



St Alban's, Earsdon

CHURCH VIEWS



December

2024

£1.00

St John's, Backworth



Immaculate Heart of Mary,
Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea



THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

December 2024

Dear All,

I'm writing this the day after the release of 'Band Aid 40'. On November 25th 1984 a large group of famous popstars, dragged into a recording studio by Bob Geldof, recorded 'Do they know it's Christmas?' They did it appalled by footage of a crushing famine in Ethiopia. They did it because they *could* do it – as their contribution. Profits from record sales would 'feed the world'.

Forty years on, the whole project has become controversial. The singer Ed Sheeran, who appeared on the thirtieth anniversary remake, has said that he would rather his voice hadn't been used in this latest version. Explaining his position, Sheeran shared a post by British-Ghanaian rapper Fuse ODG. Fuse argued that 'Do they know it's Christmas?' perpetuates 'damaging stereotypes' that Africa is plagued by 'famine and poverty', which can only be remedied by Western assistance.

Take a step back, and look at Band Aid's lyrics, and you can see why the song might raise African hackles...

And there won't be snow in Africa this Christmas time...
Where nothing ever grows, no rain or rivers flow
Do they know it's Christmas time at all?

It's possible to see this as a lazy stereotype of a vast and diverse continent. Of course there's rain; of course things grow; of course the Nile is one of world's great rivers.

It's a personal view, but I want to leap to Bob Geldof's defence. What everyone was looking at in 1984 was Michael Buerk's film of appalling suffering in Ethiopia. This did look very much like the version of Africa that Band Aid sings about. So what were Geldof and the others to do? Do nothing, and they could have been criticised for living in an ivory tower. They're damned if they do and damned if they don't.

But they didn't 'do nothing'. They used their status to bring to wider attention the needs of people who were literally dying of starvation. As Spandau Ballet's Tony Hadley said, defending the project: 'We were doing our bit, innocently, to support what was happening in Ethiopia. So what do we do? Sit back and do nothing?' Meanwhile Midge Ure, who co-wrote the song, told Jeremy Vine on Radio 2 'I understand the "white saviour complex". We've had this thrown at us for 40 years.' However, he said the song was not about portraying Africa in a negative light, but was trying to show the real-life consequences 'of famine, of war, of conflict. The result is children who need food, who need medication, who need education, and that's what we deal with.'

The climate crisis has shone a whole new light on the 'white saviour complex'. If you redraw the globe, showing the size of each country relative to its historic emissions of greenhouse gases, then the UK comes out significantly larger than the whole African continent. This makes supporting farmers hit by climate change not so much a matter of *charity* as a matter of simple *justice*.

At St Alban's, we're grateful to my brother Andrew for bringing this to our attention. Andrew has links with farmers in Tanzania, and has been involved in training projects helping farmers increase the yield of their harvest. At three Harvest Festivals now, our cash collection has been for this work. Those who did our Lent Course 'Act on Poverty' were agreed that we should look to develop our links Tanzania. So in February, Andrew and I are visiting for a fortnight. I'll be able to see with my own eyes what's happening on the ground. We'll be able to assess if there are things we can do in the UK that will help, and not make matters worse.

When we go, I pray it will not be as 'white saviours'. It will be in response to the call of the prophet Amos: 'let justice flow like rivers; right action like a never failing stream'.

Tim Mayfield.

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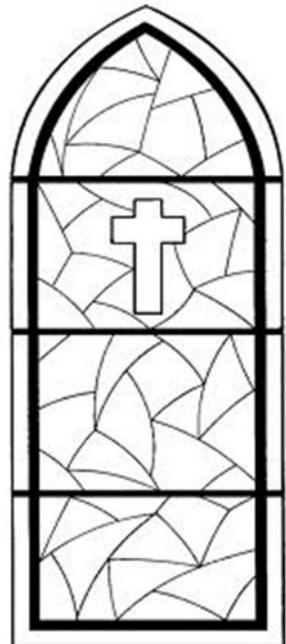
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Two lovely pictures of Alison Hudspith decorating St John's Church, Backworth with (I think) knitted poppies for Remembrance Day last month.



Many thanks to Lesley Thompson for sending these.





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WALKERS
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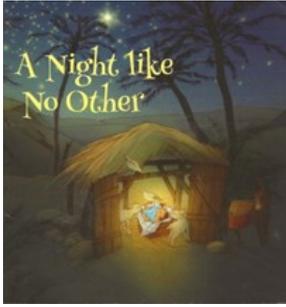
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'A NIGHT LIKE NO OTHER'

The events of a 'Night like No Other' over 2000 years ago, still reverberate around the world today. The story recounted over the centuries, in many different ways, has had cultural traditions added;

making it the kind of Christmas, we celebrate today.

We all know the story of the Nativity, but I wonder, can you recall when, where or who told it to you? Perhaps the Christmas story is one you have always known. Rather like the old hymns and carols that we sing, never setting out to learn them, however we know them by heart.

At the back of my mind, I recall having an illustrated children's book of Bible stories. I presume it may have been a Christmas gift and the story of the Nativity may have been related to me at that timewho knows?

It is a widely held view that St Francis of Assisi presented the first Nativity in 1223. Its purpose was to educate the local people and reinforce their belief in God. This event was so inspiring that the idea rapidly spread. Almost 1000 years later the same story is portrayed in schools and churches across the world, but in many different ways, often through the eyes of the animals or of the angel.

My nephew was telling the biblical version to his young son something like this:

"The angel Gabriel came down to Mary"...

"No, dad, the angel is called Whoopsie-Daisy"

"Oh" said dad. "Well then, the angel Gabriel, also known as 'Whoopsie-Daisy' came down to Mary".



During a family conversation a while ago, my granddaughter recalled her performance in the school nativity. Aged six, she had what she believed to be, the starring role in the school play 'Little Blue Star'. Wearing a blue dress, emblazoned with a large silver star she stood with the other children as the Head teacher stood to thank all of the children for a wonderful display, and for all of their hard work.



She went on to say, “Who was the most important person in this story?”

My granddaughter, standing very proudly with the other children, said she felt thrilled as she waited to hear her name, only to feel completely let down, as the teacher continued, without waiting for answers, “Yes, it was Jesus”, she said, pointing to a doll in a cot.

Maybe because the traditional nativity plays have become the norm, we see them through rose tinted glasses, boys dressed as shepherds wearing tea towels on their heads, and little girls dressed in white, adorned with tinsel. Does it still ‘educate and reinforce our belief in God’ however, as St Frances intended? Of course, it was a night like no other! Not a story, but an event grounded in the history of the world that changes lives still, today.

A donation towards the Central Heating Project is to be given on Saturday 21st December at the concert given by members of In Accord. The programme, which starts at 2.30pm will again tell the story of a ‘Night Like No Other’ with music and words drawn from across the centuries.

Tickets £10, will be available at the door, children welcome, free of charge.

Wishing you all the
Blessings of Christmas

Margaret Clark
Choir MD

Further information in case you are interested in attending this event:
It will be held at North Shields Methodist Church, Hawkeys Lane, 9th
December at 2.30pm.

Weather for the month of December.

Direct from the Captain's Charts.

Monday 2nd December to Sunday 15th December 2024.

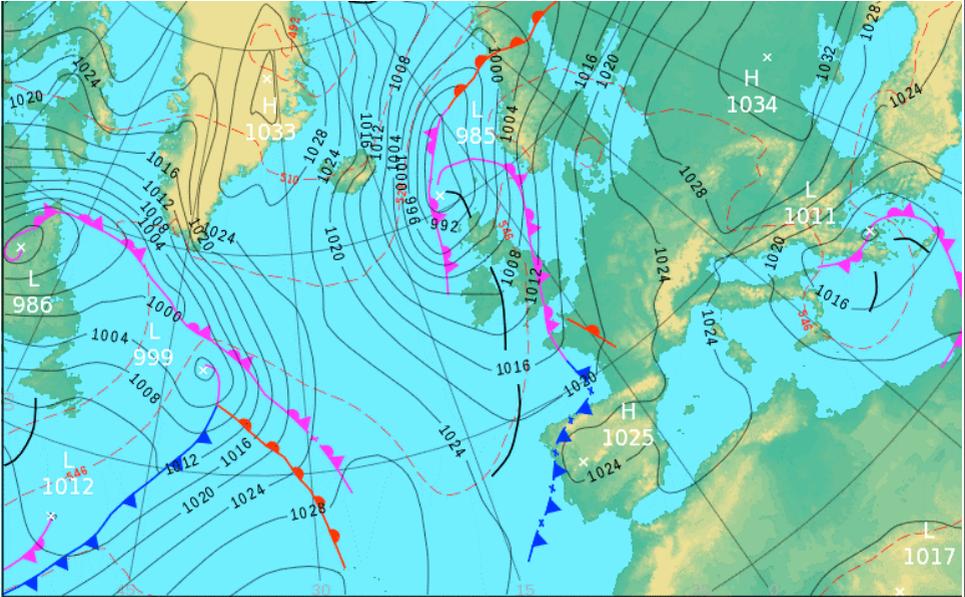
On Monday, low pressure will continue to bring rain and showers for many areas, mainly wintry across northern Scotland, and fairly windy at first in the northeast. However, any wet and windy weather will reduce as a ridge of high pressure moves in from the west overnight and into Tuesday (3rd) morning.

The Ridge of High Pressure will bring drier and more settled weather for all areas, but also a risk of fog for some areas of the northeast on Tuesday (3rd) morning which could be slow to clear. Low pressure systems are expected to resume moving in from the Atlantic commencing on Wednesday, tracking close to, or across northern and western parts of the UK, perhaps resulting in more wet and windy weather in those areas. Southern and eastern areas remain drier, but still could see rain at times. Temperatures for most places are predicted to be above average.

Sunday 15th to Tuesday 31st December 2024.

Settled weather is predicted to prevail at first, at least across the south of the country. However, towards mid-December, there are signs that the weather will become less settled in the north and northwest due to low pressure systems moving in from the Atlantic. These will bring some wetter and windier spells with a risk of some snow, especially across the northern hills and locally at lower levels. These conditions may prevail into late December, although drier, more settled spells may also affect the UK at times, probably more likely towards the south. Temperatures generally close to average throughout the period, or slightly above in areas which are wet and windy.

North Atlantic Surface Pressure Chart Prediction for 12:00 hrs (UTC) on Sunday 1st December 2024.



David Gibson

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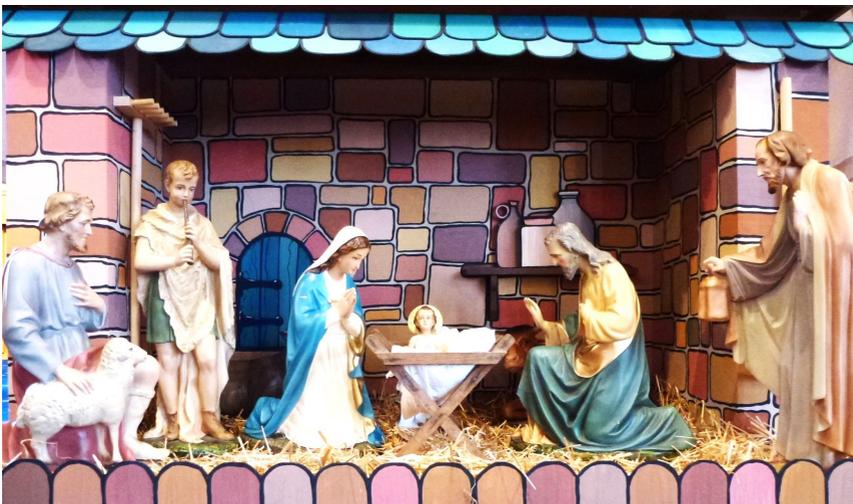
CHURCH VIEWS FOR DECEMBER 2024 FROM THE PARISH OF OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA

Christmas Magic

Thanks again to our wonderful volunteers who work their magic every year to turn this.....

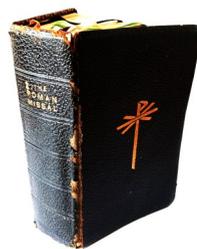


.....into this, for us to enjoy at Christmas



New Translation of the Lectionary

From the First Sunday of Advent this year we will use the new translation of the Catholic Edition of the English Standard Version of the Bible. You will notice changes in the Readings but what seems very new now will soon become familiar. I still have my very old, very battered, Missal, a 'growing-up' Christmas present from Mum and ad. It was the very latest edition in its day; now it's an heirloom. Even nostalgia isn't what it used to be.



Happening this Advent

Advent, Readings and Reflections, St Edward's Parish Rooms

At this time of year the Christmas rush can become a stampede. This hour, 2.00pm until 3.00pm on Wednesdays 4th 11th 18th December, gives us a chance to slow down, relax and think about the real meaning of the Nativity.

Christmas Floral Workshop, Immaculate Heart of Mary

On Tuesday 3 December Michele Humble will again guide everyone in making their own Christmas table arrangement. This will be Michele's second seasonal event and is proving hugely popular. Cost £20.00, which includes materials.

Advent Service, Immaculate Heart of Mary

This service of readings and hymns on Thursday 5 December at 7.00pm will put us to enjoy the anticipation of the coming celebration.

Parish Luncheon Club Christmas Lunch, Immaculate Heart of Mary

This ever-popular event will take place on Thursday 12 December at 12.00pm and cost a ridiculously reasonable £4.00 which is why booking is absolutely essential!

Good advice for Christmas.....

Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.

Ecclesiastes 9:7

Gerry Latimer, Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea

Parish Mass Times:

St Edward's: Sunday 9.30am, Tuesday and Friday 9.30am

Immaculate Heart of Mary: Saturday 6.00pm, Wed 9.30am

St Mary's: Sunday 11.00am, Thursday 10.00am

St Oswin's: Sunday 9.30am, Tuesday 10.00am

Update from Rev'd Tim Mayfield

THE NETTY PROJECT CONTINUES!

Here's the kitchen inside (November 25th) and out (November 22nd).
Who will be the first person to be served a coffee for real?



Accessible Toilet

Who would ever have thought this was till recently the void where the former boiler works were?



The two stone steps up into the church

How wonderful that wheelchairs and buggies will now be able simply to roll unhindered into church.

Now a Tarmac ramp.



Good to think that livestream camerawoman Jean won't get a cricked neck in future.



Media Room

Rob, Cathryn, Mabel and Joan enjoying 'The Halo' over the Font



Church Warden Ali accepting a lovely Christmas tree donated for St John's Church.

Thank you Bee's Knees Christmas Trees, that's very much appreciated.



The St Albans "Community Christmas tree" has been chosen, and it's a beast of a tree!!!

Thanks to Maria and the boys at Edelweiss - The Christmas Tree Co. for taking care of us so well. Heather even got a free sweet mince pie too!!

Christmas Quiz 2024

1. This year was a Leap Year. Were 1900 and 2000 Leap Years?
2. What is Whamaggedon?
3. Alan Bates hit the headlines in January. He shares his name with a famous actor, but why is he well known?
4. HRH Duke of Edinburgh met a special resident at St Helena in January who had also met his grandparents. Who is he?
5. A young actor, fresh out of drama school, was told by Arthur Lowe, “don’t worry if there’s not a lot of lines. They’ll come. In the meantime get yourself a funny costume and stand near me”. Who was the actor who passed away this year and starred in this classic sitcom?
6. Why did a family photo taken for Mothering Sunday lead to a lot of media speculation?
7. Why did North Korean television object to Alan Titchmarsh and his trousers?
8. How did a black cat called Matins get into trouble on 2nd June 1953 at Westminster Abbey
9. Where was the Carnation Revolution fifty years ago?
10. What product manufacturer (a byword in usefulness) announced in 2024 they would introduce the first bladeless version?
11. Which Oxford Don applied unsuccessfully to be a code breaker in the 1940s? there was a note by his name “keen”
12. Where is the Elephant and Bear Line?
13. What is Election purdah?
14. What was Gamblegate?

15. 17th July was National Emoji Day. One of the most popular is known as ROTFL. What does that mean?
16. In this year's Olympics the Philippines gold medallist Carlos Yulo got an unusual reward as well as the medal. What was it?
17. In August a north Italian city advertised for people to learn an ancient skill. The job requirements include being 18 or over, having a high school-level education, knowing how to swim, and possessing a medical certificate that proves "a healthy and robust constitution". What job was this for?
18. What music celebrated its 200th anniversary? Liked by many, and Karl Marx thought it "a solemn mass of earthly joy"?
19. Why might you be looking forward to not looking back in anger?
20. What types of special judges were cancelled after 147 years' service and replaced electronically?

If you need the answers, please ask Jean.



Here's a little reminder for those of you who pay your magazine subscriptions annually and have your magazine Delivered. Next year's subscription (still £12.00) will be due next month, so we will be calling early in January 2025.

St. Alban's and St. John's

Diary Page for December 2024

Sunday	1st		<u>Advent Sunday</u>	
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Thursday	5th	9.30am	Holy Communion	St John's
Sunday	8th		<u>Second Sunday in Advent</u>	
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Wednesday	11th	9.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Sunday	15th		<u>Third Sunday in Advent</u>	
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
		4.00pm	Children's Church Christmas Special	St John's
Thursday	19th	9.30am	Holy Communion	St John's
Sunday	22nd		<u>Fourth Sunday in Advent</u>	
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
		6.00pm	Carols by Candlelight	St Alban's
Tuesday	24th		<u>Midnight Mass</u>	
		4.00pm	Christingle Service	St Alban's
		6.00pm	Christingle Service	St John's
		11.30pm	Midnight Mass	St Alban's
Wednesday	25th		<u>Christmas Day</u>	
		9.00am	Christmas Day Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Christmas Day Communion	St Alban's

St. Alban's and St. John's

Sunday 29th

First Sunday of Christmas

9.00am Holy Communion St John's

10.30am Holy Communion St Alban's

Sunday Gospel Readings for December 2024:

1st

8th

15th

Luke 21. 25-36

Luke 3. 1-6

Luke 3. 7-18

22nd

29th

Luke 1. 39-55

Luke 2. 41-end.





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Complete the 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3×3 blocks contains all of the digits from 1 to 9.

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

Please note - all material for next month's magazine (January 2025) will need to be in before Monday 23rd December Thank you.

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All in the month of December

It was ...

1750 years ago, on 25 Dec 274 that the Roman Emperor Aurelian founded the cult of Sol Invictus as an official religion. He erected a temple and declared 25th December a national holiday, to be known as the Feast of the Unconquered Sun. In 336, after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, 25th December began to be celebrated by the church in Rome as the birthday of God's Son.

200 years ago, on 21st Dec 1824 that James Parkinson, British surgeon and politician, died. He was the first person to describe Parkinson's disease, in 1817.

125 years ago, on 16th Dec 1899 that Noel Coward, British playwright, composer, director, actor and singer, was born. His plays include *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives*, and *Blithe Spirit*.

80 years ago, from 16th Dec 1944 to 16th Jan 1945 that the Battle of the Bulge (Belgium) took place. German forces launched a surprise assault on the Allies in the Ardennes Forest – their last major counter-offensive operation of the war.

75 years ago, on 13th Dec 1949 that Jerusalem became the capital of Israel, replacing Tel Aviv.

40 years ago, on 3rd Dec that the Bhopal disaster took place in India. A poisonous gas leak at a Union Carbide pesticide plant killed thousands of people and left at least 120,000 with long-term health problems.

Also 40 years ago, on 31st Dec 1984 that the Bank of England stopped producing one pound notes. They remained legal tender until 1988.

25 years ago, on 1st Dec 1999 that an international team of scientists working for the Human Genome Project announced that they had mapped an entire human chromosome (number 22). In April 2003 they announced that they had mapped all human chromosomes.

20 years ago, on 26th Dec 2004 that the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami (also called the Boxing Day Tsunami) took place. A massive undersea earthquake near Sumatra caused a devastating tsunami that swamped coastal areas in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and East Africa. It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history, killing more than 230,000 people in 14 countries.

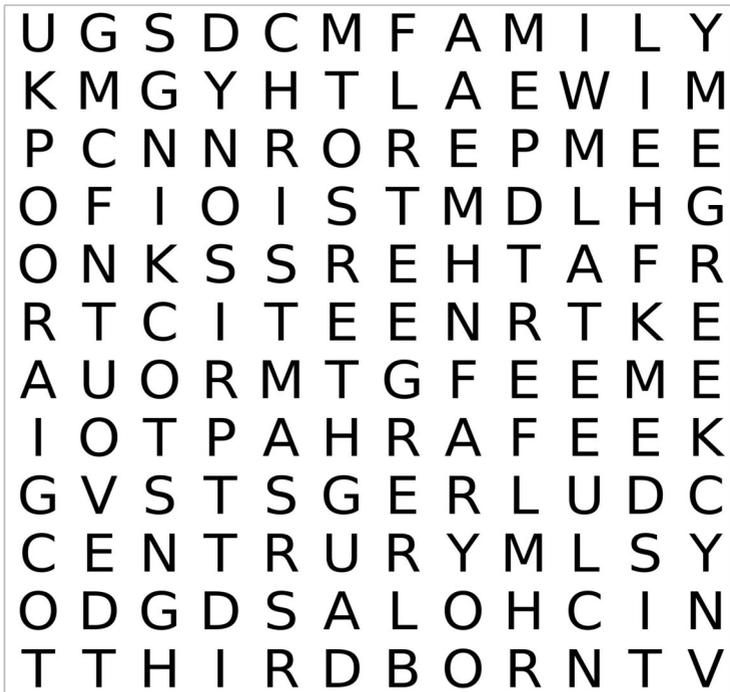
WORDSEARCH

Wordsearch for Christmas 2024

Father Christmas is based on St Nicholas, who was born in the 3rd century in the Greek village of Patara, on what is today the southern coast of Turkey. His family were both devout and wealthy, and when his parents died in an epidemic, Nicholas decided to help people. He gave to the needy, the sick, the suffering, and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. As a bishop, he suffered in prison with other bishops under the emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians.

One story of his generosity explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. There was a poor family with three daughters who needed dowries if they were to marry, and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas heard of their plight, and tossed three bags of gold into their home through an open window – thus saving the girls from a life of misery. The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. Hence the custom of children hanging out stockings – in the hope of attracting presents of their own from St Nicholas - on Christmas Eve.

father
Christmas
Nicholas
Born
Third
Century
Greek
Village
Devout
Wealthy
Needy
Sick
Suffering
Prison
Emperor
Poor
Family
Three
Daughters
Stockings



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