

# The Mustard Seed

The Parish magazine of the church of St James, Brownhills

*A Family Following Jesus*



[www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk](http://www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk)

November 2024

*Called by name & empowered by the Holy Spirit to share  
God's love with words and actions*



# Visiting Churchyards

People love to visit churches, chapels and cathedrals. Recent visitor surveys have shown that more people are visiting cathedrals this year, with an increase in visitors of 17% since 2022. They come for a variety reasons, attending services and concerts, enjoying the heritage and history and visiting exhibitions. This increase in visitors is the result of hard work and lateral thinking, focusing on making these special places appeal to those who may not be regular attendees.

Actually, it's possible that even more people are visiting burial grounds, be they churchyards, chapel yards, cemeteries and of course cathedral grounds. A survey in 2018 found that more than half the visitors to churchyards were neither entering the church building or visiting a particular grave, they were there to enjoy the peace, tranquillity, bird song, flowers and history of these special outdoor places. They were also making use of facilities such as surfaced paths, benches, ramps and other accessibility features. For those of you who care for and love your local churchyard, can you help to make it even more welcoming for visitors? Is there any information on the more interesting memorials to be visited, the locally famous or infamous or perhaps particularly beautiful stone carving? Could you put up a list of the wildlife to be seen at different times of year or steer people to spend time in the presence of a veteran tree and think how long it has been growing there?

Managing a churchyard for both people and nature really creates a space that looks cared for, is accessible but still full of the peaceful and enriching sights and sounds of wildlife that people so enjoy. By the autumn, all of your grassland areas will be cut short but can you leave a small patch of tussocky grass, nettles and hogweed around the back, perhaps by a compost heap, so that insects and other invertebrates have somewhere to overwinter? This will be used by frogs, toads, newts and slowworms who will be feeding on these invertebrates as well as by small mammals and birds. Hedgehogs in particular need shelter like this as well as food such as worms, slugs and beetles.

Do you have any berry bearing shrubs or hedges? Could they be left until the late winter before pruning or trimming in order to feed and shelter birds and small mammals? If there is ivy present you may have noticed the buzz of ivy bees on the flowers in September, flowers which have now been replaced by small black berries. Birds such as thrushes, blackbirds, pigeons and blackcaps love these berries which are rich in fat so good winter tuck! Autumn is a great time to make deadwood piles from windblown twigs and branches, pile up autumn leaves to rot down and perhaps erect some bird and bat boxes.

All of this work will enhance your churchyard so that it is teeming with even more life next spring and summer, giving pleasure to locals and visitors alike.

Harriet Carty

# ***November – a time for remembering the Saints & Looking to the Future Mission of the Church***



At All Hallows Eve and All Saints Day, we traditionally consider the lives and witnesses of the followers of Jesus who have lived before us. They are known as the ‘saints’ – as are all believers and followers of Jesus living here and now today (1 Corinthians 1:2). Rather than being anything about darkness and devil, which the ways of the world have turned it into (Halloween), it was always meant to be about Christians carrying and talking about Jesus and His glorious light, and the holy gospel.

The brilliant news is that the end of October and start of November is still about all of those positive things, for us who trust wholeheartedly in Jesus’ Name. So it’s extremely fitting that we should take the chance at this time of year to look at OUR WITNESS, and spend some time thinking about our personal evangelism.

One of the things that was spoken about at my recent Arrow training week a lot was personal evangelism. In particular it was spoken of at great length how it’s the churches whose individual Christians share Jesus outside of Sundays, with their families, friends, with their work-

colleagues and with anyone who they can, who are the most healthy and growing churches. Surely we love Jesus so much that instead of seeking out a life of comfort, we want this health and growth for St James'? We want to leave a legacy in Brownhills that will endure long after we're gone – right? I pray that is the case for us, that we have hearts that long for others to know the peace, power and supreme love of Jesus.

Right, so as we set our minds to growing in our personal evangelism, a wonderful course for us to be doing as a church, on Sundays and in our mid-week Life Groups, is the 6 session 'Talking Jesus' course. We'll do 4 sessions before we get well into Advent, and the other 2 after Christmas season concludes, and Epiphany begins (following 6<sup>th</sup> January).

This course is inspired by the 2015 'Talking Jesus' research was born out of many discussions, giving a unique and fascinating insight into how our friends and neighbours view us as Christians, what they think about Jesus and how they react when we share Jesus with them. It also told us how often practising Christians are sharing their faith, and how confident they feel when they talk about Jesus.

Since the research was released, Christians and church leaders across the country have been unpacking the findings together. We've heard stories of individuals and churches re-inspired in sharing Jesus after hearing about the research, and of unity movements across the nation responding to the challenge of making Jesus known in their village, town or city.

Since the 2015 research report, many follow-up tools and resources have been released as well as the follow-up 2022 research report which gives a fascinating comparison showing the changes in perception over the seven years since the previous research was done. The team aim to continue to do more research reports every five years to continue the insights.

### **How the research was undertaken**

Savanta ComRes conducted one 10-minute online survey among a total of about 4,000 UK adults. Fieldwork mainly took place between 28 January 2022 and 13 February 2022, with some supplementary fieldwork taking place between 28 March 2022 and 5 April 2022. Respondents were recruited into two samples. Sample one, the Nat Rep sample, was de-

signed to be nationally representative of the UK, numbering 3,115 people.

In addition to this, Savanta ComRes also recruited a Boost Sample of 917 practising Christians. Following fieldwork, these two samples were combined into a single dataset. Practising Christians were weighted so that the proportion of practising Christians in the dataset as a whole was equal to the proportion of practising Christians recruited by chance in the nationally representative sample. Then, the whole combined dataset was weighted by gender, age, and region, ensuring that the data would provide a representative picture of the whole UK population. The data has a margin of error of 1.54%, meaning that actual percentages could be 1.54% higher or lower than those presented.

### **What all of this means to us at St James', Brownhills**

We have an exciting opportunity to travel through the 'Talking Jesus' course together, spending time reflecting and praying on what we hear on Sundays at church, and to engage with humility, openness, love and prayer in Life Group conversations.

Remember, YOU are the only witness to Jesus that some people may ever meet, and although some are undoubtedly called to a special ministry and to exercise a spiritual gift towards evangelism, the truth really is that we are all called to tell others about our Saviour.

And what better time than with Christmas approaching to think and pray meaningfully into how we, personally, share Jesus with people. Through our Christmas events and services we'll have chances to have a chat with people who we don't normally see. Let's take those chances: be a friend to them, share a little something about ourselves, and tell them a little about who Jesus is to us.

I pray we'll each take these encouragements seriously, and that we'll all have a very blessed time as we acknowledge Remembrance Sunday and after that as we begin to prepare our hearts for Christmas.

With love and every blessing in Jesus,  
Rev'd Gayle

# Discipleship—Growing up together

Andrei Rublev's popular icon of the Trinity depicts the three mysterious strangers who visited Abraham (Genesis 18:1-15). It speaks powerfully of the relationship between the three persons of Godhead. *'God as Being exists in community. The natural and simple demonstration of God's communal image for humanity is the gathering of the small group.'* (Gareth Icenogle).

Therefore, small groups provide an important place where we can grow as whole-life disciples, hence the significance of the number 3. As Paul writes: *'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.'* (Colossians 2: 6,7). Small groups provide a healthy environment which encourages spiritual growth, as relationships are made and a sense of belonging established.

Groups go by different names: home groups, cell groups, care groups, discipleship groups etc. Whatever the name, the focus should be the same: a small gathering of people committed to spiritual growth. Unfortunately, it's easy for them to become inward looking and cliquy. So where do the challenges lie?

## ***Small groups are places for growth:***

Groups are not simply places to share information about ourselves and the Bible, etc. They are places of *formation*, where we can learn to grow Christ-like character i.e. developing the fruit of the Spirit, and then exploring the Spirit's gifts in a safe place of experimenting and making mistakes.

## ***Small groups are places for accountability:***

In a group we're not on our own, but we share the Christian journey with those who can encourage us on the way. These are the people who can hold us to account about how things are going: *'what is God doing in my life and how do I need to grow?'*

## ***Small groups are places for mission:***

Small groups also provide a place where we can *voice* the story of how God has been at work in our lives and is using us. This gives us the confidence that we need to share our story with work colleagues, friends and family, as we speak of our faith in Christ.

One lady told how she took her granddaughter to church for the first time. As they knelt in the tall-sided pew, the little girl whispered, *'Who are we hiding from?'* It is harder to hide from ourselves or from one another in the smaller group, than in the crowd.

# The remarkable usefulness of Allen keys

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We all need practical skills, and they are not always easily gained.

I seem to spend a lot of time assembling flat pack furniture of one type or another. The trick is to look and sound as though you know what you are doing, even though any skills are gained through trial and error. It is surprising how many household projects require an Allen key, which if you have not seen one, is an L shaped rod with a hexagon end which fits into an identical sized recess in the top of a screw. You can use the longer or shorter arm depending on the job needs extra force or speed.

The idea of a hexagon *socket* screw was probably thought of as early as the 1860s to 1890s, but such screws were not widely manufactured until around 1910. In 1909–1910, William G. Allen also patented a method of screw heads which had a *hexagonal* recessed die. The key that he lent his name to fits nicely into the head of the screw, is cheap and easy to use.

When you are called on to do some DIY, especially after someone has had a go, the best thing is to refer to the instructions and keep all your Allen keys together in one place so you can easily find them. They come in different sizes.

Bibles come in different sizes, languages, modern and old. They also fit into the hand nicely, are easy to use and contain life-saving instructions on how any and all of us should live.

# On why the COfE should never combine parishes

The Rectory

St James the Least

*My dear Nephew Darren*

*I suppose it had to come, but combining parishes is now firmly on the agenda for our villages.*

*I had always wondered what the first Earl of Stowe was trying to prove, building a church here in 1347 to accommodate 800 people when the total population has never exceeded 250. In the short term – which in this village is measured in centuries - it seems to have been to house the tombs of his 13 successors. I now realise it was to make uniting with adjoining parishes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century more difficult. Clearly the first Earl had formidable foresight. None of our neighbouring churches seem too keen to share their reserves to help maintain our cathedral-sized building.*

*The threat of the closure of St Herve the Bard has, inevitably, caused outrage – not so much from its regular congregation of three, but from all those in the village who would never think of attending. People do so like to have a church not to go to.*

*The church of St Bregowine, built by a wealthy parishioner in the 19<sup>th</sup> century because she did not like the high church practices of the parish church of St Iwig, is refusing to re-unite, even though the two churches stand only 100 yards apart, in a village with a diameter of 300*



*yards. If only they could get over the trauma of seeing the incumbent putting water in the wine on Easter Day in 1894.*

*(Although it must be conceded that the Bregowinians were equally affronted that when the daughter church opened in 1895, they found that the Iwigers had provided no brass troughs at the end of the pews for umbrellas. That they have subsequently refused to install them has only compounded the offence.)*

*Meanwhile St Plegmund is in discussions with the Church of South India as a way of avoiding uniting with anyone. Should it happen, I will be interested to see what travelling expenses the new incumbent claims. It will be difficult to tell when the present incumbent resigns, as he has not been seen at a clerical meeting for the last 30 years. Some of my colleagues suspect he is mythical, that a bloodless coup took place in the 1980s and that the church is now entirely run by the Mothers' Union.*

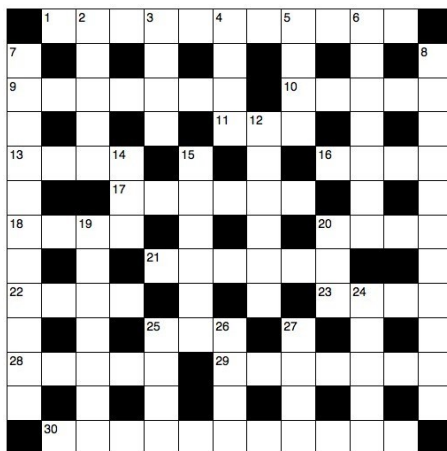
*The church of St Maximus of Constantinople in our nearest town has rather grandly offered to take all of our churches under its wing, but as a parishioner has pointed out: how could we possibly consider joining with a parish that fought on the other side at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485.*

*In the meantime, we will serenely carry on, as we seem to have done for the past six centuries; parish mergers and reductions in numbers of clergy seem to be of less interest than debating the suggestion that we change the brand of coffee served after Services.*

*Your loving uncle,*

*Eustace*

# November



# Crossword

## Across

- 1 In David's battle with the Arameans, 700 of these were killed (2 Samuel 10:18) (11)  
 9 'No — , impure or greedy person has any inheritance in the kingdom of God' (Ephesians 5:5) (7)  
 10 City on the banks of the River Nile (5)  
 11 Stamped addressed envelope (1,1,1)  
 13 Taverns (4)  
 16 'Be on your guard; stand — in the faith' (1 Corinthians 16:13) (4)  
 17 'He will not always — , nor will he harbour his anger for ever' (Psalm 103:9) (6)  
 18 and 27 Down Where the magi came from and what guided them (Matthew 2:1-2) (4,4)  
 20 Ancient Celtic alphabet of 20 characters (4)  
 21 She married Esau when he was 40 years old (Genesis 26:34) (6)  
 22 A great-grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:7) (4)  
 23 Title accorded to certain Roman Catholic clerics (abbrev.) (4)  
 25 'My house will be a house of prayer; but you have made it a — of robbers' (Luke 19:46) (3)  
 28 Annie (anag.) (5)  
 29 Plead with (Zechariah 7:2) (7)  
 30 Tenth foundation of the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20) (11)

## Down

- 2 'We have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by — hands' (2 Corinthians 5:1) (5)  
 3 Uncommon excellence (Proverbs 20:15) (4)  
 4 'You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; fine — have been poured upon me' (Psalm 92:10) (4)  
 5 — Homo ('Behold the Man') (4)  
 6 'He has given proof of this to all men by — him from the dead' (Acts 17:31) (7)  
 7 'Our — is in heaven' (Philippians 3:20) (11)  
 8 'This is a day you are to — ' (Exodus 12:14) (11)  
 12 Assault (Psalm 17:9) (6)  
 14 'Jesus found a young donkey and — upon it' (John 12:14) (3)  
 15 Liverpool dialect (6)  
 19 'Remember the — day by keeping it holy' (Exodus 20:8) (7)  
 20 Nineteenth-century German physicist after whom the unit of electrical resistance is named (3)  
 24 Nazirites were not allowed to eat this part of a grape (Numbers 6:4) (5)  
 25 'If anyone would come after me, he must — himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Mark 8:34) (4)  
 26 Evil Roman emperor from AD54 to 68, responsible for condemning hundreds of Christians to cruel deaths (4)  
 27 See 18 Across

# War and Peace

John Lennon wrote: *'Imagine there's no countries, It isn't hard to do, Nothing to kill or die for, And no religion too. Imagine all the people living life in peace.'* But on Remembrance Sunday, we should reflect on war past and present, and consider the *real* way to peace.

**The way of war:** *'What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill.'* (James 4:1-2). James reminds us that war has its basis in our own hearts, with the selfish desires that exploit, bully and kill others to get our own way. Sadly, when nations allow these inner selfish attitudes to determine their policy the result is war. Only God can establish true peace.

**The way of peace:** Isaiah, 2,700 years before John Lennon, also imagined a future of peace without any war: *'They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.'* (Isaiah 2:4).

Only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can bring true peace to our lives and world. Jesus did not experience the horror of battle, but He did die an horrific death at the hand of the Romans. He gave His life sacrificially, as He took God's anger at our sin on Himself and went on to conquer death in His resurrection. He did this out of love for us, and calls us to love others in the same way: *'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.'* (John 15:13).

How can we demonstrate such love ourselves? We can be confident in God's plan to bring an end to all wars when Jesus returns.

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*When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark,  
you don't throw away your ticket and jump off. You  
sit still and trust the engineer. - Corrie ten Boom*

# Should Christians go to war?

Have you ever wondered how people of peace, like Christians, can contemplate the use of force? Certainly, the violence of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is staggering. Terrorist activity and military conflict worldwide – the resulting loss of life is never be something of which the human race can be proud. No wonder such mayhem causes us distress – and this distress should ideally drive us to prayer.

As for what Christians should do, here are some questions to consider:

**1. *Do we believe in the validity of punishment?*** The answer, surely, must be Yes – if there is such a thing as objective truth and a given morality by which human life is ordered. If this were not so, we would have to remove from our vocabulary such words as ‘reward’, ‘merit’, ‘justice’ and even ‘forgiveness’.

Punishment is not a popular word in circles that dislike the language of retribution, and who speak rather of ‘corrective punishment’. However, St Paul said that secular authority is “God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.” (Romans 13:4, NIV). So, the treatment of wrongdoing must have a retributive element in it, if it is ever to be corrective.

**2. *Is there a difference between force and violence?*** The use of force is the disciplinary exercise of lawful authority – as seen, for example, in a well-run police force. This is a valid part of God’s order. St Paul said: “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities...he who rebels is rebelling against what God has instituted....” (Romans 13:1,2 NIV)

Of course, ‘force’ can become ‘violence’ under a repressive authority. Revelation 13:5-8 depicts such authorities as a blasphemous “beast”. Then the call can indeed be for civil disobedience. The earliest Trades Unions themselves were begun through Christian influence!

**3. *Do we assent to the depravity of the human heart?*** People are selfish. We can’t be trusted to behave well towards others. So, our societies need to agree rules for our order and survival. Without such restraints, and the power to apply them, chaos and anarchy are the result.

A Christian is called to shun all violence, but to also be committed to the disciplined use of force. Sadly, a lot of muddled thinking takes place (especially during times of international conflict) when the debate fails to take account of the difference between violence and force. Force is concerned with the upholding of law. Violence is concerned with the overthrow of law.

# ***Events Diary***

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November** – Walsall Symphony Orchestra concert in church. Tickets from Angela Cooper - £7

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December** – Church Family Christmas Meal

**Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December** - Carol Singing and Fish & Chips at Jack ‘Jigger’ Taylor pub 7.30pm

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December** – Christingle Making in Church Hall 10am

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December** – Christmas Fayre in Church from 12 noon

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December** – Christingle Service at 4.15pm

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December** – Family Film Night showing *Muppets Christmas Carol*

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December** – Carols by Candlelight at 6.15pm

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December** – Blue Christmas at 7.30pm

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December** – Carol Singing at the Homestead at 11am

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December** – All Age Nativity at 3.00pm

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December** – Holy Communion at 11.30pm

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> December**—8am and 10am Holy Communion

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> December** – New Year’s Eve Party at 7.30pm

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*Good sermons need not be long, and bad ones ought not to be.*

*- CH Spurgeon*

# When poverty pushes people into dark places

As Christmas approaches, the charity Christians Against Poverty (CAP) is warning that “Poverty has become more ruthless than ever. There are rarely simple solutions anymore. Families can’t afford to live, let alone repay debt, as incomes don’t cover the basics.”

CAP tells the story of Bea, one of its clients. “Like nearly half of CAP’s clients, Bea’s income wasn’t enough to live on. She and her husband had been made redundant and, no matter how careful she was, after paying for rent, food, and other essentials, the money couldn’t stretch to the end of the month. “I got to the point where I didn’t want to be here. I was in a black hole, and couldn’t get out.”

Nearly half of CAP’s clients have attempted or considered suicide as a way out of debt, as on-going poverty and debt is literally driving people to the brink.

And so this Christmas, CAP is asking for support, as “your gift to CAP could save lives. The holistic care and debt help local churches across the UK are providing is vital for people like Bea.”

If you would like to send a donation, please visit: <https://capuk.org>

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## Herod’s Secret Policeman

Open Doors has launched a new tool for families and churches, aimed at explaining religious persecution in an age-appropriate way.

*Herod’s Secret Policeman* is a children’s story book and animated video which tells the fictional tale of Secret Policeman Number 3 (and his toy sheep, Nellie), of the people he met on the journey, and the way in which the encounter with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph changed him forever.

“It’s an imaginative take on this familiar story that will introduce children — in a very gentle way — to the pressures faced by believers around the world, many of whom live under surveillance, or are at risk because of their faith,” said Open Doors US CEO Ryan Brown. “It helps children understand that some Christians today might even have to flee for their lives, just as Mary, Joseph, and Jesus did.”

The book and video are available for download at [opendoorsus.ubpages.com/herods-place/](https://opendoorsus.ubpages.com/herods-place/). latest-news/

# Prayer for November 2024

Dear Lord,

November can be a dreary month. Even the first syllable is negative and reminds us of all the things we are missing; the long light days, summer breaks, blossom and fresh green leaves.

As we walk through the dark days, help us to remember that You brought light into this dark world. You sent Jesus, who is that light in person, Your positive who overcame all negatives by His death on the cross.

November leads us closer to the time of celebration of His coming. Lord, thank you for Jesus. Thank you for November!

In Jesus' name. Amen.

*By Daphne Kitching*



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# *THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLEY HAY*

Called by name & empowered by the Holy Spirit to share  
God's love with words and actions

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Graham Sutherland (Reader with Permission to Officiate)	01543 671020

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### *Secretary:*

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