

February 2026 to March 2026 CONTACT

The Magazine of
St. Georges United Reformed Church
Newton Road, High Heaton



A PLACE FOR ALL



“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one sparrow is forgotten by God. Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows!” Luke 12, vs 6-7. GNB.

We live today as never before, in an impersonal society- a world in which increasingly we are treated as numbers rather than individuals. Instead of being people, we are a reference number on a tax form, a policy number with an insurance company, a national health number on a waiting list, a telephone number to a double-glazing firm. Answerphones, automated messages, emails, texts, the Internet- these have become the order of the day, personal contact reduced to the barest minimum. Disturbingly, many young people relate more easily to a computer or phone screen than to real life flesh and blood.

In such a world it is reassuring to know that, in God’s eyes at least, we are still real people, each one of us unique and precious to him. He values us for what we are, inviting us to share in a meaningful personal relationship with him. More than that, he calls us to recognise the value of others and, in doing so, to resist the depersonalising forces that threaten to undermine society today. Whatever you do, never forget that each person you have dealings with is not a number or an object, but precisely that- a person !

Ask yourself: Do you realise how much you matter to God? Do others realise how much they matter to you? Do you make time to show how much you value them?

Pray: Father God, reach out to all who are lonely, deprived of human companionship through age or infirmity, or separated from others-even when they are with them-, through fear, shyness, mistrust or prejudice. Reach out into our fragmented society in which so much of the feeling of community has been lost, where ties that once bound families together have been broken, where so many live only for themselves.

Father, give to me and to all a sense of worth and an understanding of the humanity that binds us all together, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen

Loving God, send me out rejoicing in the knowledge that you value me, and so help me to show how much I value others, expressing my concern and appreciation through word and deed, to the glory of your name. Amen

Adapted from a Reflection from Daily Prayer by Nick Fawcett.



St George’s Mission Prayer.

God of mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions, joy to our worship, and power to our witness. Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you, and in service to our local community, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

SHROVE TUESDAY – 17TH FEBRUARY 2026

The word “Shrove” comes from an old medieval word, “shriven”. This means to be forgiven your sins, the things you have done wrong. The idea is to use up rich foods like eggs, milk, and sugar before Lent's fasting and abstinence begin, which is why pancakes became associated with this day – they're a dish that can use all these ingredients.



In some French speaking countries this day is called “Mardi Gras” - meaning “Fat Tuesday”. Not because the day is “fat” but because, during Lent,



people used not to eat any meat or dairy produce. So, on “Fat Tuesday”, they ate up everything that contained any meat or fat. Mardi Gras is celebrated in many countries in the world and people appear on the streets in their special costumes; the steel bands play; there are many fireworks and the singing and dancing continues until midnight. The main colours of Mardi Gras are purple for the virtue of justice, green representing the virtue of faith, and gold to illustrate the power of God. These colours have also been used to represent the gifts the Magi brought to the baby Jesus with purple representing myrrh, green for frankincense and gold for the gold. Then the carnival is over; it really is “farewell to meat” for now it is the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday.

ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENT

“Wearing sackcloth and ashes” used to mean what it says. Long ago, when you wanted to show how very sorry you were about something you’d done wrong then you went around wearing sackcloth and you covered yourself in ashes! Nobody does that now - except that, on Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent), some Christians have a tiny smudge of ashes put on their foreheads as a sign of sorrow at not having been good over the last year. In churches where this happens, the priest first burns the palm crosses that have been kept from last year’s Palm Sunday and mixes the ashes with holy water to make a kind of greyish paste. Then, when people go to church on Ash Wednesday, the priest dips his thumb in the paste and uses it to make the sign of the cross on each person’s forehead.

ASH WEDNESDAY First Day of Lent



A time to think

Lent is a serious time of the year for Christians. It is a time when they think not just about what they had done wrong in the past but how they could be better in the future. It lasts forty days - from Ash Wednesday to the Saturday just before Easter Sunday - which is sometimes called Holy Saturday. (The Sundays in Lent do not count towards the 40 days).

For Christians the forty days of Lent are a time of preparation and of thinking ahead to the excitement of Easter. They also remind Christians of the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness.

(Taken from the Internet) Article first printed in St Cuthbert’s News.



Something to think about

- My ducks are certainly not in a row. I don't even know where some of them are. And, I'm sure one of them is a pigeon.
 - If a bottle of poison reaches its expiration date, is it more poisonous or is it no longer poisonous?
-
- Which letter is silent in the word "scent", the letter S or the C ?
 - Why is there a "D" in fridge but not in refrigerator?
 - Common sense is like deodorant. The people who need it the most never use it.
 - It's not my age that bothers me- it's the side effects.
 - As I watch this generation try and rewrite our history, I'm sure of one thing: it will be misspelled and have no punctuation.
 - As I've got older, people think I've become lazy. The truth is, I'm just being more energy-efficient.
 - I'm on two simultaneous diets. I wasn't getting enough food on one.
 - Hard to believe I once had a phone attached to a wall, and when it rang, I picked it up without knowing who was calling.

Technology Abbreviations

Any techies out there? We see these abbreviations frequently. Do you know what they mean? See if you can correctly identify them!

- | | | | |
|----------|----------|---------|---------|
| 1. Wi-Fi | 2. USB | 3. BIOS | 4. HDMI |
| 5. GPS | 6. HS | 7. OS | 8. AI |
| 9. CPU | 10. RAM | 11. IP | 12. VPN |
| 13.SSD | 14. GUI | 15. DNS | 16. URL |
| 17.LAN | 18. HTTP | 19. MAC | 20. PDF |

Answers are elsewhere in Contact. *No peeking till you've had a go!*



BIBLE A MONTH : MALI

“Go then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” Matthew 28, vs 19 (GNB)

Mali is a land locked country in West Africa. It covers an area of 478,000 sq miles (UK is 94,000), and has a population of 22 million. The country is surrounded by Algeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Cote D’Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Niger. Languages include Bambara, some French, and many local languages. The literacy rate- people who can read and write- is 35%.

Mali has suffered a series of crises for decades including armed rebellions, military coups, ethnic conflicts, and terrorist attacks. This is why your continuing support of our Bible Society colleagues in Mali is critical.

The support of vulnerable people (see Mission Update) is just one of five projects you enable, all of which focus on strengthening the faith of Christians and outreach to others.

Many people do not read, so one project promotes other methods of communication such as Bible storytelling and traditional songs and dances. Many Christians in Mali do not own a Bible, so another programme is encouraging more than 900 families to read the Bible or go to listening points to hear the Scriptures.

The translation of the Bambara Study Bible will be a valuable resource when completed, and with your support, our colleagues in Mali plan to visit at least 100 churches every year, to find out their needs and give them support such as producing biblical texts to help in outreach work.

Prayer Pointers

- Pray for improvement in the security situation of the country, especially in areas where there are terrorists. Thank God for bringing greater stability to some regions.

- Pray for the safety of the 650,000 Christians in Mali. Pray for courage and perseverance for church leaders and Bible workers.
- Ask the Lord to bless the team working hard on the translation of the Bambara Study Bible. Pray that this great task will be successfully completed and that when published it will be a huge boost to faith in the Lord in Mali.

Mission Update from Mali

Your support is critical in maintaining a Christian outpost in a country that has suffered from extremism and the presence of terrorists.

The Foreign Office advises against all travel to Mali, except to the capital Bamako, due to the risk of terrorist attacks and kidnapping. And it advises that travel to Bamako should only take place if it is essential.

Despite the security issues, you are supporting five important Bible programmes in a country which is about 94% Muslim and just under 3% Christian.

We spoke with Mauril Koudoha, who coordinates Bible Society work in countries including Senegal, Sierra Leone, Niger and Mali. Mauril was about to head into Mali so we talked and prayed with him. He told us a story from the project Spiritual Support for Vulnerable People in Mali. This project began as a trauma healing programme for single mothers, but was then expanded to widows, women with disabilities or trauma- all women in crisis.

One lady’s testimony was especially vivid. She got married around 16. When she was 22 her husband died and she was so sad that she didn’t want to get married again. Her family wanted her to marry, and she did so at 24. Shockingly the second husband also died, when she was 27. She was completely shattered. Everyone started saying she was a witch, and that was why her husbands died. She couldn’t stay in her community and in her house, so she began wandering round the city. One day she was about to commit suicide but a voice told her, “No, don’t do that. go out for a walk”

PTO

She went outside and bumped into the lady who runs Bible Society of Mali's trauma healing project. This lady invited her to the programme. She started attending and she got healed.

The programme had by then been expanded beyond Bible study and trauma healing to make it even more effective. We began teaching these women an income-generating activity, a trade, such as how to make agricultural products, or provide food. Teaching them skills helped these ladies to get back on track and make a positive impact in society. This lady is one of many who has benefited from learning a trade.

At the age of 31, another man wanted to marry her. She was a Christian by this time and was reading the Bible and going to church. The pastor told her to pray and decide if she should marry again. She's now happily married. She didn't want to forgive her family or men in general at first, but the Bible based trauma healing process eventually enabled her to forgive.

Bible a Month prayer Letter Jan 26.

Lectionary readings February to 5th April 2026 Easter Sunday

Where readings match URC diary they are highlighted

01-Feb-26	Micah 6 vs 1-8, Psalm 15, 1Corinthians 1 vs 18-31, Matthew 5 vs 1-12
08-Feb-26	Isaiah 58 v 1-9a(9b-12), Psalm 112 v 1-9 (10), 1 Corinthians 2vs 1-12 (13-16), Matthew 5 v 13-20
15-Feb-26	Exodus 24 v 12-18, Psalm 2, 2 Peter 1 v 16-21, Matthew 17 v 1-9
18-Feb-26	Joel 2 vs 1-2, 12-17 (or Isaiah 58 vs 1-12), Psalm 51 vs 1-17, 2 Corinthians 5 vs 20b--ch 6 vs 10, Matthew 6 vs 1-6, 16-21
22-Feb-26	Genesis 2 v 15-17; 3 v 1-7, Psalm 32, Romans 5 v 12-19, Matthew 4 v 1-11
01-Mar-26	Genesis 12 v 1-4a, Psalm 121, Romans 4 v 1-5, 13-17, John 3 1-17
08-Mar-26	Exodus 17 v 1-7, Psalm 95, Romans 5 v 1-11, John 4 v 5-42
15-Mar-26	1 Samuel 16 v 1-13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5 v 8-14, John 9 v 1-41
22-Mar-26	Ezekiel 37 v 1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8 v 6-11, John 11 1-45
29-Mar-26	<u>Either Palm Sunday OR Passion Sunday Readings</u> <u>Palm</u> --Matthew 21 v 1-11 , Psalm 118 v 1-2, 19-29 OR <u>Passion</u> readings Isaiah 50 v 4-9a, Psalm 31 v 9-16, Philippiian 2 v 5-11, Matthew 26 v 14-27, 66 or Matthew 27 v 11-54 02-Apr-26Exodus 12 vs 1-14, Psalm 116 vs 1-2, 12-19, 1 Corinthians 11 vs 23-26, St. John 13 vs 1-17, 31b-35
03-Apr-26	Isaiah 52 vs 13-ch 53 vs 12, Psalm 22, Hebrews 10 vs 16-25, (or Hebrews 4 vs 14-16, Hebrews 5 vs 7-9), St John 18 vs 1- ch 19, vs 42
05-Apr-26	Acts 10 v 34-43 or Jeremiah 31 v 1-6, Psalm 118 v 1-2, 14-24, Colossians 3 v 1-4 or Acts 10 vs 34-43, St. John 20 v 1-18 or Matthew 28 1-10

Answers to Technology Abbreviations:

1. Wireless Fidelity 2. Universal Serial bus 3. Basic Input/Output System.
4. High Definition Multimedia Interface. 5. Global Positioning system. 6. Hot Spot
7. Operating System 8. Artificial Intelligence 9. Central Processing Unit. 10. Random Access
Memory 11. Internet Protocol 12. Virtual Private Network. 13. Solid State Drive 14.
Graphical User Interface. 15. Domain Name System 16. Uniform resource Locator 17. Local
Area Network 18. Hyper Text Transfer Protocol 19. Media Access Control 20. Portable
Document format.

If you know more than 5- very well done. If you knew all 20- you are a genius !!!

P.S. Don't forget that crucial troubleshooting abbreviation, PBKAC. (Problem between keyboard and chair)

Northern Synod Prayers

A year of prayer, gratitude and faithful service across our Synod- rooted in Christ and guided by hope.

Please join with others in the synod to pray for the churches and people mentioned below.

We pray for a renewed sense of God's Spirit as we move through 2026.

February 2026

- 1st Assembly Executive (6th-8th). Remembering churches: Wooler and St James's Alnwick; CRCW Fliss Barker. St Mark's Amble, after the retirement of Rev'd Alison Mills.
- 8th Racial Justice Sunday- celebrating the image of God in all people. Advocate- Pat Poinen.
- 15th St Andrew's Glanton; Longframlington and Rothbury. Minister- Rev'd Ed Butlin.
- 22nd The Trust: Secretary, Mr Willie Duncan and Treasurer , Mr Gordon Wanless and all the trustees. The work of The North East District Council.

March 2026

- 1st Church Action on Poverty North East. Trinity, Ashington; Trinity Bedlington; St Andrews and St Mark's Newbiggin; Seaton Delaval LEP; Minister Rev'd Alan McGougan.
- 8th Preparing for Synod Meeting (14th). Moderator, Rev'd kim Money. Synod Clerks: Lucy Cooke and Lisa McAvoy. Synod staff team- Andrew Atkinson, Wendy Watson, Ragen Dorward, Helen Hogg. URC Youth Assembly.
- 15th Widdrington; St George's, Morpeth; Great Bavington. Minister Rev'd Julian Sanders.
- 22nd Our work with Northerly Synods- Moderators Jamie Kissack; Lindsey Sanderson, Geoff Felton; Mike Thomason.
- 29th St Aidan's Hexham. Local Church Leader: Linda Gowland. Northumbrian Industrial Mission (NIM) Fiona Usher.

April 2026

- 5th ***Easter Sunday*** rejoicing in the risen Christ, a time of hope and possibility.
- 12th St Andrew's Monkseaton and St Columba's North Shields. Minister Rev'd Louise Sanders.

Hire of Halls, Rooms and Church

Our premises are available for letting as follows:-

Regular Hires, based on a maximum 3 hour session:-

Large Hall: £60 Minor Hall: £45
Meeting room: £25 Church: £65

One-off hires, based on a maximum 3 hour session:-

Large Hall: £85 Minor Hall: £55
Meeting Room: £30 Church: £110

If you would like to book any of the above, or require further information, please telephone Mr Harry Fawcitt, 07351050480. If any church members wish to hire the halls for private functions (at 50% discount), please check in the church diary first to make sure your date is free, then contact Harry to confirm booking. This avoids double bookings. A Hiring agreement will need to be signed – as required by Synod. There is no fee for church-related activities but in some cases a Hiring Agreement may have to be completed.

SAINT DAVID AND SAINT PATRICK

There are two Saints Days in March – here are a few things about them which you may or may not know.

Saint David

Saint David, or Dewi Sant as he's called in the Welsh language, is the patron saint of Wales. His day is

1st March. His influence is shown in the number of churches dedicated to him in Wales and the celebrations each Saint David's Day. St David's Day has been a national festival in Wales since the 18th century, and is still marked with gusto. Many people will wear either a daffodil or a leek, which are both symbols of Wales. The other Welsh symbol, *Y Ddraig Goch* (the Red Dragon, Wales's national flag), will be flown on many more buildings than usual.

There aren't many facts about St David. He was at the heart of the Welsh church in the 6th century and he came from an aristocratic family in West Wales. Saint David's father was a prince called Sant, son of the King of Cardigan. His mother, Non, was also a saint, and was the daughter of a local chieftain (and possibly the niece of King Arthur).

Although he had a hard life, David's holiness and personal charisma were enough to hold the community together in the service of God. The example of his life, and the modernity of his most famous saying - that we should concentrate on "doing the little things in God's presence with conscientiousness and devotion," make St David a figure with a very contemporary appeal.



Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. St Patrick's Day is **17th March.**

St Patrick is traditionally associated with the Shamrock plant, which he used to explain the concept of the Trinity. St Patrick's value doesn't really come from the historical details but from the inspiration of a man who returned to the country where he had been a child slave, in order to bring the message of Christ.

It is said that he was born in 387 AD in Scotland, in Kilpatrick, although alternative sources suggest he was born at Banwen in Wales. Although his father was a deacon, Patrick was not a believer. When he was aged 16, Patrick was captured by a gang of Irish pirates and taken as a slave to Ireland. Patrick came to believe that this was a punishment for his lack of faith. He was put to work for six years herding sheep and pigs on Slemish mountain in County Antrim. While he was a shepherd, Patrick spent much of his time praying. In an escape bid (while he was a captive in Ireland), Patrick stowed away on a boat bound for Britain, and it landed not far from where his parents lived. Patrick then decided to follow his vocation to become a priest, and after a dream he was inspired to return to Ireland. Patrick spent several years studying before he felt ready to take up the life of a missionary.

Patrick eventually returned to Ireland, as the country's second bishop and brought the message of Christ to many people who had never heard it. Patrick believed that when "every nation" had heard the gospel, Christ would then return, and it seems he believed that he was the person to bring this message of Christianity to the land that represented this "final hurdle" of God's plan. *From the Internet. Article first seen in St Cuthbert's News.*



Hello to our good friends at St George's from Julia and Dennis in Allendale.

.I think we can now safely say we are into village life having made many new friends from the village and some surrounding farms. It must be said that our membership of the local church has facilitated us making lots of nice friends, both within and without the church. Mention of the church brings to mind that although we have a large electric organ in our church no one can play it so we have to use a large digital screen and recorded music which seems to only know one speed, not the best but it suffices. How fortunate you are at St George's to have the talented musicians for your services. Sadly, the Methodist church in the hamlet of Catton, about 2 miles from us, had to close but the services are now held in the village hall, and it was to the hall that Julia and I went during Christmas week to join in their evening service of carols. On Christmas eve we returned to Catton for an outside carol service on the green at which about 45 folk turned up. It was freezing cold (the words from the carol, 'earth stood hard as iron' came to mind), for sure there were no male monkeys running around!

Afterwards we retired to the Crown Inn for more carols - and liquid refreshments! On the first Sunday in the month the local Methodists and farming folk gather at the Hamlet of Sinderhope, which is about four miles from us, for a combined service in the modernised old school building, now a community centre. It was a very cold morning when we gathered for the service, but the

hall has a huge wood burning stove which was roaring during the service - lovely jubbly to quote Del Boy! After the service there is always a warm and cold buffet, and it is a nice time to socialise.



As is the norm, the traditional Allendale New Years eve ceremony of carrying the burning Tar Barrels around the village (I told you of the origins of that in an earlier article) which drew record crowds from towns and villages throughout the northeast. The cafe in the square done a roaring trade with the sale of it's homemade broth and buns. It was needed, because the night was bitter cold and the wind exacerbated the cold. The

strong wind stoked up the fire within the barrels and the sparks were flying. I took some photos, but a friend of one of my daughter's, is a semi professional photographer (James Little photography) and so I dumped mine and used some of his - see attached. I have been told that one year, the Co-op store in the square was set alight by the bonfire, but the village fire service,



who are always strategically placed on such occasions, soon had it under control. Having seen the event several times I was not too bothered watching it again but, as friends were with us who hadn't seen it, Julia and I walked to the square and braved the cold. However, I had wrapped her up like the Michelin tyre man, complete with close fitting safety specs to stop her eyes watering.

Although we missed the early January snow which you had on the east side, we did have low nighttime temperatures which dropped to minus 6c several times and never got above 0c during the day. When the snow does come, as it will, the local farmers are contracted by the council to clear and grit the small roads around the area, and as we have a farm close by, our road will soon cleared but any snow is just cleared from the centre of the road which means we have to clear the drive to get out!.

I have written before of the much slower pace of the village life, something I never thought I could tolerate, but I have been slowly brought down a few notches and I accept everything now, I am certain those who know me would find that difficult to believe, but it is true. I have also accepted that it is quite normal to wait at the counter of the Post office or Co-op while Mrs Goodbody and the assistant finish their conversation. I used to get excited and make fists in my pocket about it but nothing will change and I suppose that is how it is, and should be.

Most people know that Julia has a memory problem, and they are so understanding and helpful. If we are shopping at the Co-op (which I do to get my 'divvy') I leave it to Julia to pack the bags as I feed the items through, but sadly she gets confused with that and the staff never hurry her but gently guide her and they don't give a hoot if there is a queue. Honestly, everyone is just

so nice. I had to smile to myself last week as we were standing with the shopping waiting to cross the road in the village. An approaching car stopped and waved us across the road (as often do) and I said to Julia, "we must look like two Darby and Joan members". I am now considering dying my hair a dark shade of black.!

THANK YOU

I apologise for the length of time it has taken me to say "thank you" for the amount of donations made at Sandra's funeral for the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society, £269.56 and the Wansbeck Palliative Trust Unit £167.25. The Funeral Director H. Duckworth, arranged for the distribution of the donations and "thank you" letters from both recipients have been received.

Myself and the my family were truly amazed at the attendance of so many people at the church and we all want to thank you for your support on the day and especially for my on going support every week at church. We have a truly amazing church family but of course you already know that.

Special thanks to Dorothy for her epic organ playing at the beginning of the service and of course to Liz for such a wonderful service. Thanks also to the flower arranger and to those who cleared up after the service and left the church in an acceptable state.

Norman

Quotes of Winston Churchill

Churchill, the British Statesman, military leader and writer who was Prime Minister from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955, was famous for his many thoughts on all aspects to life. Despite the fact that he died over 60 years ago, in 1965, many are applicable to the modern world. Here are just a few examples.

On Politics. "Democracy is the worst form of government – except for all the others that have been tried."

Politics is the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next month and next year, and to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't happen."

"There is no such thing as a good tax"

On himself. "I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught!"

"I am fond of pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals"

On critics. "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on"

"History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it"

On Life. "Laughter can lighten even the heaviest burden"

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty"

"If you are going through hell- keep going"

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

His last words: "I'm bored with it all". After such a life, what a finale!

GIFT AID AND GIFT AID SMALL CASH DONATIONS SCHEME.

PLEASE DON'T IGNORE THIS ARTICLE AS BEING BORING AND NOT ONE THAT PROBABLY DOESN'T APPLY TO YOU!!

TO THOSE WHO PAY INCOME TAX.

It's that time of year again when I ask you to think about helping St. George's financially without any additional cost to you. I **encourage any of our members or friends** who donates to St. George's, pays income tax and does NOT gift aid their donations **to complete a gift aid form**. If personal circumstances change and a donor ceases to pay tax, or no longer pays sufficient tax for us to claim, the gift aid declaration can be cancelled. For this reason, we normally only make an annual claim in May or early June to allow our donors time to check whether or not they still pays sufficient income tax to cover **all** gift aid donations he/she has made **to any charity**.

It is likely that most of our members will by now be aware whether or not they have paid income tax for the tax year which will end on 5th April 2026.

I will be making the claim for St. George's sometime around mid to late May 2026

Anyone who has gift aided their offerings/donations and has ceased to pay sufficient income tax should contact me by the 10th May 2026 to ensure I do not make a claim on their donations for the tax year ended 5th April 2026

TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT TAX PAYERS.

If you do not pay tax but would still like to help the Church reclaim under the Gift Aid Small Cash Donations scheme please make your offerings in **CASH** amounts of up to **£30.00** per week preferably in the Free Will Offering envelopes. These can be supplied by Anthony Armstrong. If you are not able to attend Church every week please put your donations in your Free Will Offering envelopes and bring them when you are able to come. We can claim for donations of cash in the offering plate but only up to £30 per person per week which is why the Free Will Offering envelopes are best.

Unfortunately, we cannot claim for non-tax payers who pay directly into the bank account or donate by cheque.

If you require any further information, need to check whether you have given an ongoing declaration, or require a gift aid declaration form please speak to me either at Church, by sending me an email at alhall23@yahoo.co.uk.

Your support for the Gift Aid Scheme forms a significant part of the income of St. George's and is much appreciated by the whole congregation. (last year we claimed a total of £5506.01 through the Gift Aid and Small Donations Scheme).

Thank you

Alison Hall

Answers to the Quiz page 12

1. Sunderland

2. South Korea

3. Twelve. i.e.

1,000,000,000,000 *now that's a lot of noughts!*

4. Antonio Vivaldi

5. Poseidon

6. Buzz Aldrin

7. Won

8. Herbivores

9. Japan

10. Electronic

11. Palindrome

12. Four

13. 1970's. It was sent in 1971

14. Brazil

15. Rice

16. Skin

17. Mercury

18. Tolkien

19. Earthquake magnitude

20. Carbon Dioxide.

News of the Church Family

By the time this magazine is printed, Christmas will be a distant memory. But it is worth saying Thank you to all the folk who were involved in leading our worship during Advent – Rev'd Kate Hackett, Ken McKenzie, Rev'd Mark Carrick, Rev'd Liz Jewitt and the Elders. And we thank everyone who made teas and coffees, or were stewards. Or who decorated the church. It has been a real team effort.

We've had our social on Dec 6th (thanks to Lucy), Socks and chocs collection, Pram service. The retiring offerings so far, for the Marie Curie Hospice, in memory of Judith Das, have raised £232.68.

On January 4th, we were delighted to welcome Miracle and Beth who brought their baby girl Imina for a service of Dedication. There were lots of family members there to be with Imina on her special day, and some stayed for coffee and cake afterwards. After the Dedication, Rev Liz Jewitt presided at an Epiphany Communion and welcomed the visitors to join us at His Table.

Alan and Lesley Trafford are about to retire! Alan was ordained and inducted to St George's in July 1983, and served 10 years before moving to the States. 28 of his years have been at Covenant Evangelical Church in Lake Jackson, Texas. Alans successor has already been found and has been working with Alan for the past 6 months. There is no vacancy. The handover is seamless! Lesley is to decide about formally winding up her business as The English Florist but won't be doing any more weddings. The plan is to move to Kyle, in Texas, which is nearer to son Nathan, daughter in law Christina and granddaughter Penny. If you would like to email Alan and Lesley, ask Dorothy B for the address.



St George's send their Congratulations and Best Wishes to Audrey and Moira, who celebrate special "O" birthdays in February and March respectively. We wish you well and trust that you will enjoy your special days. God bless you.

THANK YOU

To all who ordered Christmas cake this year, a very big thank you, I hope you enjoyed the festive season. Thanks to you this year I have made a donation of £230 to church funds. Thank you for continuing to help me raise money for Our Church.

Audrey Matfin

The World Day of Prayer 2026.

This is observed on the first Friday in March each year, and is a world-wide movement of informed prayer involving people of many denominations and languages in more than 170 countries.

The Day of Prayer begins on the international dateline, in Samoa. As the earth rotates, a great wave of prayer begins to build. It sweeps across the Pacific, touching Fiji and New Zealand, rolling on through Asia,; Japan, the Philippines, Korea and Bangladesh. The countries of Africa and the Middle East are next. The wave reaches the shores of Europe as the day dawns there. Then it moves across the Atlantic, the Caribbean, the Americas, and on to the Pacific again until the sun finally sets over American Samoa, where the final service takes place. A worldwide circle of prayer is complete.

Each year the service is written by women in a different country who share the hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, opportunities and needs, of their country.

The World Day of Prayer 2026 will be observed on **Friday March 6th**. The theme for this year focuses on Nigeria, drawing inspiration from Matthew 11, vs 28-30, which invites participants to find rest in God amidst life's burdens.

This ecumenical service takes place this year at St George's URC at 1.30 am. Though it has been prepared by women, it is **not** a service for women only-**EVERYONE** is welcome.

Light Refreshments will be served after the service.

N.B. It would be lovely to have some volunteers from St George's to read some of the prayers or commentaries!



A Bit of a Quiz

1. What city was wrongly depicted on the medals issued to the Great North runners in 2025?
2. Where does the food Kimchi originate from?
3. Tesla share holders have recently approved a new pay packet for Elon Musk that could be worth up to one trillion dollars over the next decade. How many zeros do you have to add to 1 to get a trillion?
4. Who composed the four Seasons?
5. In Greek mythology, who is the god of the sea?
6. Who was the second man to walk on the moon?
7. What is the currency of South Korea?
8. What do we call animals that only eat plants?
9. What country is known as the Land of the Rising Sun?
10. What does the "E" stand for in the acronym "EMAIL"?
11. What is the term for a word which reads the same backwards as forwards?
12. How many strings does a standard violin have?
13. In what decade was the first email sent?
14. Which country produces the most coffee in the world?
15. What is the main ingredient in the Italian dish risotto?
16. What is the largest organ of the body?
17. What metal is liquid at room temperature?
18. Who wrote the Hobbit?
19. What does the Richter scale measure?
20. What gas do humans exhale during respiration?

My MBE. 13th January 2026.

Dear family & friends

What a real, special, memorable occasion it was for me to receive my MBE.

It is the norm that up to 3 people are allowed to accompany the recipient for such an occasion, but as I have 2 children and 2 grandchildren I

asked permission for all 4 to attend. My request was granted.

So on the 12th January, Lynne, Ian, Ian James, Keira and I set off by

train to London. We were booked for two nights into an Airbnb in Kings Cross. The weather was lovely. In the afternoon we visited some other parts of London by hopping on and off the tubes.

That evening, I was sent to my room for half an hour. When I was allowed out, I was amazed to see how the lounge was decorated. They had balloons, large posters, serviettes, plates, coasters and tumblers with my name and the occasion printed on. They had prepared a buffet supper of all finger foods which they know I love. There was also a wrapped gift for me to open which contained a coffee mug, a note book and a pen, all with the same words printed on. We ate and then played table games which was so much fun. What a special time we had. We woke that next morning to see the rain



and it continued the whole day. Before we left all spruced up, the children had another gift for me a silver necklace!

We travelled by taxi to get to Windsor Castle for 2pm. We had quite an uphill walk from where the taxi dropped us off to get up to the castle.

Sadly the rain meant it was too wet to take photos in the castle grounds and of course no photos are allowed inside the castle, other than by the official



photographers. The staff were amazing, so friendly and they made each person feel so special. It was then when I was told that the investiture would be with the Princess



Royal, the very Princess Anne, the hardest working Royal in many people's eyes.

I had been given instructions of when to stand in front of her and curtsy, then take 2 steps closer to her when she pinned my medal onto my jacket.

She was wonderful, asking me how I got involved with Bluefields, coming over very interested. After I finished explaining, she said 'you must certainly enjoy what you do!' With the conversation over, she shook my hand and that was my cue to take 2 steps backwards and curtsy again. Then it was time for the official photographs to be taken with my family. That was fun!

It was then out into the rain again, goodbye Windsor Castle and a taxi back into London. The children had booked our evening meal in a lovely restaurant. Ian had mentioned to the staff what the occasion was and the manager came and congratulated me and served us 5 glasses of champagne.

The meal was lovely – a fantastic end to such a memorable occasion.

My children did me proud. I'm so grateful to my family who have supported me these past 17 years and of course my dear friends for their love and support too. I feel this award is for us all, as I couldn't have done what I do on my own. My gratitude too, to the late Mark Catley for believing in me and nominating me for this award. How I wished he could have been present to share in this special occasion with me.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story.

Love Margaret. MBE

Points to Ponder

- Be kind to yourself and to others. Smile at a stranger, say “Thank you” a little louder and remember that even small acts can make someone’s whole day brighter.
- A persons most useful asset is not a head full of knowledge, but a heart full of love, an ear ready to listen and a hand willing to help others.
- Sometimes you don’t need to hear their excuses or what they have to say for themselves because their actions already spoke the truth. *Inspiration Cabin.*
- Your desire to change must be greater than your desire to stay the same. *Inspiration Cabin*
- No matter how you feel. Get up. Dress up. Show up. Never give up.
- Be compassionate. The world is difficult enough for people, and you can make it a little easier with kindness.
- Lonely is not being alone- it’s the feeling that no one cares.
- You can’t change the past, but you can ruin the present by living in the past and worrying about the future.
- If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours.
- Try to be a rainbow in someone else’s cloud.
- You will never “find” time for anything. If you want time, you must make it.
- God will meet you where you are in order to take you where He wants you to go. *Tony Evans*
- Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows. It empties today of its strength. *Corrie Ten Boom*
- Look forward with hope, not backwards with regret.
- Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. *Corrie Ten Boom*
- They key is this: meet todays problems with todays strength. Don’t start tackling tomorrows problems until tomorrow. You do not have tomorrows strength yet. You simply have enough for today.
- Keep standing. Keep hoping: Keep believing. I’m coming- God.

SMILE !!

- Never buy flowers from a monk. Only you can prevent florist friars.
- Due to the hot weather forecast along the south coast back in August, the local authorities requested that people who were out and about wear light clothing and carry at least a litre of cold water. They also said that it was okay to go for a dip in the sea in Sussex and Hampshire although they wouldn’t in Dorset!
- My first girlfriend left me because I couldn’t play leapfrog properly. I don’t think I ever got over her.
- I entered a competition the other month and today I found out I’ve won a years supply of marmite. Yes,.....one jar.
- I’m curious....did the guy that started they knock knock jokes ever get the nobell peace prize?
- Me looking at a barn full of feed: “Who’s all that for?” Farmer- “The cattle eat it”. Me- “Wow, that’s one hungry cat!”
- To all the people who said its okay to let your pet sleep on the bed, my goldfish is now dead!
- Cowboys would put a lantern on their saddles so they could see their way home at night. It was an early version of saddle light navigation.
- There’s an online group for victims of tailgateing. I’ve been following them closely.
- I own two shirts and some neck wear that used to belong to a guy who was in the Mamas & Papas. All the sleeves are brown and the tie is grey.

CHURCH DIARY

February

- 1st 10.30 am Worship will be led by Rev'd Liz Jewitt, retired URC minister, and will include Holy Communion.
- 8th 10.30 am Worship will be led by the Elders
- 15th 10.30 am Worship will be led by Rev'd Yvonne Tracey, retired URC minister.
- 17th Shrove Tuesday
- 18th Ash Wednesday: service to be led by Rev'd Liz Jewitt
- 22nd 10.30 am Worship will be led by Mr Peter Waugh

March

- 1st 10.30 am Worship will be led by Sharon Cowey, Elder and one of the Worship Team. To include Holy Communion.
- 6th 1.30 am World Day of Prayer- AT St George's (Heaton Churches Together)
- 8th 10.30 am Worship will be led by Rev'd Peter Moth, retired URC minister.
- 15th 10.30 am Worship will be led by Angela MacKenzie, one of the Worship Team.
- 18th 7.00 pm Elders Meeting
- 22nd 10.30 am Worship will be led by Rev'd Liz Jewitt, retired URC minister.
- 29th 10.30 am Palm Sunday. Worship will be led by the Elders

April

- 2nd Maundy Thursday service
- 3rd Good Friday service
- 5th 10.30 am Easter Sunday worship will be led by Rev'd Liz Jewitt. It will include Holy Communion.

MORE SMILES

- I have been banned by the local athletics club. I have won the 10 k walking race 3 years running.
- There's a display of medieval torture racks in our town tomorrow. I might pop along- just to stretch my legs.
- My ex girlfriend was the voice of the Speaking Clock. After we parted she wouldn't even give me the time of day.
- I used to go out with a girl called Sue Denim, until I found out that it wasn't her real name.
- When I started as a bank robber, I used to cover my face in filo pastry, chopped nuts and honey until the cashier pointed out that it was actually "balaclava"
- If Honor Blackman had married Richard Todd, would she have been lonely for the rest of her life?
- When I add up how much I've spent on contortionist lessons I could kick myself.
- Singing in the shower is fine until you get soap in your mouth. Then it's a soap opera.
- Breaking news: Man faints on luggage carousel at Newcastle Airport. He is slowly coming round.

With thanks to LIVERNEWS, the Live Patient Support Newsletter.

	February 1st	8th	15th	22nd	March 1st
Duty Elder	Alison Hall	Dorothy Barker	Tony Hall	Val Kane	Dorothy Barker
Door Stewards	Dorothy Coates & Maureen Collier	Lesley Cadwallader & Jennifer Cunningham	Anthony Armstrong & Audrey Matfin	Sharon Cowey & Renee Croft	Harry Fawcitt & Rob Hailes
Communion Stewards	Tony Hall & Alison Hall				Dorothy B & Audrey Matfin
Flower Arranger	Ivy Renton	Dorothy Barker	Jennifer Cunningham	Clare Hutton	Ivy Renton
Flower Donations	No donor	Dorothy Barker	Jennifer Cunningham	No donor	No donor
Tea after worship	Val Kane & Jennifer Cunningham	Clare & John Hutton	Ivy Renton & Maureen Collier	Babs & Tony Hall	Dorothy Coates & Lesley Cadwallader
Screens Set up	Bob Renton	Alison Hall	Bob Renton	Alison Hall	Bob Renton
Screens operate	Anthony Armstrong	Alison Hall	Bob Renton	Harry Fawcitt	Anthony Armstrong
	March 8th	15th	22nd	29th	April 5th
Duty Elder	Sharon Cowey	Alison Hall	Dorothy Barker	Tony Hall	Val Kane
Door Stewards	Babs & Tony Hall	Dorothy Coates & Maureen Collier	Lesley Cadwallader & Jennifer Cunningham	Ivy & Bob Renton	EASTER Anthony Armstrong & Audrey Matfin
Communion Stewards					Angela MacKenzie & Harry Fawcitt
Flower Arrangers	Dorothy Barker	Jennifer Cunningham	Clare Hutton	Ivy Renton	Dorothy Barker
Flower Donations	No donor	No donor	No donor	No donor	No donor
Tea after worship	Val Kane & Jennifer Cunningham	Clare & John Hutton	Ivy Renton & Maureen Collier	Babs & Tony Hall	Dorothy Coates & Lesley Cadwallader
Screens Set up	Alison Hall	Bob Renton	Alison Hall	Bob Renton	Alison Hall
Screens operate	Alison Hall	Bob Renton	Harry Fawcitt	Anthony Armstrong	Alison Hall