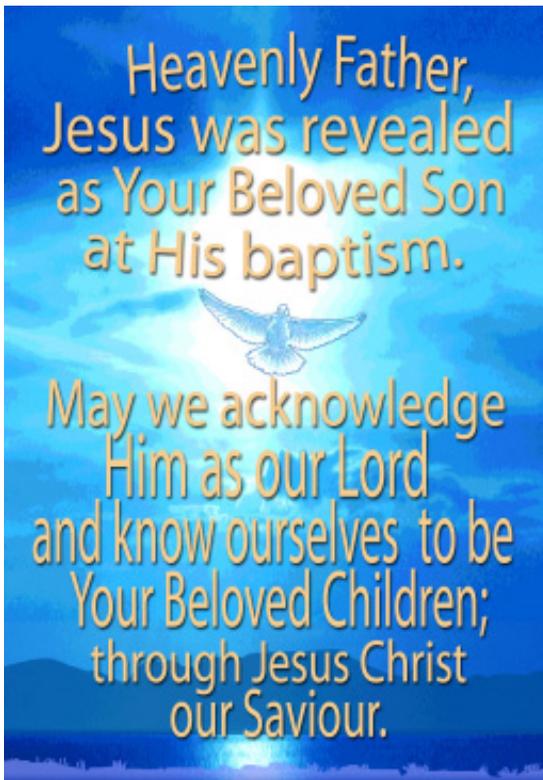


ST JAMES' CHURCH
Brownhills



Following Jesus

THE MUSTARD SEED



www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk

50P

January 2022

*Our mission is to worship God
and to serve the community by sharing the love of Jesus*

From the Registers

The families of the following have asked for continuing prayer after funerals at St James' Church

Janet Poynton
Roger Hill
Bernard Watts

Lawrence Higgins
Diane Hudson

Grace, Truth & Life Groups

There are now five GTL Groups which are now meeting on a regular basis. It would be good to think we could increase the number meeting, so if you would like to be involved, please speak to Revd Gayle in the first instance.

Telephone Prayer

If you would like any prayer ministry via the telephone, please contact Gayle on 07545 657 636, or Liz Corbett on 01543 370162.

Magazine Articles

If, in your reading, you find an article that you think bears repeating in the parish magazine, please let us know and we will try our best to include it in a future issue.

Do more, learn more and be more.

Girls & boys aged 6 to 18.

Based at Group HQ, Barnetts Lane, WS8 6HZ

For info: www.brownhills-scouts.org.uk

Call: Sue 01543 276953 or Mary 01543 453293



Happy New Year!?

The Meaning for Followers of Jesus

For so many of us, New Year's Day is just another holiday. For followers of Jesus, New Year's Day has no unique meaning, and there is no direction from the Bible that informs our celebrations.

Yet that fact doesn't mean that as followers of Jesus we shouldn't pause and reflect on the coming of a new year. One of my favourite scriptures is Psalm 90 verse 12, where Moses asked of the Lord, *'Teach us to number our days, so we may get a heart of wisdom'*. We know then that it's God's will that we should choose wisely how we spend our time.

For us as Christians, New Year's Day can also remind us of the opportunity for new plans and new life to arise. As we choose to live for Jesus, and have His Holy Spirit filling us, each day can be a chance to reject any old habits or ways of thinking that might be holding us back, in favour of embracing life-giving habits and thought-patterns.

I can't emphasise enough how vital it is for us all at St James' to recognise that setting goals for a new year is a key sign that we're intentional about glorifying God in every area of our lives: in our home life and personal relationships, in our work, and in our approach to Sabbath and our personal renewal each week in the Lord's Presence. A wise and disciplined approach to planning for each of these areas of our lives helpfully aids our private and public witness.

What will support us a great deal in our efforts to order our time well will be the following four steps: -

1. Remember: Let's take time to **be thankful** for the past year – whatever challenges, causes of sadness, encouragements, or joys there have been. Let's commit the past year's events and experiences, perhaps especially in relation to the impact of Covid 19, to the Lord, realising that every new season is a testimony, a signpost, to **God's grace**.

2. Repent: Mindful of the **amazing goodness of our God**, let's be led to **repentance**, and leave behind anything we realise He is calling us to leave. Beginning the new year with repentance is to draw closer to Jesus, to get

more truly in touch with His grace. It is the gateway to greater intimacy with Him.

3. Renew: Thirdly, New Year can be a time of **renewing old commitments**, like that to our family, our marriage, and to our church family. So before we might make any new year's resolutions to get fitter, or to learn a new skill/engage in a new hobby maybe, let's begin by renewing the core commitments we already have.

Our commitments to those things that we're most familiar with – to our families, to marriage if we're married, to our friendships, and to our church family at St James' and its work don't, always look or feel significant. But let's always remember that joyful faithfulness in these core things over a long period means that we have a radical, countercultural life. They show the world what it looks like to be a Christian.

4. Rest: At New Year we can rest in the reality of our identity in Christ. We may feel like we've not met some of the goals we had for 2021, but Jesus still loves us. Also, having taken time to spiritually rest, and to plan for this to happen each week in 2022, I pray we can each, alongside this, commit to making sure we get enough sleep and leisure time. Doing this is a sign of spiritual strength and that our confidence is placed in the God who never sleeps but continually watches over us (Psalm 121).

Reflecting on these 4 steps, I pray that as we each go ahead and make our plans for 2022, we'll remember that we serve the One Lord who remembers our frame and knows we are dust (Ps. 103:14). I pray that we'll make plans, but have the courage, wisdom and serenity to hold them lightly, and that we'll entrust this new year to our mighty King Jesus, who holds the whole world in His hands.

With love and every blessing,



Rev'd Gayle



There's more with us than with them!!

We begin the New Year with a Bible event from 2 Kings and an anecdote from Birmingham.

For a number of years, the king of Syria had tried to capture the prophet Elisha. (*The story is found in 2 Kings 6:11-19*). Elisha always knew what the Syrians were planning, and revealed their plans before they could be carried out. Finally, the Syrian armies surrounded Elisha in Dothan.

When Gehazi, Elisha's servant, woke up and saw the encircling Syrian armies, he was terrified. But Elisha prayed, 'Lord, open his eyes.' When Gehazi looked again, he could hardly believe what he saw. All round them were horses and chariots of fire. The armies of heaven were protecting them! And Elisha encouraged him. "*Don't fear, there's more with us than with them!*" Immediately the Syrians were struck with blindness and Elisha and Gehazi escaped.

Often, we need to ask the Lord to open our eyes. When our strength has failed and faith is weak, we're apt to think that God has forgotten us. But He hasn't! He is near and only our dimness of vision prevents us from seeing His great presence and power and provision. Fear not! Trust God! Believe His Word! There's more with us than with our enemy!

In the early 1950s a well-known department store in Birmingham, wanted to extend its premises. Close at hand was an ideal site but it belonged to the Quakers whose Meeting House had been there for well over 200 years. The department store wrote to the Quakers, offering to buy the site. They said, "We will give you a very good price for the land. In fact, we'll send you a blank cheque. Please fill in whatever sum of money you think appropriate, and we will honour it." Four weeks passed and there was no reply, then five weeks, then six weeks.

Finally, a letter arrived from the Quakers. It thanked the department store for their generous offer but declined to accept it. "Our Meeting House has been here for almost 250 years," they explained, "much

Continued on next page

longer than your store. We have no wish to sell our property. However, if you would agree to sell your site to us, we are very interested in buying it. We will give you a very good price for it. Just state your selling price and we will honour it.”

The letter was signed ‘Cadburys.’ The department store thought they were dealing with a small congregation of Quakers. Instead, they were dealing with the Cadburys’ empire. Cadburys could have bought the department store twenty times over!

When our enemy the devil attacks us, by ourselves we are weak and feeble. But when Christ dwells in us by His Spirit, we are mighty! The devil is no longer attacking us; he is attacking the Captain of our salvation and the devil cannot win!

There’s more with us than with him! As we go through 2022, be encouraged. With Christ we are more than conquerors!

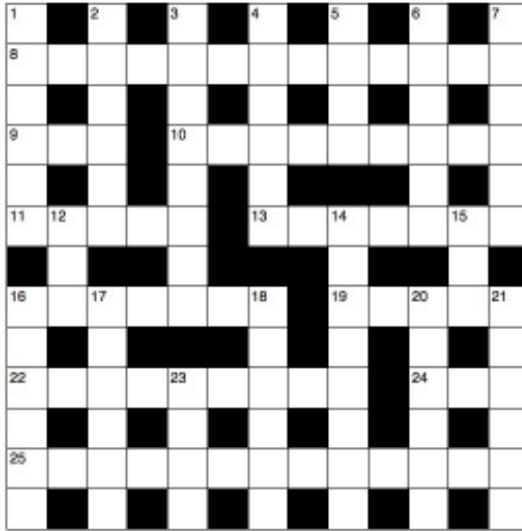
Enter the coming year with renewed hope in the power of God to do through you what you cannot.

- John MacArthur

Open your window

When you have friends come to visit you, open the window for ten minutes of every hour that they stay. It will help to reduce the level of any Covid particles that may be in the air.

As one medical officer for England explained: “People with Covid release virus particles into the air whenever they speak, breath, or cough. These can linger in unventilated settings. So, it’s vital to open windows, to keep the air moving and help prevent infections.”



Across

- 8 How the Abyss (NIV) is described in the Authorized Version (Revelation 9:1) (10,3)
 9 Frozen water (Ezekiel 1:22) (3)
 10 The Ten Commandments (9)
 11 In Roman Catholic theology, neither heaven nor hell (5)
 13 Des cons (anag.) (7)
 16 'Though [your sins] are red as – , they shall be like wool' (Isaiah 1:18) (7)
 19 Keen (Romans 1:15) (5)
 22 Repugnant, loathsome (Jeremiah 24:9) (9)
 24 Drink like an animal (Judges 7:5) (3)
 25 First and last (Revelation 22:13) (5,3,5)

Down

- 1 Father of Ahi, a Gadite (1 Chronicles 5:15) (6)
 2 Where David found the stone with which he killed Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (6)
 3 'Hour by hour fresh lips are making thy – doings heard on high' (8)
 4 'And there were shepherds living out

in the fields near by, keeping watch over their – at night' (Luke 2:8) (6)

5 United Society for Christian Literature (1,1,1,1)

6 'If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would – – or a tax collector' (Matthew 18:17) (1,5)

7 Where Paul was taken when things became difficult for him in Berea (Acts 17:15) (6)

12 Istituto per le Opere di Religione (Vatican Bank) (1,1,1)

14 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new – ; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Corinthians 5:17) (8)

15 Used to colour ram skins red for use in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:5) (3)

16 Vat car (anag.) (6)

17 'Be joyful – , patient in affliction, faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12) (2,6)

18 'The parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts – – special treatment' (1 Corinthians 12:23) (4,2)

20 Ancient rowing boat (Isaiah 33:21) (6)

21 Say again (2 Corinthians 11:16) (6)

23 What Jesus did in the synagogue in Nazareth after he stood up (Luke 4:16) (4)

Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Even nowadays, hiding away in remote parishes, there are still some colourful clergy about. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an Evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in parish life.

On parish accounts, teapots and Labrador retrievers

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Your annual accounts – all 146 pages, bound in their plastic covers and laid out in faultless detail – really are most impressive. I was rather envious to note you have a clergy 'discretionary fund'; if I were to be given such a thing, my cellar of claret would improve immeasurably although that is perhaps the reason why I am not given one.

The size of your office expenses makes me wonder if you have a staff rivalling that of the European Community. I suppose that at least you are doing your bit for job creation. Our dear Miss Marigold, who spends two hours a week randomly filing pieces of paper, mistyping rotas and failing to re-order stationery, is only rewarded by being the first to find out who are booking marriages and having their babies baptised – and if they do not happen in that order, that will be another piece of information remembered for future use. All this is information beyond the price of jewels in village communities.

Our accounts have more by way of charm than they do of accuracy, generally consisting of one sheet of handwritten paper. There are only ever three copies for circulation, as that is the limit of Colonel Denster's carbon paper. It seems to be an unalterable tradition that they never balance, until we find the following year that the missing £20 was found months later under the teapot on the mantelpiece. One footnote to this was the occasion when the Colonel suspected an unaccountable £5 had been eaten by his Labrador. Our greatest expenses by far are categorised as 'miscellaneous', which is a catch-all for everything that our treasurer is unable to recall where it really went.

The thousands paid on church maintenance and diocesan fees are nodded through without comment – but if the money spent on Easter lilies or packets of tea for the Summer Fete increases by anything more than 50 pence, there will be much agonised debate and speculation about whether this is an indication of money laundering.

I see that your accounts were professionally audited. Fortunately, it does not matter too much about the accuracy of our own, as I have an arrangement with our auditor who lives in the village: if he refuses to sign them off, then I refuse to baptise his grandchildren.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Always remember . . .

There are no strangers in our church –
just friends you haven't met yet.

Readings for January

The readings are the ones we will use in church and online.

2nd January 2022 – Morning Service -
Joshua 1 v 1–18

9th January 2022 – Morning Service -
Joshua 6 & Joshua 23

9th January 2022 – Evening Service -
Acts 8 v 14–17 & Luke 3 v 15–22

16th January 2022 – Morning Service -
Judges 1 v 22–36 & Judges 17

16th January 2022 – Evening Service -
Psalm 36 v 5–10 & John 2 v 1–11

23rd January 2022 – Morning Service -
1 Samuel 16 & 1 Kings 1

23rd January 2022 – Evening Service -
Psalm 19 & Luke 4 v 14–21

30th January 2022 – Morning Service -
Proverbs 2 v 1–11

30th January 2022 – Evening Service -
Malachi 3 v 1–5 & Luke 2 v 22–40

CROSSWORD ANSWERS
ACROSS: 8, Bottomless pit; 9, Ice; 10, Decalogue; 11, Limbo; 13, Seconds; 16, Crimson; 19, Eager; 22, Abhorrent; 24, Lap; 25, Alpha and Omega.
DOWN: 1, Abdiel; 2, Stream; 3, Wondrous; 4, Flocks; 5, USCL; 6, A pagan; 7, Athens; 12, IOR; 14, Creation; 15, Dye; 16, Cravat; 17, In hope; 18, Need no; 20, Galley; 21, Repeat; 23, Read.

A New Year's Resolution from Micah

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression...? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you: To act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:7-8)

I quite like olive oil; not the Popeye character but the cooking ingredient. Although I am not sure what I would do with even one river of oil, and I have nowhere to put a ram.

Still, this is one of my favourite Bible passages, and it is an ideal one for lawyers. It sums up in a very simple but helpful way what true religion should be. That makes it a good verse to start the year. The message is simple: God does not want empty promises or lip service, but our real devotion, from our heart.

What does it mean for us?

Do justly - Be honest and open in our dealings with others this year. Be dependable. We should say when things are going wrong and be appreciative when they go well. Be fair in our dealings, whether at home or at work or in church. Keep confidences and never pass on gossip.

Love mercy - Give people the benefit of doubt, do not take advantage of others and do not always criticise or complain. Accept apologies and explanations where we can, and be generous.

Walk humbly - Quietly get on with things. Do not make a big show of what we do.

Lastly, we are required to do these things. They are not options or choices but requirements. Like many requirements in the Bible, they are simple to understand, but not always simple to do. Happy New Year.

*Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbours,
and let every new year find you a better man. - Benjamin
Franklin*

Prayers & Poems

The Baptism of Jesus

(Mt 3:13-17; Mk1:9-11; Lk3:21-22;
Jn1:31-34)

He came to John
In the Jordan
That day,
Jesus,
Man that He was,
Purer than the water that washed Him.
In His Baptism
Man before God,
God before man.

He came to Jesus
In the Jordan
That day
Spirit,
God that He is,
Affirming son-ship,
In a love
That asks painful questions
And answers with an empty tomb.

By Daphne Kitching

New Year Prayer 2022

Lord of all creation, Lord of all the years. Thank you for steering us through the fragmented landscape of two pandemic-riddled years. Here we stand at the beginning of a new year, not knowing what lies ahead. Our only security lies in you, Lord.

Please take our hands and guide us, day by day, into January and beyond. We will not be afraid, Lord because you have promised never to leave us, never to forsake us. And you keep your promises. We are safe. 2022, here we come... expectantly, In Jesus' name, Amen

By Daphne Kitching

The reality of faith in God

As we enter this New Year of 2022 even the most devoted Christians can't ignore the uncertainties we face. The whole world was caught up in the persistent spread of Coronavirus. It is shaking national economies and causing untold stress and harm. Many people fear that their lives and families will never be the same again.

Almost daily the news has been gloomy and economic experts say the situation is the worst in living memory. How do we, as Christians, react to all this? What do we trust in? Has God something to say to us in these days?

An answer may be found in a well-loved passage from the Bible Psalm 23: *'The Lord is my shepherd ...He restores my soul ...he leads me ...I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'*

But in the middle of this lovely psalm there are three reminders that Christians are NOT exempt from the realities of life. The psalmist speaks of 'the paths of righteousness', 'the valley of the shadow' and 'the presence of my enemies.'

The mention of 'the paths of righteousness' is a reminder that we are called to love the Lord and live our lives in righteousness. The wonderful promises in this psalm come with a condition; they are given to those who determine by God's grace to live righteously. And that must be our first resolution for 2022.

The 'valley of the shadow' may refer to death, but generally the reference here is wider. It means all those occasions when fear and sorrow and heartbreak and loss come to even the best Christians.

Then there are our 'enemies.' Originally that probably meant those wanting to kill the psalmist. For us it may be the seduction of old temptations, the fears that paralyse us and the memories of sins that still haunt us.

The psalmist is a realist! As Christians we live our lives in the real world! We are not floating on cloud nine; we are rooted in a fallen world and surrounded by temptations and sins and infirmities. Any

Continued on next page

day, pain, an incurable disease, even death itself, may come to us or to those we love. How do we face these realities?

Psalm 23 has the answer. If we, by God's grace, will walk in 'the paths of righteousness,' then all the promises are ours! The Lord will be our Shepherd. He will lead us by the still waters; He will restore our souls, prepare a table for us in the wilderness, protect and guide us with His rod and staff and, at the end, bring us into the house of the Lord forever. Let's make Psalm 23 our charter of faith for 2022!

Enter the coming year with renewed hope in the power of God to do through you what you cannot. - John MacArthur

God's fragrance – do people catch a whiff of it on you?

'...and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume'
John 12:3

A story runs of how a lady was having tea outside a tea shop late one afternoon, when she became aware of a pleasant scent filling the air. She asked the waiter the source of the scent and was told that it came from the people passing by. He explained that they worked in a perfume factory down the street and were on their way home. When they left the factory, they always carried with them the fragrance that had permeated their clothes during their day's work.

As the perfume workers leave the factory full of the fragrance of where they have been, so we, as we leave our churches and chapels and wherever we spend time with God, are meant to carry the perfume of His presence with us. We are called to spread everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him (2 Corinthians 2:4). If we allow ourselves in worship to be permeated with Christ's love and the sweetness of His presence, then we will be able to take the Jesus in us out into the world.

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THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLEY HAY

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by sharing the love of Jesus

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Lay Ministers:

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Liz Corbett 01543 370162

Graham Sutherland (Reader with Permission to Officiate) 01543 671020

Community & Children's Worker:

Mel Pearce 07710 811893

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Wardens:

Margaret Powell 01543 371396

Roger Corbett 01543 370162

Lay Chair:

Dennis Powell 01543 820513

Secretary:

Brenda Stanford 01543 373063

Treasurer:

Joy Powell 01543 820513

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Pete Biggs, BEd(Hons), AMusCAM 01922 692163

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Margaret Powell 01543 371396

Safeguarding Co-ordinator:

Roger Corbett 01543 370162

