqani, in a speech titled ‘Encouraging the Weary with a Word (see link below).



These words reinforce my view that some of the most thought-provoking and spiritual messages in our church at present are coming more from the female clergy/lay readers than from the men, who seem more concerned with the process of running the church. I would not be surprised if a future religious historian referred to the first half of the 21st century as the period when the Church of England was rescued from bureaucratic oblivion through the lead shown by a number of female prophets urging local congregations to cope with their frustrations at declining numbers by concentrating on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in their day-to-day ministry of doing the little things well.

Bishop Guli admitted that her views were unusual among her bishop colleagues who wanted more central direction of the church, with emphasis on visions for growth rather than individual prayer and ministry. She drew on her experience of having to flee from her home country when the Iranian revolution led to the destruction of the Christian church, forcing any remaining Christians to carry on their faith in private with no institution or central oversight.

She stressed that the Church of England is better at a local level where the personal ministry of showing ourselves as a model to others by continuing to do the little things well contrasts with the central church’s attempt to follow current secular culture which demands progress, key indicators and growth. She urged us all to hold

steady, as our time is but the blink of an eye in God’s view.

She also acknowledged that many clergy are exhausted and that expectations of them are too high, partly because of declining numbers and partly because of too many central initiatives. There are never enough hours to do all the ministry that is there to do.

We should recall all this when thinking of the arrival of our vicar this month and not have unrealistic expectations. We should not expect dozens of new initiatives, targets and future visions but realise he needs time for listening to others, for prayer, for meditation, for new learning and for leisure.

We should also remember the advice to concentrate on doing the little things well. What are these little things? We all have our own lists of things we might do, and some of us are better than others at each of them: re-read Chapter 12 of Paul’s epistle to the Romans for an insight here.

Among the little things, in my view, that we could do are:

show kindness to others; comfort people in their losses or disappointments; read the Bible frequently; use the internet to understand new thoughts and insights; maintain the church fabric; lead and share prayers; listen to others; sing the right notes in the choir; arrange church flowers; carry out sacristan roles; make sure the sound system works; run church groups; play the organ; share your money and possessions with others; talk to our neighbours; learn from other faiths and from those with no faith; make friends with strangers; give lifts to those without transport; volunteer in charity shops and local societies.

I am sure each of you could add to this list.

Chris Lewis

Eds: Bishop Guli’s speech can be found at:

<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=BISHOP+GULI&type=E210GB384G0#id=10&vid=427f6786f53d740b2e9894f0ed6dba0e&action=view>

SERVICES at ST JOHN'S – FEBRUARY 2025

Weekly at 8.45am - Sunday Morning Service on Zoom

Sunday 2nd February - Candlemas

9.45am Holy Communion

Monday 3rd February

7.00pm Welcome Service for Revd Seamus Hargrave

Sunday 9th February - Fourth before Lent

9.45am Holy Communion

Sunday 16th February - Third before Lent

9.45am Holy Communion

5.00pm Evensong

Sunday 23rd February - Second before Lent

9.45am Holy Communion

Sunday 2nd March - Sunday next before Lent

9.45am Holy Communion

Wednesday 5th March - Ash Wednesday

8.45am Holy Communion with imposition of ashes

7.00pm Holy Communion with imposition of ashes

Early in-person Sunday services in Frome

1st & 3rd Sundays; 8am Christ Church; 2nd & 4th Sundays; 9am St Mary's

Open Doors

every 2nd Saturday, 10.30am to 12 noon.

Next date: **Saturday 8th February.**

An opportunity for people to deal with baptism/wedding arrangements and for volunteer teams to meet

Vestry team:	January & July
Sidesmen & Welcome:	March & September
Intercessions team:	April & October
Lesson readers team:	June & December

DIARY DATES – FEBRUARY 2025

February

Sat	1	9am	United Prayer
Mon	3	7pm	Welcome service for Revd Seamus Hargrave
Tues	4	10.30am	Worship Committee meeting
Wed	5	6.30pm	<i>Inspired to Read</i> Book Club (JC house)
Thurs	6	2-4pm	Craft & Cake (BC)
Sat	8	9.30am-11am	Working Party - meet in church
		10.30-12 noon	Open Doors
Wed	19	7pm	PCC Meeting (BC)
Thurs	20	2-4pm	Craft & Cake
Tues	25	11am	Julian Meeting

March

Sun	2	11am-2pm	Café & Mini Market
Tues	4		Shrove Tuesday
Thurs	6	2-4pm	Craft & Cake (BC)
Sat	8	9.30am-11am	Working Party - meet in church
		10.30-12 noon	Open Doors
Wed	12	6.30pm	<i>Inspired to Read</i> Book Club (BC)

Monthly working parties

Next one: Saturday 8th February, 9.30am – 11am

We are gradually working round the church, decluttering and cleaning, and so far we've decluttered the North Porch and the South-West Porch and given the Lady Chapel a really good clean. There's lots more to do, so do come along if you can, even if only for half an hour. Speak to Neil McCormick if you want to know more – and let him know if you see anything that needs doing so that he can add it to the list.

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Links in a Golden Chain 7

Dorothy L. Sayers

Dorothy L. Sayers was born in 1893 and died in 1957. We know her best from her detective fiction featuring the aristocratic amateur sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey. The books were first published in the 1920s and 30s, and have remained in print ever since. Some of you will remember their dramatisations on BBC radio and, later, on television. She is numbered amongst the 'Queens' of the Golden Age of Detective Fiction, along with Agatha Christie,

Margery Allingham and Ngaio Marsh. Not so high in the public memory are her contributions to more serious literature and scholarship. She wrote a number of plays on religious themes, many of which were performed in churches and cathedrals, and broadcast on the BBC. Her radio dramatisation of the life of Jesus, *The Man Born to be King*, was broadcast at monthly intervals in 1941-1942. It caused controversy at the time when some critics within the church took exception to an actor taking the role of Jesus.

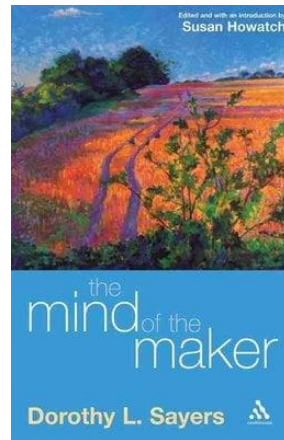
She was the daughter of a clergyman, and she did not enjoy school, but her abilities were recognised in her gaining a first-class degree in French at Somerville College, Oxford. Her first employment was as a teacher, which she did not find congenial. She went on to work for Blackwell, the Oxford bookseller and publisher. She then moved to an advertising agency, Benson's, where, amongst other achievements, she was instrumental in establishing the image of the toucan in the publicity for Guinness. The success of her novels meant that she was able to devote herself to more serious writing.

Her major literary work was an English translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The first two parts were published by Penguin in 1949 and 1955, but her death in 1957 cut short her work on the final section on Paradise, which was completed by another author, Barbara Reynolds, and appeared in 1962. It has been noted by Reynolds, writing in 1989,

that, following her translations, Dante's work has been read by 'more English-speaking readers in the last forty years than in the past six and a quarter centuries'.

Theological insights undergirded all her literary work, but she also wrote on specific Christian issues. In 1941 she published *The Mind of the Maker*, in which she illustrates the doctrine of the Trinity by relating it to the process of writing fiction. This book was republished in 1994 with an introduction by Susan Howatch, herself an author of fiction with ecclesiastical storylines. There is a detailed account of her life and work on Wikipedia. Perhaps it might be worthwhile for some of us re-read Lord Peter Wimsey to discern the Christian moral ideas within the stories.

Kevin Tingay



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Notre-Dame reopens December 2024

We all recall those heartrending TV pictures of the Notre-Dame fire in June 2019 when for days it was not clear whether there would be anything left of France's most important religious building. Just as flames seemed to engulf the building, combined efforts of firefighters, clergy and the public managed to save the basic structure. In the last five years the efforts of thousands of French men and women have not only restored but also enhanced the cathedral.

The reconstruction efforts are striking. Restoring the historic monument to its former state has cost an estimated £600 million so far. In fact, more than this has been raised from over 300,000 donors in 150 countries, with the extra funds used to restore other monuments. As always, questions will be asked whether this could be better spent on 'more socially important' projects. However, I do not think there was any alternative. You cannot half-repair a cathedral: indeed, Notre-Dame has not only been repaired but has been massively enhanced as well as being heavily insured against future damage. Would England have done anything different if this had happened to one of our great cathedrals? Indeed, after the Great Fire of London in 1666, Christopher Wren was asked not only to rebuild St Paul's but also to rebuild every London church.



The repairs took an immense amount of work. 1,300 cubic metres of stone were replaced, thousands of organ pipes were cleaned and retuned, 1,500 solid oak pews were created. Oaks as tall as 88 feet were felled. Well over 2,000 dedicated workers were

involved in all this work, and the results of their labour are very impressive indeed.

I have been to the old Notre-Dame many times, but I have always been disappointed in the experience. I think this has mainly been because of the gloomy state of the interior due to many years

of accumulated grime. Although to some this gloom created a mystical and numinous charm, most people I talked to could not wait to get back outside where there was more light. We can rejoice that these new repairs have restored light to the interior and enabled visitors to see the cathedral as it was always meant to be seen.

This lack of care is a lesson to us all and reminds us that we must continue to look after all our ancient churches or they will deteriorate as had Notre-Dame. Indeed, as long ago as 1828 the novelist Victor Hugo was commissioned to write a book about Notre-Dame because of the need to raise consciousness about its value as a Gothic monument. A primary theme of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* is that of the value of Gothic architecture, which at that time was neglected and often destroyed to be replaced by new buildings or defaced by replacement of parts of buildings in a newer style: e.g. stained glass.

After these repairs, darkness has given way to light. The naked columns of the cathedral now soar up to the ceiling; the walls, stripped of centuries of dust and grime, now appear brand new. You can see around you and appreciate more the grandeur of the building and all its features, no longer hidden in gloom. Looking up at the ceiling we can now see a lattice of 1,200 oak logs – the 'forest' as workers call it – felled in a former royal forest, just like the beams that held up the original roof.



Perhaps the most recognisable elements within Notre-Dame are its famed stained-glass windows – masterpieces of French Gothic art – and, in particular, its three rose windows set into the north, south and west facades. While the glass extraordinarily survived the fire, it required careful restoration to resolve smoke and lead damage as well as extensive cleaning after decades of weathering and wear and tear. Years of grime have been removed, restoring the vibrant colours so that once more, lipstick reds and lapis lazuli blues bathe the cathedral’s interior when the sun shines through.

Notre-Dame’s famous Grand Organ is the largest in France, consisting of 8,000 pipes, five keyboards, a pedalboard and 109 stops. Its largest pipes are 32 feet tall. The Grand Organ survived the fire with only one pipe damaged. Despite this, it needed to be completely restored to remove the lead dust that settled inside it after the fire, as the pipes of the Grand Organ contain leather, which needed to be replaced.

The cathedral’s reopening was marked by a spectacular concert, during which the Organ was blessed and awakened by the Archbishop of Paris. The sound resonated around the cathedral, filling every nook and cranny with glorious music. The playing was managed expertly by the official organists of the cathedral, who made history with an event that has received coverage worldwide.

To accompany the restoration of Notre-Dame's spire and medieval charm, plans have also been announced to revamp the surroundings of the cathedral into a serene, green oasis, which will begin in autumn 2025. Many will be eager for their first visit to this newly restored landmark. And the fiery colours of those famous windows will surely be all the proof needed that Notre-Dame – scarred and wounded but transformed – lives on. Musicians everywhere look forward to hearing how the refurbished organ sounds when classical organ works are played on it. I, for one, hope to be able to visit the new cathedral in the near future.

Chris Lewis



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Inspired to Read Irish Writers

What makes Irish writers so special? So many of the great authors of the past 200 years have been Irish: Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Roddy Doyle, Maeve Binchy, to name but a few. Maybe there is something in their culture of story-telling that enables them to spin a yarn that can have you hooked within just a few words; I have often found there is a poignant mix of gentle humour that offsets quite a bleak tale. Over the past few weeks I have found myself reading books by very different Irish writers, all contemporary and all award-winning.

In December the Inspired to Read book group gathered to discuss *Small things like these* by Claire Keegan, a pocket-sized novella (only 128 pages – you could easily read it in an hour!) – but it packs a punch, and it provoked one of the most wide-ranging and profound discussions we have had in the group. In just a few, well-chosen words Keegan can create images that stay with you for a long time.



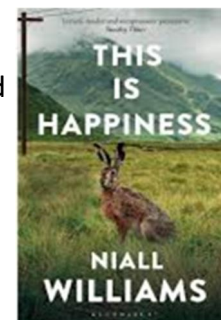
But Furlong never had found out who his father was. His mother had died suddenly, keeled over on the cobblestones one day, wheeling a barrow of crab-apples up to the house, to make jelly. ... Furlong was twelve at the time.

From his own difficult beginnings Furlong is drawn to a young girl he encounters who is being raised by the nuns, and the story exposes the scandal of the Magdalene laundries. These were institutions run mainly by Roman Catholic nuns, ostensibly to help young unmarried mothers. They started in the 18th century, but in the 1990s many stories of abuse and exploitation were exposed, after 155 unmarked graves of young women were found in the grounds of one of the convents. In Keegan's book (which is more succinct than this article is likely to be!) Furlong rescues the girl, regardless of the possible consequences for his own family.

Having read this, the book group discussed the plight of unmarried mothers, and the current situation in Afghanistan was raised, where,

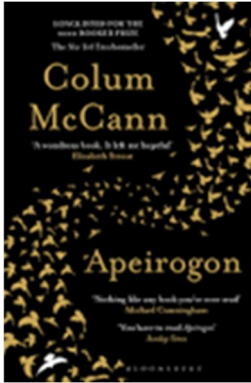
despite the country having one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, the Talib have taken moves to close midwifery training centres, a move which is likely to endanger mothers and babies even further. We also discussed changing social attitudes towards unmarried mothers, and another book was strongly recommended: *Philomena* by Martin Sixsmith, the journalist who exposed the story of Philomena Lee, an unmarried mother who suffered abuse in the 1950s at the Sean Ross Abbey in Tipperary. Despite the troubling issues raised, I think we all agreed that the book left us with a feeling of hope for the innate kindness of humanity.

My second Irish novel is by award-winning writer Niall Williams. *This is Happiness* is a book I would strongly recommend for its evocative storytelling and character portrayal. We are presented with a picture of a community whose lives are changed with the arrival of electricity. But essentially this is the tender story of an old love affair re-kindled after fifty years, and I was hooked after the first chapter: "*It had stopped raining*". Chapter 2 makes clear the



importance of this event: "*Rain ... was a condition of living. It came straight-down and sideways, frontwards, backwards and any other wards God could think of. It came dressed as drizzle, as mizzle, as mist, as showers ... as a wet fog, as a damp day, a drop, a dreeping and an out-and-out downpour.*" I found myself totally drawn in to the lyrical prose writing and didn't want to put the book down. I have read another of Williams's books: *History of the rain* (you may detect a common theme here!), but the one I am most keen to read next is *John*, of which the blurb says: "*Aged, blind and perilously frail, John the Apostle has walked ten thousand miles to tell of love.*"

And finally the book I am reading at the moment: *Apeirogon* by Colum McCann. A very different book and probably not one I would have tackled, but it is the next book for my Dorset-based book group. Born in Dublin, McCann now lives in New York, and many of his novels are political. This one tells the true stories of two fathers, one Israeli and one Palestinian, who have both lost daughters in the



conflict between their two countries. It is an intense read, and I am not finding it easy, partly because the story is revealed episodically, and sometimes digresses into passages which don't always seem particularly relevant, but also because it has made me realise how little I actually know about life in that part of the world, where walls divide communities, crossing checkpoints are only open for a few hours a day, and segregation even includes some roads being

“for Israelis only”. Despite the very different content, I can see similarities of prose style between McCann and Williams, not least in their eloquent use of sentence structure and evocative choice of words:

“The sky was a radiant blue. The cobblestone street was crowded with September shoppers. Music was being piped from a raffia-fronted loudspeaker. The blasts ruptured the sound system. The silence afterwards was uncanny, a stunned interval, until the street erupted in screams.”

Despite finding it challenging I am sufficiently absorbed by this book that I will finish it, and may even read more of his work in the future, but only if I ever reach that point of my life when I have the time to devote to reading a whole book in a couple of days!

News from the Book Group

Bad weather meant we held our January meeting online. It was not so easy to have wider-ranging discussions, but as our goal was to plan the programme for this year's meetings, it did have the advantage that we were all by our computers and could look things up as we talked about them. We have come up with a programme that should provide us with some interesting reads and discussions, beginning with ***The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn, on Wed Feb 5th**. In March, we will discuss the **books we read in our youth** that have influenced our reading habits today – or possibly just enjoy a nostalgic look back at the books we treasured (and probably still have somewhere on our

shelves!). The March meeting will be a week later in the month than usual, **on Wed 12th**, as the first Wednesday of that month is Ash Wednesday. If you are interested in joining the group please let me know. Plans for later in the year:

- Wed 2nd April** Book: *A Month in the Country* by J. L. Carr
- Wed 7th May** Poetry evening – details to be confirmed
- Wed 4th June** Book: *The Glassmaker* by Tracy Chevalier
- Wed 2nd July** Discussion about local authors
- Wed 6th Aug** Book: *Precipice* by Robert Harris
- Wed 3rd Sept** Discussion: Sci Fi books
- Wed 1st Oct** Book: *English Pastoral* by James Rebanks
- Wed 5th Nov** Discussion: Book Awards 2025
- Wed 3rd Dec** Book: *Brotherless Night* by V.V. Ganeshananthan

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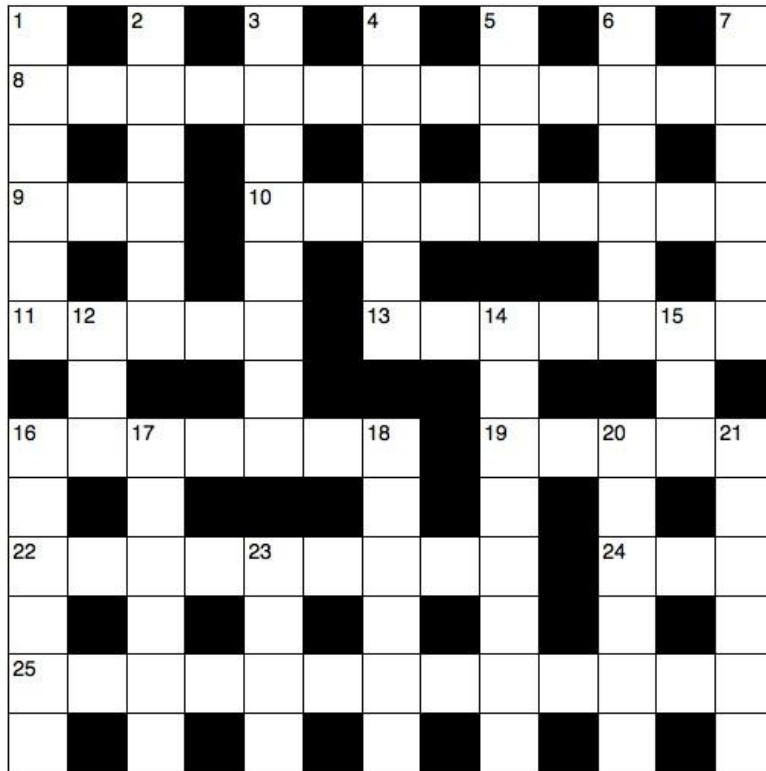
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FEBRUARY CROSSWORD



Across

- 8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)
 9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)
 10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)
 11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)
 13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)
 16 Went to (John 4:46) (7)
 19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)
 22 David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)
 24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1)

- 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)

Down

- 1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)
 2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)
 3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)
 4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)
 5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)
 6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)
 7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)
 12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)
 14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)
 15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)
 16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)
 17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)
 18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)
 20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)
 21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)
 23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)

Answers to the crossword in the December magazine

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.

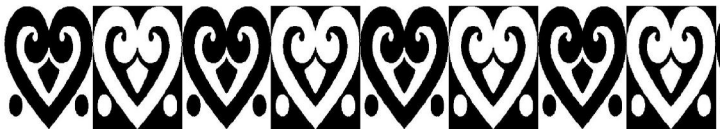
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FEBRUARY WORD SEARCH

February opens with Candlemas – the naming of Jesus in the temple. Simeon and Anna praised God to see the promised Messiah, sent by a loving God to save his people. February also celebrates the love between men and women: Valentine cards and wedding fayres abound. ‘Love’ as in social compassion is also remembered: Fair Trade fortnight, Holocaust Memorial Day, World Leprosy Day, Education Sunday and National Nest Box Week.... Love is truly needed by everyone!

naming
Christ
Candlemas
Simeon
Anna
temple
love
Valentine
romance
Matthias
Fairtrade
Fortnight
coffee
bananas
chocolate
justice
poverty
nest box
marriage
wedding
Holocaust
leprosy
education
Sunday

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



FEBRUARY SUDOKU

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SERVICES ROTA FOR FEBRUARY 2025

Date/Week	Services	Readings	Duties for the 9.45am service at SJ				
			Readers	Prayers	Sidespersons	Chalice	Sacristy
Sunday 2 February Candlemas	8.45am Zoom Service <u>9.45am Holy Communion</u>	Malachi 3.1-5 Hebrews 2.14-end Luke 2.22-40	E Gilbert T Bushell	R McCormick	G Fone R Gosling	C Holland	P Connew
Sunday 9 February Fourth before Lent	8.45am Zoom Service <u>9.45am Holy Communion</u>	Isaiah 6.1-8 (9-end) Psalm 138 Romans 5.1-11 Luke 5.1-11	C Holland The Hudsons	J Caudwell	B Essex J Davies	A Crook	M Veakins M Smitherman
Sunday 16 February Third before Lent	8.45am Zoom Service <u>9.45am Holy Communion</u>	Jeremiah 17.5-10 Psalm 1 1 Corinthians 15.12-20 Luke 6.17-26	B Essex R McCormick	A Crook	J Bruges C Holland	J Davies	R & N McCormick
Sunday 23 February Second before Lent	8.45am Zoom Service <u>9.45am Holy Communion</u>	Genesis 2.4b-9, 15-end Psalm 65 Revelation 4 Luke 8.22-25	S Caden S Smith	A Henderson	M Smitherman M Veakins	A Crook	P Connew
Sunday 2 March Sunday next before Lent	8.45am Zoom Service <u>9.45am Holy Communion</u>	Exodus 34.29-end Psalm 99 2 Corinthians 3.12-4.2 Luke 9.28-36 (37-43a)	N McCormick C Holland	J Bruges	G Fone R Gosling	C Holland	M Veakins M Smitherman
Vicar: Revd Seamus Hargrave Reader: Janet Caudwell		Sunday 16th February Evensong at 5pm Tuesday 25 February Julian meeting at 11am					

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Inspire magazine

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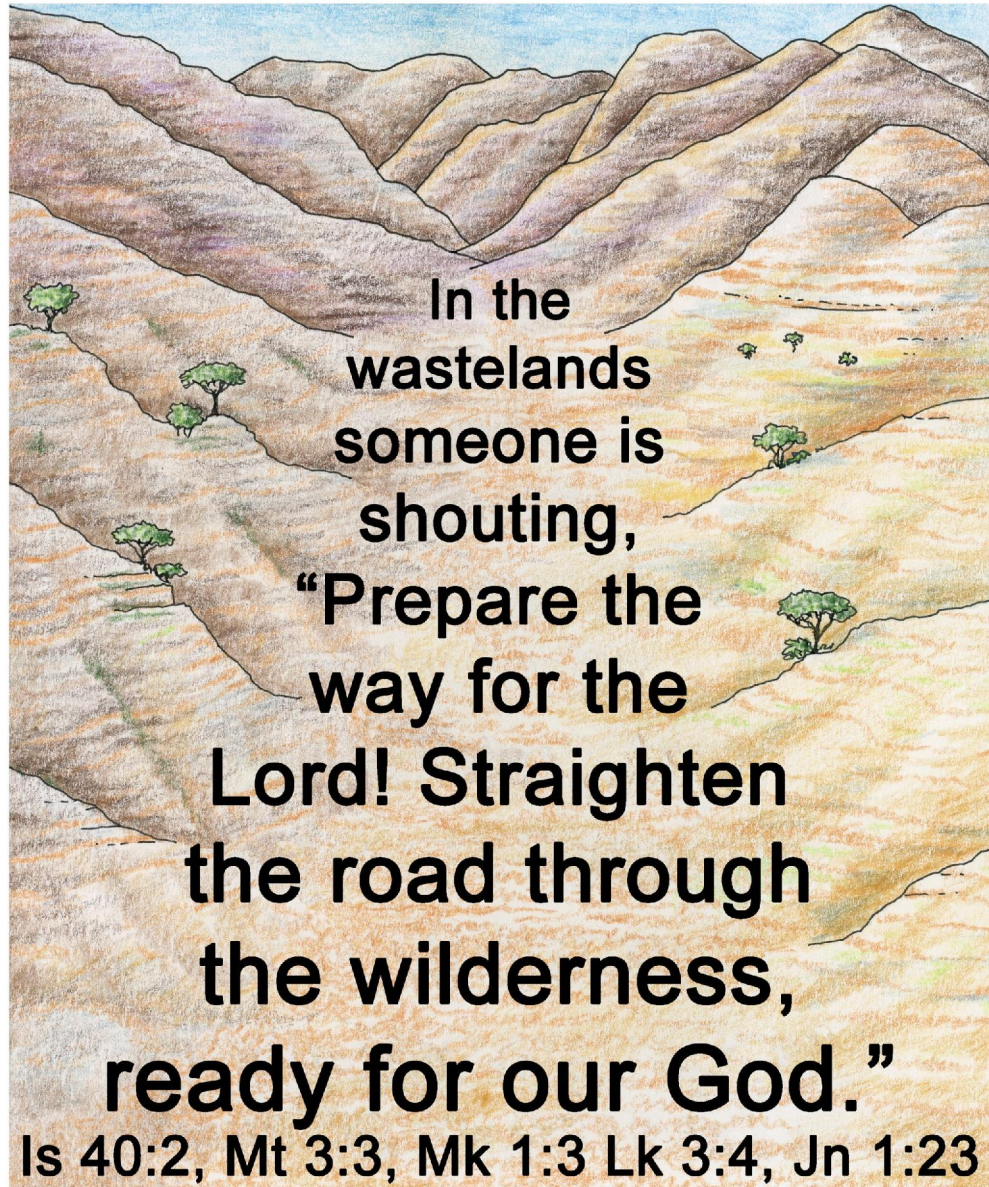
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In the
wastelands
someone is
shouting,
“Prepare the
way for the
Lord! Straighten
the road through
the wilderness,
ready for our God.”

Is 40:2, Mt 3:3, Mk 1:3 Lk 3:4, Jn 1:23