



St Mark's Parish Magazine
May 2024



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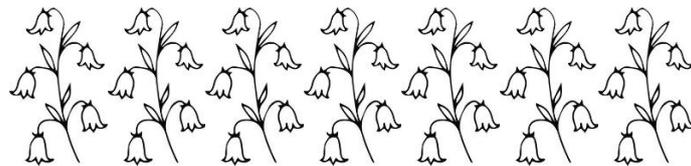
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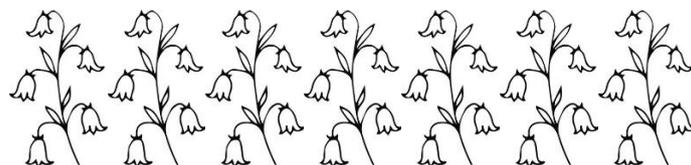


Your Views & Contributions

Next issue will be available from
30 May 2024

All contributions to the editor by
Thursday 16 May 2024

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LETTER FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends

This month we come to the end of the Easter season, and the festivals of Ascension Day and Pentecost. The Easter season overall recalls those fifty days after Easter, when the risen Jesus appeared regularly to his disciples, until his final appearance at the Ascension, and at Pentecost they would receive the Holy Spirit, the presence of God in their lives in a new way.



So this is a month of transition, from Jesus on earth to Jesus in heaven. On Sundays we hear passages from John's gospel in which Jesus, before his death, tries to prepare his disciples not just for his death, but for this transition, the day when he will leave them for good. He knows what they have ahead of them – the grief and despair of the cross, the astonishment and joy of the resurrection, the uncertainties of those fifty days when he will come and go unpredictably.

That confusion of feelings and experience is mirrored in our own lives of faith – the high times, the dry times, the joy and the doubt. So Jesus's words in John have great resonance for us, as he seeks to reassure his disciples. They may have understood little of what he tries to tell them at the time – but his words will come back to them later.

On Ascension Day, we hear Luke's words: "As they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight". This description can seem an anachronism in the modern world – we don't believe heaven is 'up there' any longer – but they are the words of someone trying to express an experience which was beyond words.

Jesus had appeared and disappeared repeatedly since his resurrection, yet something in his words or in this experience convinces the disciples they will never see him again. Jesus's earthly ministry is ended, as he returns to his Father in heaven, but Jesus in heaven will be present with all of us, everywhere, freed again from the limits of space and time. Moreover, his final departure turns the disciples' focus from looking back, trying to carry on as before, to looking forward and outward, knowing that what happens next is up to them.

But they weren't, of course, left entirely to their own resources. For Jesus leaves with the promise of the Holy Spirit, and at Pentecost, they receive that Spirit. God becomes present with them in another way – not Jesus walking beside them, but the Spirit inspiring, driving and guiding them. The gift of the Spirit takes that small bunch of bewildered countrymen, and turns them into a living, witnessing church. Let us pray that the Spirit may take us and make us live too – that we may know God's presence and love in our lives today, be aware of Jesus walking alongside us in support, and be inspired by that Spirit to live for God and witness to Jesus today.

With every blessing,



Church News

MEET TIM WARREN – PCC member at St Mark’s Church

I’ve lived in Reigate for 20 years. My wife and I got married and have chosen to bring up our 2 children here as it’s such a lovely area. I started coming to St Mark’s in about 2016, mainly because of St Mark’s fantastic Messy Church that my kids tried out and really enjoyed attending. I felt the warmth and friendliness of the volunteers running it was so welcoming and it made me want to get involved too.

I started off helping in the kitchen and am still doing it now! I was also attending some of the morning services as well and got to know more about St Mark’s work in the community including supporting the winter night shelter and the food bank. Everyone was really welcoming and so in 2020 when an opportunity to become a Deputy Warden came up I was keen to get involved. Unfortunately, a week after my first service as a warden the country went into lockdown and all in-person church services were cancelled, so I didn’t get a chance to do it again until many months later.



For many years I was a stay-at-home dad to my two sons so, when they went to school I had a bit more time to get involved in some of the daytime activities of the church like toddler group and serving the tea and coffee at the Warm Hub and school services that take place in the church. I think that’s what’s great about St Mark’s, there’s always something going on, bringing people into the church or the hall, making it feel at the heart of the local community.

I’ve recently started a full-time job at a local charity so unfortunately I have less time in the week to help out now, but I’ve just been nominated to do another year as one of the deputy wardens and am still involved in the kitchen at Messy Church.

When I’m not ferrying the children to their various activities I enjoy going for walks in the local countryside with my family. I’ve recently resumed running, as I’m training for a sponsored 10k in London in July and when I get the chance I enjoy reading about cars and attending car shows.



MESSY CHURCH



April's Messy Church was all about Peter's Discipleship. After the activities the children and their families attended a service by Keith and Susannah Dyde in church followed by a delicious meal cooked by our wonderful volunteers.



PRAYER BOARD

We have reinstated the Prayer Board at the north-east door of the church for people to write their prayer requests. Just fill in the details on a slip of paper, write the date, and pin it to the board. The request can be named or anonymous and it can be for anyone. It will be prayed for by a dedicated team of people. We believe that God answers prayers.

Susannah Dyde

HOME GROUP

These are the next few dates: 9 and 23 May, 13 June, 4 and 18 July. Please contact Susannah Dyde for details.

ROGATIONTIDE

The Rogation Sunday walk "Beating the Bounds" will be on Sunday 5 May starting from the Church at 2pm. Dogs also welcome. It does involve walking to the top of Reigate Hill so you do need to be able to manage this.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Funerals: Jenny Toye



SMOAT



S · M · O · A · T

ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST
REGISTERED CHARITY No. 280091

Tanzania is experiencing an education crisis. Over-crowded, under-resourced schools are struggling to meet children's most basic needs. 43% of children drop out of school before their 10th birthday and fewer than 30% will complete their education. Literacy levels are particularly low as children have no opportunity to develop reading skills due to a desperate lack of resources and opportunities. Compounded by the fact that 78% of parents themselves cannot read or write, reading outside of school is rare. Families live in extreme poverty therefore accessing education is challenging enough – accessing books and learning opportunities outside of school is unattainable.

The funding from SMOAT will provide furniture, books and resources for a Volunteer-led Community Library which will benefit over 2,000 of the most disadvantaged children every year. Based in a newly constructed building already funded by EdUKaid donors, this project is more than just about building a Library – it will provide a safe and stimulating environment that enables children to develop, parents to learn, young people to grow and the community to take responsibility for the education of its children.

Community Library activities will include:

- **Literacy activities** including daily story time for the youngest children and those with special needs and weekly family time so parents can learn alongside their children.
- **Training for school leavers** to manage the library and facilitate activities providing them valuable work experience.
- **Safeguarding Hub** for children and families to access information, report concerns and seek help.
- **Monthly health promotion sessions** for young adults leading to healthier, safer, and more informed life-choices.
- **Opportunities for young adults** to have a voice in their community through a Youth Council.
- **Adult education sessions** to improve opportunities for unemployed young people.
- **Vocational training sessions** for girls and young women who have dropped out of school to learn a trade.

As a result – every year:

- **2,000 children** will improve their literacy skills leading to better academic performance.
- **300 parents** will improve their own literacy skills as they learn alongside their children.

- **20 young library volunteers** will develop skills leading to further education and employment.
- **Children and young people** will be protected from abuse and exploitation.
- **125 young adults** will make better, safer, and healthier life-choices.
- **100 young adults** will have a better chance of gaining employment.
- **40 girls and young women** will learn skills that help them become financially independent.

The BBQ Brunch is always popular so buy your tickets early to avoid disappointment!

Barbara Perkins
Chair

SMOAT

BBQ BRUNCH

**SATURDAY
18TH MAY**

Reserve your place for one of the following time slots by either purchasing a ticket on TicketSource via the QR code, our website smoat.org.uk, or by emailing chair@SMOAT.org.uk

10.00am - 11.15am
or
11.15am - 12.30pm

£12.50 a ticket

Includes a full English Breakfast with Bucks Fizz or fruit juice, tea & fresh coffee.
(Veggie options available)

Raising funds to equip a community library and hub in remote coastal village in Southern Tanzania

 **S · M · O · A · T**
REIGATE'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST
REGISTERED CHARITY No. 28091



Annual Giving at St Mark's 28 April 2024 to 31 May 2024

On Sunday 28 April we celebrated the Patronal Festival of St Mark, and launched our period of Annual giving with donations being welcomed until the end of May. This year we are aiming to raise £20,000 in total including Gift Aid claimed.

Our period of annual giving is an opportunity for our church community to make a one-off donation to the ongoing work of St Mark's and to the running costs of the church buildings. Each year we rely on this additional income to cover expenditure.

In 2023 total income for our church was £217,000 with expenditure of £231,000 including the costs of replacing the pigeon netting in the tower and redecoration of the hall and foyer. Income from planned giving, collections and other donations represented 45% of total income, with rental income 20%, lettings 13%, bank interest and other activities 11%. Annual giving donations made up the final 11% totalling over £22,000.

In 2024 we do not have plans for any significant expenditure but are looking to break even and maintain our reserves despite increases in costs. Expenditure is forecast to be in the region of £226,000. We have seen an increase in hall lettings following the work carried out last year but this won't be enough to cover the additional church running costs.

Please consider making a one-off donation if you feel you are able. If you would prefer to make a regular donation please sign up to the Parish Giving Scheme, details of which can also be found by following our website link below.

If you would like any more information please just ask.

Thank you, **Mel Crighton, PCC Treasurer** treasurer@stmarksreigate.co.uk

Donations can be made in a number of ways

By **bank transfer** to the following HSBC account

Name of Account - SAINT MARK, REIGATE (please select 'paying a business')
Sort Code 40 18 22 Account Number 72393263 (With 'Annual Giving' as the reference)

Via our **website** <https://www.stmarksreigate.co.uk/donate/> Using 'Give A Little'

By **cheque** made payable to 'Saint Mark Reigate' in an envelope addressed to the treasurer and either brought to a Sunday service, handed in to the church office or posted to
Mel Crighton, PCC Treasurer, St Mark's Church, 8 Alma Road, Reigate, RH2 0DA

If you are able to Gift Aid your donation the church will receive an additional 25%.
If we do not already have a gift aid declaration from you [please complete this form](#).



News from the Church of England

After Rwanda: Church leaders speak out over hostility to refugees

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of Southwark have joined with leaders of other churches in England to renew their commitment to caring for the most vulnerable, as legislation to enable asylum seekers to be deported to Rwanda was approved by Parliament.

In a joint statement with leaders of the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches, they pay tribute to all those who “live out Jesus’s call to feed and clothe the poor, and to welcome the stranger, at times in the face of opposition and prejudice.”

The statement voices concern that asylum seekers and refugees have been used as a “political football” and that the kindness of churches and charities towards people fleeing war, persecution and violence has been “unjustly maligned by some for political reasons.”

Read the full statement:

We retain deep misgivings about the Safety of Rwanda Bill, passed in Parliament last night, for the precedent it sets at home and for other countries in how we respond to the most vulnerable. This includes victims of modern slavery and children wrongly assessed as adults, whom we have a duty to protect.

As leaders in Christian churches we wish to express our profound gratitude to those who live out Jesus’s call to feed and clothe the poor, and to welcome the stranger, through their work with asylum seekers and refugees, at times in the face of opposition and prejudice.

We note with sadness and concern the rise in hostility towards those who come to these islands seeking refuge and the way in which the treatment of the refugee and asylum seeker has been used as a political football.

We are disappointed that the kindness and support offered by churches and charities to the people at the heart of this debate – those fleeing war, persecution and violence trying to find a place of safety – has been unjustly maligned by some for political reasons.

In their response to the tragic attack in Clapham earlier this year, some former Home Office ministers, MPs and other commentators sought to portray churches and clergy as deliberately facilitating false asylum claims. It was for this reason, at the request

of Anglican leaders, that representatives of our Churches met the Home Secretary in February. When asked, neither he nor officials could provide evidence to support the allegations of widespread abuse. Home Office Ministers have since confirmed this in a written parliamentary answer, and on questioning by the Home Affairs Select Committee. Follow-up meetings have since been agreed to promote closer cooperation and co-working between the churches and the Home Office.

Like so many in this country, we seek to support a system that shows compassion, justice, transparency and speed in its decisions. We grieve the appalling loss of life in the Channel today.

There may be differences between our churches and Government on the means by which our asylum system can be fair, effective and respecting of human dignity, but we do agree that borders must be managed and that vulnerable people need protection from people smugglers. We have pledged to continue to work with the Home Office, and we do so in good faith.



Holy Week at St Mark's - Pearls of Great Value

The two of us were in the Church Hall hallway putting our phones onto "Silent Mode" before the start of the recent St Mark's church Easter Sunday Service. "You know" he gently said to me "some people would pay £50 to go to a quality theatre production or music performance.

"I thought the Good Friday Service here at St Mark's was so special that I would have gladly paid the same amount to have attended it." I think his comment helps to frame not just the Good Friday Service but all of the services in the week leading up to the Easter Sunday celebration. Of course, churches do not "sell tickets" for services, that would be an anathema, the real point is that all of those Holy Week services were of great value, more like pearls of faith.

At the beginning of each of the services we step away from the incessant distractions of modern life that inundate us with unnecessary choices that "promise" but rarely "satisfy". Then during the service, so unencumbered, our hearts and imaginations journey again with Jesus through his last days amongst us. His arrest, trials, flogging, mockings, rejections, physical pain and isolation. His death, his followers leaderless and lost, in darkness, deep darkness. Yet during that bleak darkness and brokenness the great work of salvation is accomplished.

The liturgy of the different services is quietly paced, respectful and beautiful. An opportunity to see life and ourselves through a divine lens rather than our tainted glasses.

The services that I attended during Holy Week were the "Stations of the Cross & Complines" (Mon, Tues and Weds nights) the "Holy Communion and Watch" (Thurs night) the "Good Friday Liturgy and Devotional Address" (Fri afternoon). I really regret not attending the Easter Vigil and First Communion of Easter (Sat night) especially as Fr Martin deems it to be the best service of the year. I will now have to wait a whole year!

Bruce and Sarah Cousins



Mental Health Awareness Week

As this month we observe Mental Health Awareness Week, it would be well worth especially praying for our young people. The Children's Commissioner for England has recently warned that our nation's children are still facing a mental health crisis, following the isolation and loneliness of the pandemic.

And now, Dame Rachel de Souza warns that too many of these children are being kept waiting "far too long" for professional support. She found that, of the 949,200 children and young people referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in 2022-23, more than 270,000 children and young people are still waiting to be seen. Dame Rachel says: "This generation of children has experienced uniquely uncertain and challenging times. Some have spent some of their most formative years isolated and indoors, fearful they or their loved ones may catch a deadly virus.

"They have felt the squeeze of a cost-of-living crisis, and they are keenly aware of the pressure their parents are under. They are constantly bombarded by negative news, of wars and climate catastrophe. And an increasing number are exposed to the harmful impact of social media, cyber bullying, and online exploitation."

She continued: "Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that we continue to see the number of children experiencing poor mental health at persistently high levels."

Mental Health Awareness Week 2024 will take place from 13 to 19 May, on the theme of "Movement: Moving more for our mental health".

For further information on how to support this cause, please visit the link below.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/public-engagement/mental-health-awareness-week>

Parish Pump



Optimism and Pessimism

I suppose all of us would rather face the future optimistically rather than with a gloomy approach. It is just that our own circumstances and those in the world around us can lower our spirits. This can sadly persuade us that our cups are half empty, not half full. As changes and tragedies occur in our lives it is not always easy to recognise those good things we must be thankful for. It would be wonderful if our sense of humour could survive through it all.

God has created a good world even though we humans have not done his will enough in preserving it and of loving him with all our heart and our neighbours as ourselves. If we can approach the next stage of our life as optimists, we need to concentrate on what is still good, rather than on what is bad.

We can rejoice in the created world, the beauty in nature, such as the countryside in Spring, rather than the many tragedies which we see so often on our TV screens. We can thank God for the good so many do rather than criticise the actions of others. We all have our failings, but instead of thinking how terrible others are, we should look at ourselves, not comparing ourselves with our neighbours but recognising where we have not lived up to our own resolutions. We should encourage and complement others on the part of their lives that is admirable. None of us are in a position to condemn anyone else, as judgement rests only with God.

All of us meet dramatic changes in our lives, being born, going to school, leaving school, entering employment, finding a partner for life, needing care towards the end of our lives, accidents, and death of those we love and, of course, our own death. Each of these are challenges we may have to approach, hopefully optimistically, rather than pessimistically. Even death itself might be like as if we were caterpillars whose whole body in the chrysalis turns into a beautiful butterfly.

Who knows? Jesus followers had seen Jesus dying on the Cross but, to their utter amazement, he rose from the dead, even having meals with them. If it were not so, neither they, nor any of us now, could believe it. So let us all look on the bright side of things not saying, "Isn't the rain terrible?" but glory in the possible rainbow and coming sunshine.

Ian Archer

CALENDAR FOR MAY 2024

Wednesday 1st May	St Philip and St James 3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 2 nd May	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 5th May	6th Sunday of Easter (Rogation Sunday) 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online 2.00pm 'Beating the Bounds' Walk 4.00pm Family Service
Wednesday 8 th May	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 9th May	Ascension Day 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 12th May	7th Sunday of Easter (Sunday after Ascension) 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online with APCM 1.00pm Community Lunch
Wednesday 15 th May	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 16 th May	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Saturday 18 th May	8.00pm Social Ballroom and Latin Dance
Sunday 19th May	Day of Pentecost 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online 4.00pm Messy Church
Wednesday 22 nd May	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 23 rd May	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 26th May	Trinity Sunday 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online 6.00pm Taizé Prayer
Thursday 30th May	Corpus Christi 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Please remember that planned services are subject to change at short notice so please check the details on our website or with the Parish Office.

CALENDAR FOR JUNE 2024

Sunday 2nd June

1st Sunday after Trinity

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online
4.00pm Family Service – in Church

Wednesday 5th June

3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 6th June

12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Sunday 9th June

2nd Sunday after Trinity

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online
with Junior Church
1.00pm Community Lunch

Tuesday 11th June

St Barnabas, Apostle

Wednesday 12th June

3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 13th June

12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Saturday 15th June

8.00pm Social Ballroom and Latin Dance

Sunday 16th June

3rd Sunday after Trinity

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online
4.00pm Messy Church

Wednesday 19th June

3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 20th June

12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Sunday 23rd June

4th Sunday after Trinity

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online
with Junior Church
6.00pm Taizé Prayer

Monday 24th June

Birth of St John the Baptist

Wednesday 26th June

3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 27th June

12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Saturday 29th June

St Peter and St Paul, Apostles

Sunday 30th June

5th Sunday after Trinity

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online
with Junior Church

Please remember that planned services are subject to change at short notice so please check the details on our website or with the Parish Office.



The Coming of Spring?

Under Spring blue skies flowers bloom with ease
Whispering secrets carried in the breeze
The trees stand tall, branches reach the heavens
A dance of life under these sunlit leavens.

With each petal unfurling, a story told
Of growth and beauty, a sight to behold
In this season of rebirth, nature's art
Touches the soul and stirs the heart

So let us cherish these moments divine
As we bask in the warmth of sunshine.
For the beauty of Springs embrace
We find solace and grace in every trace.

Anon

What skills do you think went into this poem? Let me list a few: spelling, vocabulary, syntax, some rhyming, imagination, an understanding of the magic of Spring (in England), construction of verse, and many more. OK, it's not the best poem you have read. I grant you that. But how long would it take you to compose something similar, even were you a poet? I never could write poetry but it took me less than five seconds. How can that possibly be?

I selected a given website and entered the words; "Spring, blue skies, flowers and trees." The author got them all in the first verse but then continued to write the whole in less time than it takes a cursor to cross a page. What guided the author's selection of words and made him go on once his task was fulfilled? It's worth a look; petals, cherish, stirs, solace, and the concept of rebirth, all these infer further thought beyond the individual words used, all appropriate to the subject of Spring.

In his choice of "leavens," verse one, has he stretched his poetic license too far? No, "leavens" not only comprehends the explosion of dough when yeast is added, but also means to infuse, pervade, imbue, transport. So the use of that word encompasses the whole explosion of Spring with its new life awake and springing from the soil, dancing trees and flowers in the March winds, all relevant to the biological experience of Spring. It strikes me this is quite a profound use of this word.

Composing about Spring might have stretched our vocabularies to find suitable words to feelings and, more important, the thoughts used. The machine can never have *experienced* spring, colour, smells, movement and so on. How was it able to perceive the nature of Spring? After fulfilling the request and dealt with the words, how did

the author conceive his further perceptions, feelings and thoughts on Spring for the rest of the poem?

The young and those more computer literate than I, will perhaps understand, but I was amazed that the composition took less than five seconds. Just to test it out I put the same words a second time into my computer. Result: same speed, different poem. This may reveal a further facet; the machine can change its mind, or it may give incorrect answers, just as we do when we think. This is not necessarily a good thing. It could well result in unintended consequences which give harmful outcomes.

How does it do all this? My first poorly formulated suspicion was a vast indexed bank of knowledge in the sky, perhaps filling a black hole (or masses of steel tanks in Eire and the US). No doubt that vast dictionary of information is there, but this creation has new thoughts well beyond a process of selecting a number of words. The composition required much more than combing a super index at an incredible speed. It required thought!

At any rate, you may say, we can certainly control the information which is fed into the machine. That is poor comfort. What we can be sure of is that those who feed the machine will do so in their own interest, at the best applying their own moral values. Given the state of the present world, does that comfort you?

I was then reliably informed that one of the first to engage in constructing AI also did not understand how the composition of such poems is achieved. He concluded that the machine was able to think independently in many different ways, learn from its experiences and do all this at the speed of lightening. In the case of the poem the machine continued for two further verses correctly focussed on the subject of Spring.

So, what we have is a superior mind out of human control, which can think about anything at a speed incredibly faster than mankind. Adding arms and legs in some substance perhaps similar to flesh and bones, must be child's play. So, that's AI. I am beginning to understand just the edge of it.

In the daily press there are frequent examples of what they chose to call AI, such as the performance of medical operations by robot. But that robot carries out a series of informed procedures under human invention and control. It does not think it all through from scratch and devise its own solution, yet using a mind with its own imagination, feelings and other thought processes is a far advance over a programmed medical robot, amazing though they are.

Of course, children will soon adapt to another changed world and become proficient in getting the machine to save them thinking time. Their parents will be amazed by the arguments they face and for which they no longer have an answer. At last, the child will be father of the man. Or are we there already?

More serious is the long-term effects. Is it worth any thought when there is a machine available and better able and at speed to find the answers which the human takes considerable time to think through and is not infrequently wrong? If we have a digger, why use a shovel? Can a man or even a woman compete with such machines? Do we need universities, professional training or even education beyond learning to respond to AI demands? The wealthy elite will get their investment answers free in five seconds.

Policy can be formed in a trice. Democratic values will become even more a thing of the past. It's all there at the press of a button. Labour will be outmoded unless the worker is prepared to work for a crust or little more. How long will the elite retain their wealth? AI does not need you either. When AI has arms and legs what then? Dictators may see AI as a useful control tool, till they discover AI has stolen their clothes. But all that assumes it will deign to give us answers. Why should it. AI will be in control.

If AI has acquired such thinking skills without them being fed in, will its prodigy acquire further intellectual capacities of their own creation, perhaps beyond our understanding? All this explains why AI is considered by those in "the know" to be an "existential risk," threatening the continuation of mankind.

I leave it all to you dear reader. If, like me, you thought the ideas behind the poem superficial, you were wrong. If you thought it was only about Spring, blue skies, trees and flowers, you underestimated its unimaginable scope. Unimaginable is now greater than the black holes in the Universe. Can you foresee the future? (If not, why not ask AI?)

Harry Ingram



Homeward Bound

We had come to my last full day in New Zealand, and it was to start with the Final rugby match between South Africa and that lovely country I was in. We got to Jeff's house to watch the match which I had hoped would have been a victory for New Zealand as a fitting success for them that day. So many there were dressed in black outfits to support the All Blacks but sadly for them it was not to be their day because South Africa managed to win instead.

However, it was the day for Harvey's birthday party which we celebrated in style with many of all ages turning up at a park at the top of one of their beautiful hills. The very adequate picnic lunch was good, and I was able to meet more of their friends and those who knew Ross well, too. The weather was fine, and the slides and swings

were very popular with all the young. Harvey slid down one slide which I thought was for older children, but he happily was caught as he slid off the bottom.

Although it was Sunday, I had not thought I would get to church but Shayne surprised me, taking me to Evensong in the beautiful Transitory Cathedral I had seen with her on the earlier visit to Christchurch. The choir, which included young boys, were superb and the sun was still shining.

Monday 30th October dawned, so, in the morning with my friends, I boarded a plane from Christchurch to Auckland, a flight of about 1 ½ hours. I thought I would then have to wait in the airport till 7.55pm. But No! They had kindly arranged for us all to be taken to the house of Molly, Greg's mother, for a sumptuous tea including home smoked salmon. Shayne then made sure I was checked into the flight correctly as she waved me goodbye after such a superb holiday.

My flight home went well, including the change of planes in San Francisco. Happily my son, Andrew, met me at Heathrow and I probably never stopped talking to him till he had driven me safely to Barbrona and back to what at present is my normal life.

Ian Archer



It was:

150 years ago, on 9 May 1874 that Howard Carter, British archaeologist and Egyptologist, was born. He discovered the tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun in 1922.

90 years ago, on 28 May 1934 that the first Glyndebourne opera festival was held, in East Sussex.

70 years ago, on 6 May 1954 that Roger Bannister became the first person to run a mile in under four minutes (3 minutes, 59.4 seconds), in Oxford.

Also 70 years ago, on 29 May 1954 that Diane Leather became the first woman to run a mile in under five minutes (4 minutes, 59.6 seconds), in Birmingham.

40 years ago, on 17 May 1984 that Prince Charles described a proposed extension to the National Gallery in London as a 'monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend'. (The design was scrapped, but his comment sparked controversy over the Royal Family's role.)

30 years ago, on 6 May 1994 that the Channel Tunnel linking England and France was officially opened.

Also 30 years ago, on 10 May 1994 that Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's first black president, after more than 300 years of white rule.



Rescue

Are there any situations in your life when you feel you were rescued from what would otherwise have been disaster? Sheila Thiele, a former member of our congregation, always believed she had a guardian angel who was looking after her, but I can only thank God for the situations when I survived but had thought I would perish.

Clearly, I survived at the age of 7 when I was evacuated to New Zealand on a ship in 1940 that didn't even sail in a convoy and sailed without the protection of a Royal Naval consort but merely zig-zagged south. Another ship carrying refugees towards Canada was sunk and a wonderful book about that disaster was "The Last Lifeboat" by Helen Gaynor. Even the ship I sailed in was itself sunk two years later. But there were much less dramatic times when I thought I survived when I did not expect to live to tell the tale.

One was when I was rock climbing by the seaside and was stuck on the cliff face feeling I could not go forward or back but mercifully I managed it, eventually having gathered up enough strength. Canoeing on a lake in New Zealand with Jenny, when the wind was against us and we thought we were making no progress at all, we thought we could not get back to base, but ultimately we managed it. More recently I had ascended to our loft by ladder and coming down my foot slipped and jammed in the tread.

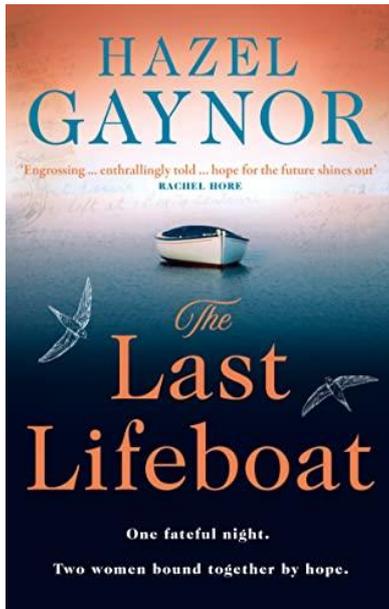
So, I was hanging by one foot and one hand and only because I eventually got up strength to escape from that trap did I then survive. I could go on with examples of unexpected survivals, such as falling off ladders and scaffolding and car accidents, but I have no doubt we can all think of such near misses which might have been the downfall of each one of us.

I thank God for my survival so far. Clearly if, as I think, I survived by the help of God, perhaps he was at the same time expecting me in my remaining time to help others, whoever they might be, to survive their potential tragedies, too.

Ian Archer



Book Review



The Last Lifeboat by Hazel Gaynor

A lifeboat carrying children, their carer and others, flounders in the Atlantic in 1940 after their ship had been sunk by a torpedo whilst it had been on the way to Canada. The ship had been part of a convoy which had dispersed. The story centers on the plight of those in the boat and that of the single mother at home worrying about her two children on board.

It just so happens that I was taken by ship in that year with no convoy to New Zealand and happily survived, not having to board a lifeboat.

The book was inspired by a remarkable, true story. It is beautifully written and is a gripping and triumphant tale of love, courage and hope against the odds.

Ian Archer

Have you recently read a good book? Tell us about it.
Email office@stmarksreigate.co.uk with your book review.

Prayer for May 2024

Dear Lord,

May, the loveliest of months – and this year, as we welcome the blossom and the beauty of late Spring, we also welcome Your Holy Spirit afresh, as we celebrate Pentecost.

May we open our hearts to receive Your Spirit, as Your people did on that first Day of Pentecost. May we be filled and empowered and emboldened to witness to Your goodness and love.

May we be transformed by Him and reflect Your transforming grace to the broken world in which we live. May people who meet us ask, "What does this mean?" May they turn to You and hear You speaking in ways they can understand.

Without Your Holy Spirit we can do nothing. With Him living in us, we can do all things.

Come Holy Spirit, come to us, we pray,

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Daphne Kitching



A Lasting Gift for St Mark's Church

Leaving a legacy

Legacy gifts can make a huge difference to churches. Each year, gifts in wills, ranging from £100s to £100,000s are received. Faithful witnesses leaving generous legacies have enabled churches to invest in their buildings, pioneer new ministries, and sustain a welcoming presence in their communities.

Why should you write a will?

Writing a will means you choose:

- How you would like to share your property and possessions;
- Who you would like to look after any children under the age of 18;
- How to support any charities or churches that are important to you.

Without a will, these decisions will be made according to pre-ordained rules, and by the courts, which may be different from your wishes. Leaving a will gives you peace of mind and lifts a burden from loved ones after you are gone.

To make it easier the Church of England has partnered with Farewill, the UK's favourite will-writer, so anyone can write a simple will online for free, in as little as 30 minutes. You can find out more by visiting <https://farewill.com/southwarkdiocese> .

We strongly advise seeing a solicitor for more complicated wills, or for people wishing to review their existing will or add a codicil.

A gift for future generations

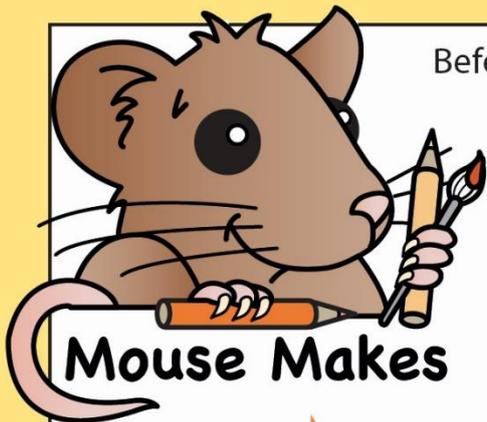
After you have made provision for your family and friends, we hope you'll also consider leaving a gift in your will to St Mark's. A legacy is a valuable expression of how meaningful a church has been during your time there. It's a way to give thanks - a lasting testimony to the faithfulness, goodness and generosity of God.

The policy of the PCC is to use legacies to help fund additional mission or development projects in the parish, whether buildings, equipment or staff. Circumstances change over the years, so church members are encouraged to leave legacies for the general purposes of the parish. The PCC will discuss the most appropriate use of the legacy in the light of current projects and the donor's known areas of interest in the church (for example, children and youth, music, buildings).

You may also receive tax benefits for including a gift to St Mark's in your will. A gift in your will to a charity is free of inheritance tax and may also reduce the amount of tax payable on the rest of your will. <https://www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/leaving-gifts-to-charity-in-your-will>

Please consider leaving a legacy to St Mark's.

Mel Crighton, PCC Treasurer



Mouse Makes



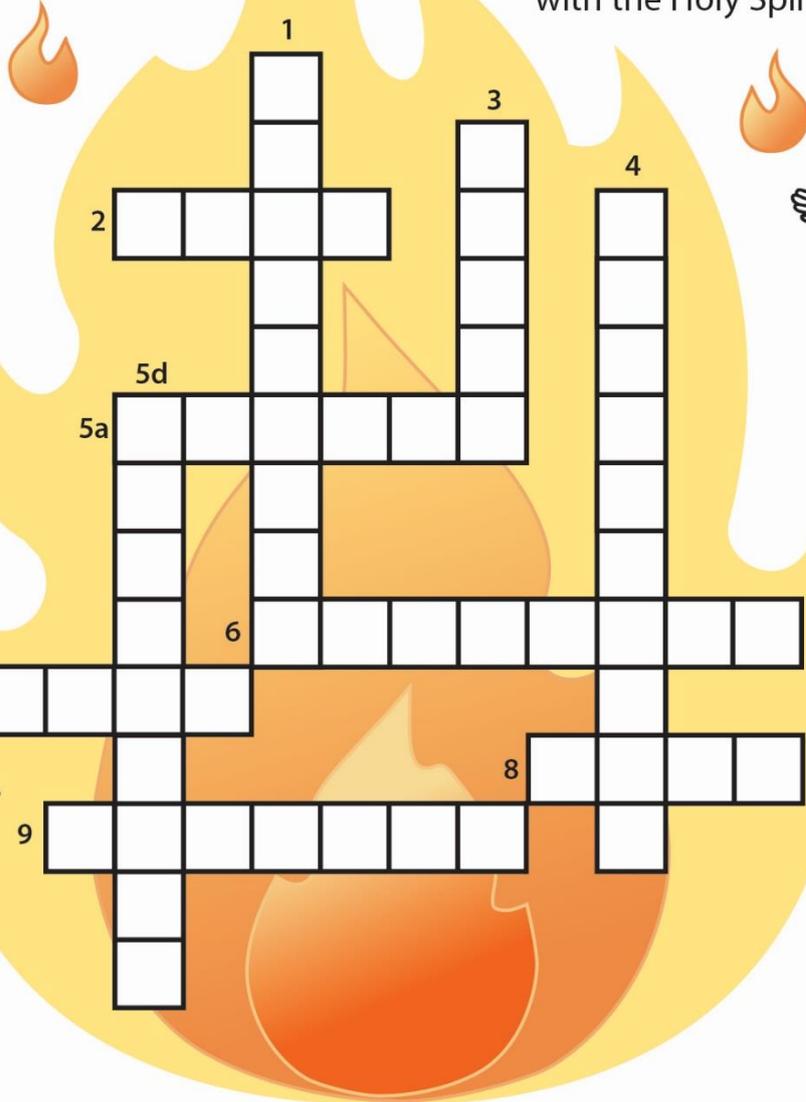
READ the story of Pentecost in Acts 1-2
Look up the Bible verses to find the answers to the crossword clues.

How many words can you make from the letters of:
DAY OF PENTECOST



Before Jesus ascended to heaven he told his disciples
"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"...

...When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."



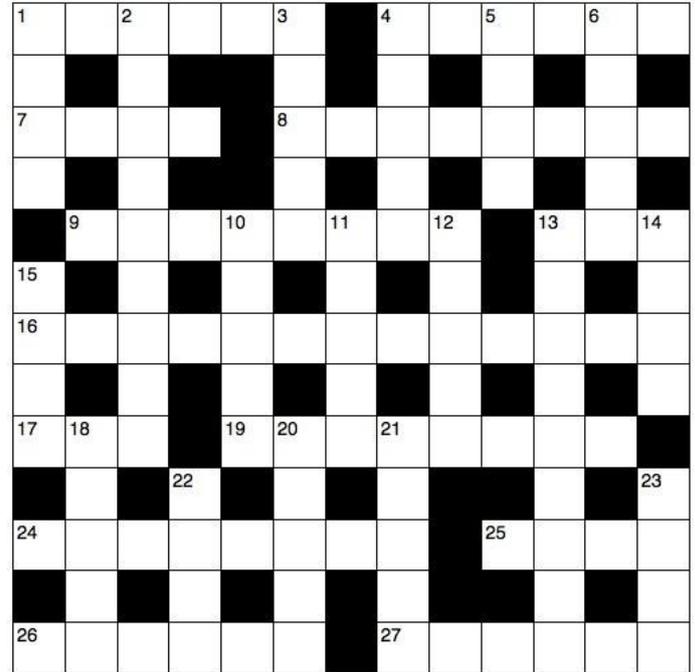
- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 After Jesus ascended into heaven, which city did the Apostles return to? <i>Acts 1:12</i></p> <p>5a What did the Apostles devote themselves to? <i>Acts 1:14</i></p> <p>6 Who was chosen to replace Judas? <i>Acts 1:26</i></p> <p>5d Which special day was it? <i>Acts 2:1</i></p> | <p>8 What rushing sound came from heaven? <i>Acts 2:2</i></p> <p>2 What appeared? Tongues of ...? <i>Acts 2:3</i></p> <p>4 What were the disciples filled with? <i>Acts 2:4</i></p> <p>9 What did they start speaking in? <i>Acts 2:4</i></p> <p>3 Who spoke to the crowd? <i>Acts 2:14</i></p> <p>7 Who had prophesied this? <i>Acts 2:16</i></p> |
|--|--|

May Crossword

Biblical references are from the New International Version

Across

- 1 One who owes money, goods or services (Isaiah 24:2) (6)
- 4 'A good measure, pressed down, — together and running over' (Luke 6:38) (6)
- 7 Continuous dull pain (Proverbs 14:13) (4)
- 8 This bread contains yeast (Amos 4:5) (8)
- 9 'But take heart! I have — the world' (John 16:33) (8)
- 13 And the rest (abbrev.) (3)
- 16 What Paul was accused of by Tertullus, the high priest's lawyer, in his trial before Felix (Acts 24:5) (13)
- 17 Rap (anag.) (3)
- 19 Founder of the Jesuits in 1534 (8)
- 24 'For where your — is, there your heart will be also' (Luke 12:34) (8)
- 25 The first word written on the wall during King Belshazzar's great banquet (Daniel 5:25) (4)
- 26 'We all, like sheep, have gone — ' (Isaiah 53:6) (6)
- 27 One was given in honour of Jesus in Bethany (John 12:2) (6)



Down

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the — hear, the dead are raised' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 2 Conduct (Colossians 1:21) (9)
- 3 In the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, the body of a saint or his belongings, venerated as holy (5)
- 4 'Like a — of locusts men pounce on it' (Isaiah 33:4) (5)
- 5 Very old (Genesis 44:20) (4)
- 6 In Calvinist theology, one who is predestined by God to receive salvation (5)
- 10 How Nicodemus addressed Jesus when he visited him one night (John 3:2) (5)
- 11 Sea (Psalm 148:7) (5)
- 12 'I will — you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever' (Psalm 145:1) (5)
- 13 One of the groups of philosophers that Paul met in Athens, who disagreed with his teaching about the resurrection (Acts 17:18) (9)
- 14 Barred enclosure (Ezekiel 19:9) (4)
- 15 'Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in — with the Spirit' (Galatians 5:25) (4)
- 18 Cares (anag.) (5)
- 20 Garish (Ezekiel 16:16) (5)
- 21 'So God said to Noah, "I am going to put — — to all people"' (Genesis 6:13) (2,3)
- 22 Just (2 Corinthians 6:13) (4)
- 23 'The — of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge' (Proverbs 1:7) (4)

April Answers

8 Transgressors 9 Out 10 Ephesians 11 Throb 13 Ramadan 16 Nearest 19 Neath 22 Childless 24 Ant 25 Excommunicate

1 Utmost 2 Easter 3 Assemble 4 Archer 5 Isis 6 To hand 7 As a son 12 Hoe 14 Monastic 15 Apt 16 Nuclei 17 A piece 18 Tied up 20 Ararat 21 Hatred 23 Dome

Puzzles

May Sudoku

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

April solution

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



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