

THE

March, April & May 2026

ELBOW

The Magazine of **Formby Methodist Church**

Open
to all

From the Editor

And so another Christmas is over. There were the customary services, of course - Christingle, Nativity and Christmas Day; all of these were well attended and appreciated. And we even enjoyed an event with a difference - a 'Celtic Christmas'. This proved to be a huge success (see p25) and we hope to do something similar this year.

And so our thoughts now turn to Easter. As always, there will be various commemorative events at Elbow Lane - see opposite page and back cover for details. Indeed, one of these events has already begun (see p5).

I am always grateful when I receive contributions from Church members for the magazine, so my special thanks this time to Ivy, as well, of course, to Jenny, Irene and Janet for their regular church news and updates.

Other contributions, though, would be greatly appreciated! After all, the '*Elbow*' is a magazine for everyone to share and in which to be involved. Ideally these should be via email, or at least typed, but even if they're handwritten, or need editing in whatever way, I'll still be very grateful to receive them!

I must draw your attention to an important item on p13. Safeguarding is something we hear about all too often these days, on the News and in the papers, and the role of Safeguarding Officer(s) is a vital one in the life of our Church. Jane & I have been carrying out this role for nearly 10 years, and feel that it is now time for us to stand down. So please give the matter of our replacement(s) your prayerful consideration.

My thanks as ever to Graham Watts for continuing to come up with some beautiful images for our Front Cover. And to Helen for her splendid '*Our News*' and help and support to me in the production of the '*Elbow*'.

A very Happy and joyful Easter to you all!

Next '*Elbow*' Copy Deadline - 24 May

SERVICES AT ELBOW LANE

1 March, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
8 March, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Christopher Humble
15 March, 10.30	Morning Service	Mr Colin Fyles
15 March, 6.30	Evening Service	Rev Christopher Humble
22 March, 10.30	Morning Service	Mrs Shirley Potts
29 March, 8.30	Palm Sunday Service	Mr J Clifford Hill
2 April, 2.00	Maundy Thursday Service	Rev Sheila Prest
3 April, 9.30	Good Friday Service	Rev Sheila Prest
5 April, 8.30	Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
5 April, 10.30	Easter Sunday Service & Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
12 April, 10.30	Morning Service	TBA
19 April, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Sue Edwards
19 April, 6.30	Circuit Service (Easter Offering)	Rev Sheila Prest
26 April, 8.30	Holy Communion	Rev Christopher Humble
26 April, 10.30	Morning Service	Miss Lesley Goddard
3 May, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
10 May, 10.30	Morning Service (Christian Aid)	Mrs Eirlys Jessop
17 May, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Brian Trudgian
17 May, 6.30	Evening Service	Mr Colin Fyles
24 May, 10.30	Morning Service	TBA
31 May, 10.30	Circuit Service	St Philip & St Paul with Wesley, Southport

Songs of Praise

Our morning service on 25th January took the form of a Songs of Praise service. This was very well received - my thanks to all those who expressed their appreciation, and of course to those who took part. It is very likely that we will repeat this format later in the year, so be prepared!

Minister's Letter

Hi All,

As we move through these spring months, I find myself returning again and again to the simple invitation at the heart of our Draw Near journey which is unfolding in the next few weeks in our church (see p5). It's an invitation that doesn't demand perfection or certainty—just a willingness to come as you are, with whatever you're carrying, and discover that God is already leaning toward us with love.

During **Lent**, I've been especially aware of how easily we drift into busyness, distraction, or self-reliance. Perhaps you've felt that too. Lent gives us permission to slow down, to breathe, and to notice the quiet ways God is present in our ordinary days. It's not about giving things up for the sake of it, but about making space—space to listen, space to rest, space to be honest with ourselves and with God.

Then comes **Easter**, with its bright, surprising hope. Every year I'm struck by how gently the resurrection story unfolds: a garden at dawn, a name spoken softly, a small group of bewildered friends discovering that death does not have the final word. This year, the message feels especially poignant. Draw near, the risen Christ says—not with fear, but with trust. Not with answers, but with open hearts.

And as we move toward **Pentecost**, I'm reminded that drawing near to God also draws us nearer to one another. The Spirit doesn't just comfort; the Spirit connects. The early disciples didn't suddenly become perfect people—they simply became people willing to show up, to pray together, to share what they had, and to let God work through their ordinary lives. That gives hope for us too.

My prayer for these months is that each of us will find one small way to draw near — to God, to one another, and to the world God loves.

Maybe it's a quiet moment of prayer at the kitchen table.

Maybe it's reaching out to someone who's been on your mind.

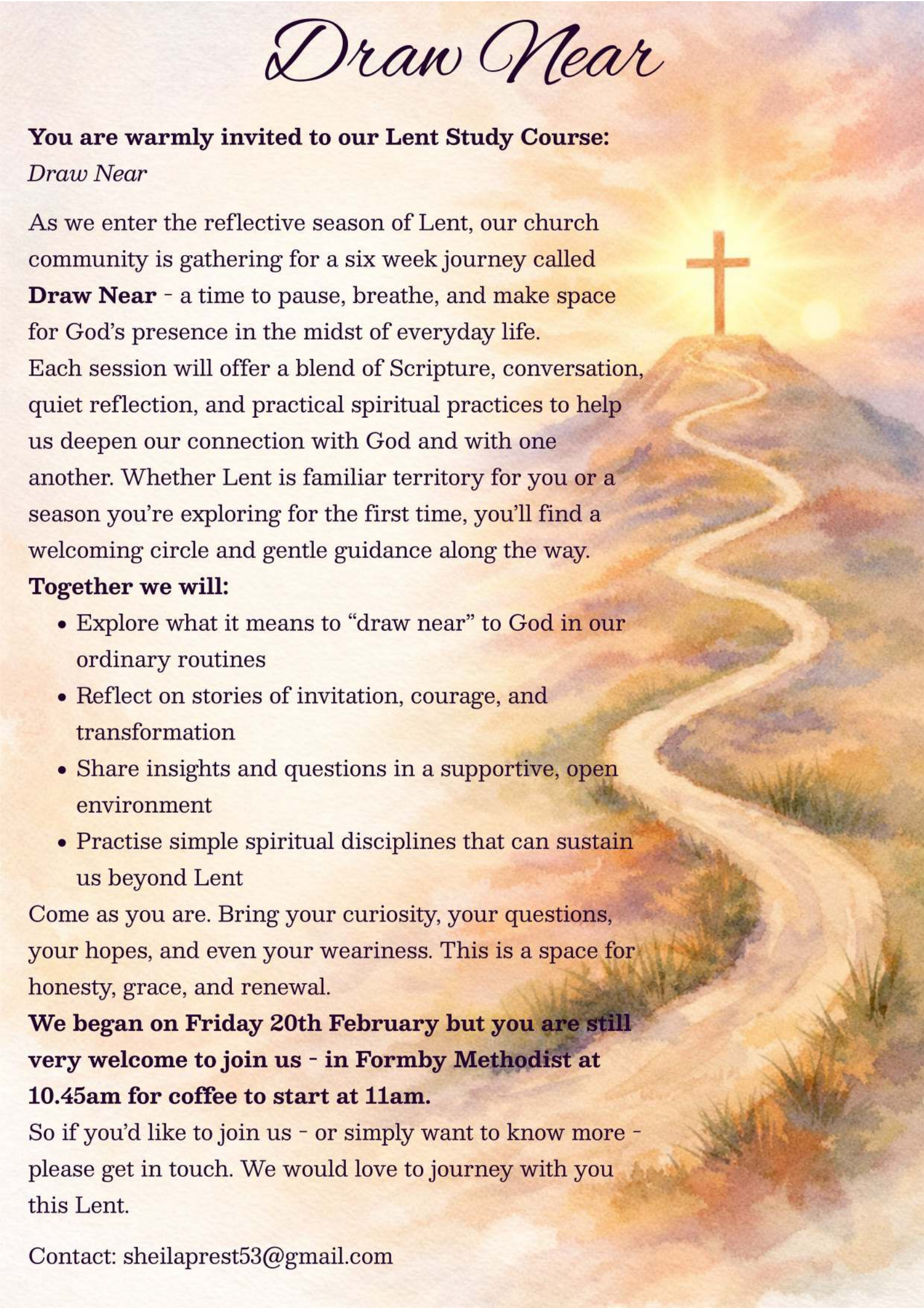
Maybe it's allowing yourself to be held by the community when life feels heavy.

Whatever it looks like for you, know this: you are not walking this journey alone. God meets us with grace at every step, and we have one another for encouragement, laughter, and shared strength.

Have a BLESSED EASTER!

Sheila

Draw Near

A soft, painterly illustration of a winding dirt path that leads up a grassy hill. At the top of the hill, a simple wooden cross stands against a warm, golden sunset sky. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the right side of the frame, casting a long, gentle light across the landscape. The colors are muted and earthy, with shades of orange, yellow, and soft green.

You are warmly invited to our Lent Study Course:

Draw Near

As we enter the reflective season of Lent, our church community is gathering for a six week journey called **Draw Near** - a time to pause, breathe, and make space for God's presence in the midst of everyday life.

Each session will offer a blend of Scripture, conversation, quiet reflection, and practical spiritual practices to help us deepen our connection with God and with one another. Whether Lent is familiar territory for you or a season you're exploring for the first time, you'll find a welcoming circle and gentle guidance along the way.

Together we will:

- Explore what it means to "draw near" to God in our ordinary routines
- Reflect on stories of invitation, courage, and transformation
- Share insights and questions in a supportive, open environment
- Practise simple spiritual disciplines that can sustain us beyond Lent

Come as you are. Bring your curiosity, your questions, your hopes, and even your weariness. This is a space for honesty, grace, and renewal.

We began on Friday 20th February but you are still very welcome to join us - in Formby Methodist at 10.45am for coffee to start at 11am.

So if you'd like to join us - or simply want to know more - please get in touch. We would love to journey with you this Lent.

Contact: sheilaprest53@gmail.com

A Peaceful Mind

There is a lot of talk about 'mindfulness' these days, and how to find calm moments in our daily lives. Both the BBC and Classic FM have even got radio stations devoted to 'mindful' and 'calm' music. But as Christians, we have an extra, divine resource to call on.

The Bible tells the story of Jesus and His stressed disciples in a boat in a storm. Like them, we also get hit by storms in life. And like them, we can know that Jesus is also with us. Why not take a moment to ponder these promises:

“Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken.” (Psalm 55:22)

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4: 6-8)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11: 28-30)

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12)

(from the Parish Pump)

Why we should all be like donkeys!

Are you a pet-lover? Many people own a dog, a cat or a budgie, but most of us don't own a donkey! Yet in Bible times, donkeys were essential to daily life. They did everything from helping to grind corn, to ploughing, to carrying people, to transporting their belongings. Despite their small frame, donkeys are surprisingly tough. They are content with poor fodder like thistles and can travel an average of 20 miles a day.

There are two occasions in the Christian calendar where donkeys walk into the picture. At Christmas, Mary travelled the 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem on a donkey. And although a donkey doesn't get a specific mention in the manger story, that same one that transported her was probably there at the birth; where else would it have been?

And on Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Jesus deliberately chose this animal rather than a horse. Why? In Bible times, the horse was associated with war, conquest and worldly might. But the donkey was a symbol of peace and humility. Jesus used this animal to show that He had come with the dignity of the King of peace. His entry into the Holy City also fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Messiah.

Donkeys are hardworking and undemanding. They wait for their master to put them to the work he has chosen for them. And, remarkably, each one bears the mark of the Cross on their backs!!

(from the Parish Pump)

Two donkeys were walking along the streets of Jerusalem. One said: "Just a few days ago I came down that hill carrying Jesus, and the people were all singing and shouting and throwing down their cloaks and palms for me to walk on. But today they don't even recognise me." The other donkey replied: "That is how it is, my friend. Without Jesus, none of us amounts to much."

The Story Behind the Hymn

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross



Isaac Watts (1674 - 1748) was a Congregational minister, theologian and hymn writer - indeed he has been described as England's greatest hymn writer. Three centuries later, some of his hymns seem as fresh and meaningful today as ever. We still regularly sing *Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun*, then on Remembrance Sunday *O God Our Help in Ages Past*, at Christmas *Joy to the World* and, topically, during Lent *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*.

Isaac Watts was born in Southampton in 1674 and brought up in the home of a nonconformist; he had a classical education, learning Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

From the moment he could read and write, Isaac showed a love for poetry, writing verses of his own before some children could even read. His mother quickly noticed something special about her son, and when Isaac was seven years old, she sat him down at the kitchen table and told him to write a poem. Isaac obliged, using the ten letters of his name:

*"I am a vile polluted lump of earth,
So I've continued ever since my birth;
Although Jehovah, grace doth daily give me,
As sure this monster Satan will deceive me,
Come, therefore, Lord, from Satan's claws relieve me.
Wash me in Thy blood, O Christ,
And grace divine impart,
Then search and try the corners of my heart,
That I in all things may be fit to do,
Service to Thee, and sing Thy praise too."*

On another occasion, during family prayer, he spied a mouse trying to climb a rope and began to giggle. When reprimanded, Isaac replied:

"A little mouse for want of stairs, ran up a rope to say its prayers."

When threatened with punishment, Isaac continued:

"O father, father, pity take; And I will no more verses make."

Watts attended the Dissenting Academy in Stoke Newington in Inner London, and indeed would spend much of his future life in the area. He became pastor of a large independent chapel there. He soon became acquainted with

Sir Thomas and Lady Mary Abney and eventually lived with the family for 36 years at Abney House, until his death in 1748.



The first public statue to Watts was erected in 1845; it stands in Abney Park. The earliest surviving monument to him, however, is in Westminster Abbey; it was completed shortly after his death. The Civic Centre clock in Southampton (where he had been born) chimes the tune of the opening line of *'Our God, our help in ages past'*, three times a day.

Isaac was always bothered by the words of many hymns, which he considered to be often semi-meaningless (sound familiar?!)

*"Ye monsters of the bubbling deep, your Master's praises spout;
Up from the sands ye coddlings peep, and wag your tails about."*

Neither did he agree with the church only singing Psalms. As wonderful as they were (many of his hymns are actually based on them), the Psalms did not tell the story of God's salvation through Christ's life, the cross, His death and resurrection, so he started writing hymns for church services. As Watts put it, the Psalms should be *"imitated in the language of the New Testament."*

Indeed, he committed himself to writing a new hymn weekly - which he did for the next two years. In so doing, he helped usher in a new era of English worship as many other writers and poets followed his example. *'When I Survey'* stirred up great controversy, but this hymn (along with the other 750 he wrote) gave Christians of Watts's day (and ours) a way to express a deeply personal



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gratitude to their Saviour for what He had done in their life. He interpreted the Old Testament using knowledge of the New - an example for later hymn writers; as Watts explained it, *"Where the Psalmist describes religion by the fear of God, I have often joined faith and love to it. Where he speaks of pardon of sin through the mercies of God, I have added the merits of a Saviour. Where he talks of sacrificing goats and bullocks, I rather mention the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God."*

'When I Survey' is regarded as one of the finest English hymns ever written, with its focus on the crucifixion and personal devotion. Inspired by Galatians 6:14, it was originally designed as a Passion hymn, then came to be regarded as a communion hymn. It also offers a very moving and deeply personal, first-person reflection on Christ's sacrifice.

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*See, from His head, His hands, His feet
Sorrow and love flow mingle
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!*

'When I Survey' is traditionally sung to the 19th century tune 'Rockingham', referring to the Marquis of Rockingham, the patron of its composer, Edward Miller. However, in recent years it has also been sung to the 17th century Scottish folk tune 'The Water is Wide', which also suits the words perfectly.

Alastair

Three Medieval Prayers

A prayer as Lent continues

Let me hold fast to You, beautiful Lord, whom the angels themselves yearn to look upon. Wherever You go, I will follow You. If You pass through fire, I will not flinch, I fear no evil when You are with me. You carry my griefs, because You grieve for my sake. You passed through the narrow doorway from death to life, to make it wide enough for all to follow. Nothing can ever now separate me from Your love.

(Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090 -1153)

Man's desire

If only I possessed the grace, good Jesus, to be utterly at one with You! Amidst all the variety of worldly things around me, Lord, the only thing I crave is unity with You. You are all my soul needs. Unite, dear friend of my heart, this unique little soul of mine to Your perfect goodness. You are all mine; when shall I be yours? Lord Jesus, my beloved, by the magnet of my heart: clasp, press, unite me for ever to Your sacred heart. You have made Me for yourself; make me one with You. Absorb this tiny drop of life into the ocean of goodness whence it came.

(Francis of Sales, 1567 – 1622)

The Love that gives love

Jesus Christ, the love that gives love,
You are higher than the highest star;
You are deeper than the deepest sea;
You cherish us as Your own family;
You embrace us as Your own spouse;
You rule over us as Your own subjects;
You welcome us as Your dearest friend.
Let all the world worship You.

(Hildegard of Bingen, 1098 – 1179)

How to Handle Temptation

Oscar Wilde once said, *'I can resist everything but temptation'*. During Lent we remember Jesus' experience in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), when *'He was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.'* Temptation is a test of whether we do things our way or God's way. After 40 days of fasting Jesus was tired, hungry and vulnerable. Like Him, the Devil will attack us at our most vulnerable moments, especially when we are stressed.

The first temptation was to turn stones into bread: Jesus' ministry was not about putting His own needs first, but being nourished by God's word. *'We do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'* (Deuteronomy 8:3). Like Jesus, we need to make God our priority and trust Him completely.

The second temptation was to put God to the test: Jumping off the Temple pinnacle would have been a dramatic way for Jesus to gain popularity, but this was not God's way! *'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'* (Deuteronomy 6:16). We too need to learn this lesson!

The third temptation was to worship Satan: The devil took Jesus up a mountain to offer Him worldly power. In contrast, His calling as Messiah was to be marked by suffering and honouring God. *'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'* (Deuteronomy 6:13). This is to be our experience of living for God.

Jesus stands with us in our temptations. As we claim the promises of Scripture, like Him, we will find strength in the Spirit's power and the victory of the Cross.

Finally, consider these verses:

'Watch and pray, so that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' (Matthew 26:41)

'Since Jesus Himself has endured being tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.' (Hebrews 2:18)

'Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tested, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.' (James 1:12)

'If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you'll be at rest!' (Corrie Ten Boom).

(from the Parish Pump)

FLOWER ROTA

1 March	Iola Douglas	Trish
8 March	Annette and Michel Lempereur	Vicky
15 March	Alastair and Jane Gillies	Margaret
22 March	Sylvia Robinson	Margaret
29 March	David Miles	Vicky
5 April	Brenda Domville	Vicky
12 April	Lil White	Trish
19 April	Pauline Poynton	Vicky
26 April	Jean and Roy Allan	Margaret
3 May	Mo Swain	Margaret
10 May	Edna Gilmour	Trish
17 May	Peter Warren	Trish
24 May	Anne White	Vicky
7 June	Trish and Ted Pentecost	Margaret
14 June	Chris and Trevor Hanson	Margaret

Safeguarding Officer(s)

After nearly 10 years as Safeguarding Officers, we have decided that it is now time for us to stand down. We will, however, continue in our roles until the AGM on 17 May.

The role involves mainly doing DBS checks (these only need to be renewed every five years) and arranging training as appropriate. Otherwise, there is not a great deal to do. We will be happy to discuss what's involved with whoever would care to take over from us. We will ensure that most things are up to date.

We must stress that, in the highly unlikely event of there being a serious incident of the sort that we sometimes hear about, the job of the Safeguarding Officer is not to deal with it, but merely to report the issue to the Circuit Safeguarding Officer - nothing more.

So if you feel you could take on this vital job in the life of our church, please do not hesitate to speak to us.

Jane & Alastair

CHURCH CRAFT GROUP

We would like to thank all who supported our Craft Stall at our Christmas Fair. We raised just over £1000 which we donated to the church. A big thank you to Mike Hunter who raised £400 of our total with his awesome woodwork items.

'Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair'

This year one of our members, Carolyn, introduced us to 'Japanese Boro Bags'. Many old boro robes have been patched and re-patched, with the random stitches and areas

of fabric wear giving them an incredible texture, prized by collectors. The improvisational effect of the patches has been compared to abstract art. The 'Boro Bag' is made by hand-sewing patches of new or recycled fabrics onto a foundation fabric. We enjoyed this challenging project and were pleased with our results. Thank you Carolyn.

We continue to meet every Monday morning from 10am to 12noon and would welcome any new members.



LADIES FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

March 5 Maggie & Mandy

12 Rev Derek Bowser

19 Members' Afternoon

26 Rev Darren Garfield

April 2 Rev Sheila Prest - open meeting in church

9 No meeting

16 Rev Christopher Humble

23 Stephen Gerrard

30 Bridge Inn Community Farm

May 7 Alan Foxall (ex Sefton Horticultural Society)

14 Ruth Bloom - Chair Exercises

21 Kate Ankers - Dogs' Trust Charity

28 Members' Afternoon

June 4 Shirley Potts - Role of Hospital Chaplains

We meet every Thursday in the Maple Leaf Room at 2pm and would welcome any who would like to join us.

Irene Watts (876219)

Sefton Children's Trust

(A local charity supporting local children)

26 Brooks Rd
Formby, Merseyside
L37 2JL
Mob: 07967597526
Email: anonakelly66@hotmail.com
www.seftonchildrenstrust.org



19th January 2026

Dear Phil and congregation of Formby Methodist Church

Sefton Children's Trust (SCT) – A Local Children's - Charity Number 1016643

Thank you very much for thinking about our charity with Christmas toys, gifts and donations of £442 which were gratefully received.

We are a small charity who do our best to support local families who are experiencing difficulties. We can only achieve this with the support of generous people such as yourselves.

Kind regards

A.C. Kelly

Anona

Trustees:					
C Huyton	Chairperson	N McCaskill	Secretary	A C Kelly	Vice Treasurer
E Ley	Vice-chair	M Gillam	Treasurer		
Trustees: A Maddocks, K Dean-Sheeky, A Taylor, C Bennett, A Patterson					

A Thank You from our Church Food Bank

Thank you once again for the generous donations from church members throughout 2025.

Appreciated families have sent their messages of thanks to Elaine the Family Support Worker who we support and Elaine has sent ~~us~~ several texts to us. One text is, in particular, quite moving

"So sorry I missed your call Elaine, I was in the ozzie (hospital) with A, he wasn't well again it's his chest, would it be OK to meet you after boxing day for my hamper please? don't worry if you can no longer do it, I totally understand, we kind of missed today with A being in ozzie, so going to celebrate as soon as he is home (hopefully soon). We don't have much unfortunately so if we can still have the food it would be so helpful thank you again and the church. many thanks from us all B, A, C, D, E and F all send their love."

Friends, please keep the Food Bank in your prayers.
Thank you - Steve + Phil

Elbow Lane - generous as always!

4th Anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine War

At the 4th anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the statistics make grim reading.

Massive displacement: 5.9 million refugees have fled Ukraine, with a further 3.7 million internally displaced.

Significant casualties: Russia has suffered one million casualties in all, including 250,000 soldiers killed. Ukraine has had well over a million casualties, including about 150,000 deaths.

Immense destruction of Ukraine's infrastructure, medical facilities and educational facilities.

Impact: Russia now occupies about 20% of Ukraine, including Crimea. Worldwide, a weakened global economy, threatened food security, and documented war crimes, including chemical weapons used by Russia.

Expense: Billions of dollars have been given in aid to Ukraine.



The future is unclear, but here are some memorable quotes of two leading Ukrainians:

At the start of the war, when offered evacuation from Kyiv by the U.S. government, President Zelenskyy famously stated,

"I need ammunition, not a ride".

On 25 February he emphasised Ukraine's determination, stating:

"We will be defending our country, because our weapon is truth, and our truth is that this is our land, our country, our children, and we will defend all of this".

The head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Archbishop Shevchuk, focuses on themes of resilience, freedom, and hope.

"Ukraine is wounded, but it is not defeated! Ukraine is exhausted, but it is standing and will remain standing! Believe me, no one thinks of giving up."

A recurring theme in Zelenskyy's speeches is that

"Life will win over death, and the light will win over darkness".

(from the Parish Pump)

Remembering the Dunblane Massacre

30 years ago, on 13th March 1996, the Dunblane Massacre took place in Scotland. Thomas Hamilton, a former Scout leader, entered Dunblane Primary School, shot dead 16 children and a teacher, wounded 15 more, and then committed suicide.

There was no obvious reason for the massacre, though Hamilton's behaviour had previously made the police raise questions about his fitness to own firearms. He was said to have had a grudge against some prominent members of the community who had made certain allegations against him, which were said to have affected his kitchen fitting business.

The allegations arose after he was ejected as a Boy Scout assistant leader and had to give up as organiser of several boys' clubs after he had behaved strangely towards young boys - though nothing illegal was ever proved against him. Future tennis star Andy Murray had been a member of some of the clubs.

The teacher who died, 43-year-old mother Gwen Mayor, was killed while trying to protect her pupils, who were in the youngest class.

Another teacher and an assistant teacher were wounded while similarly attempting to keep the children safe.

After the massacre, residents of Dunblane started the Snowdrop Campaign and gathered about 750,000 signatures for a petition against the private ownership of handguns. A law was passed the following year and as a result the number of gun killings in the UK dropped considerably.

A service in Dunblane Cathedral the Sunday after the massacre - Mothering Sunday - saw locals united in a determination to find "*peace, hope, calm and joy*". Tears naturally flowed - except for one minute when, unaccountably, the crying stopped and everyone was silent.

(from the Parish Pump)



Michael Bond

Creator of Paddington Bear

100 years ago this year, Michael Bond, the children's writer, was born. He has an assured place in any literary Hall of Fame, for he created the characters Paddington Bear and Monsieur Pamplemousse.



Paddington Bear padded into Michael Bond's life quite by accident. It was back in 1956 that he was on his way home from work at the BBC when he spied a lonely looking teddy bear on the shelf in a shop window in London. On the spur of the moment, Michael decided to take it home as a stocking filler for his wife.

He called the bear Paddington, because they lived near Paddington

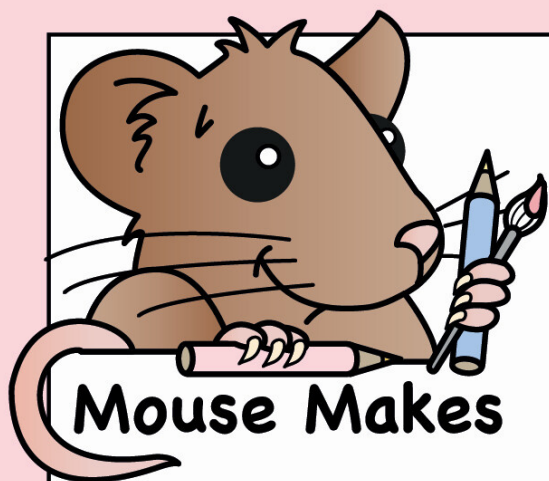
Station. Two years later, while daydreaming over a typewriter and a blank sheet of paper, Michael wondered what might happen if an unaccompanied bear turned up at a railway station looking for a home. The rest is literary history.

His first book, 'A Bear Called Paddington', was written in ten days and published by Collins in October 1958. 28 more books followed, and in all more than 35 million Paddington books have been sold worldwide, in more than 40 languages. Over 27 million Paddington Bear soft toys have been sold, since 2021 alone. The films alone have grossed over \$778 million.

Paddington made his most famous appearance at Buckingham Palace in 2022, where he had tea with Queen Elizabeth II on her Platinum Jubilee, and exchanged tips with her about the best place to store marmalade sandwiches.

Michael Bond was born in Newbury in 1926 and served with the RAF and army during World War II. He started writing in 1945 while stationed in Cairo, and began his career at the BBC, where he later worked on 'Blue Peter' as a cameraman. He died in 2017, aged 91.

(from the Parish Pump)

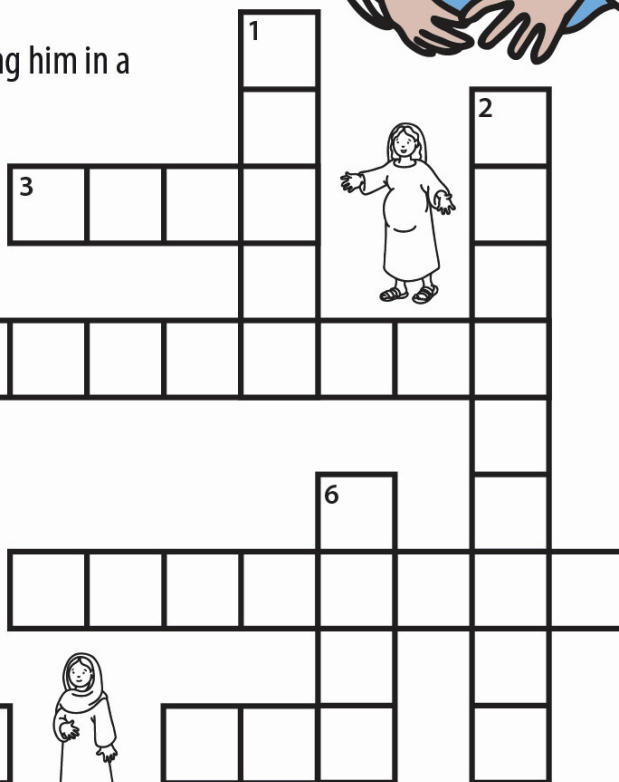


The Bible has many stories of mothers who had great faith in God. With their love, care, encouragement and prayers their children grew up to be great people of God.



Who saved her baby by putting him in a basket in the river?

Exodus 2:1-3 and 6:20



Who was 90 years old when she had her son Isaac?
Genesis 17:19



Across

3. **Obed's** mother
Matthew 1:5
4. **John's** mother
Luke 1:57-60
7. **Reuben's** mother
Genesis 29:32
8. **Joseph's** mother
Genesis 30:22-24
9. **Jesus'** mother
Acts 1:14

Down

1. **Boaz's** mother
Matthew 1:5
2. **Solomon's** mother
1 Kings 1:11
4. **Timothy's** mother
2 Timothy 1:5
5. **Ishmael's** mother
Genesis 16:15
6. **Jacob and Esau's** mother
Genesis 25:21-26

Whose prayers for a child were answered by God?
1 Samuel 1:20

Who had two sons called Cain and Abel?
Genesis 4:1-2



Living on the Island

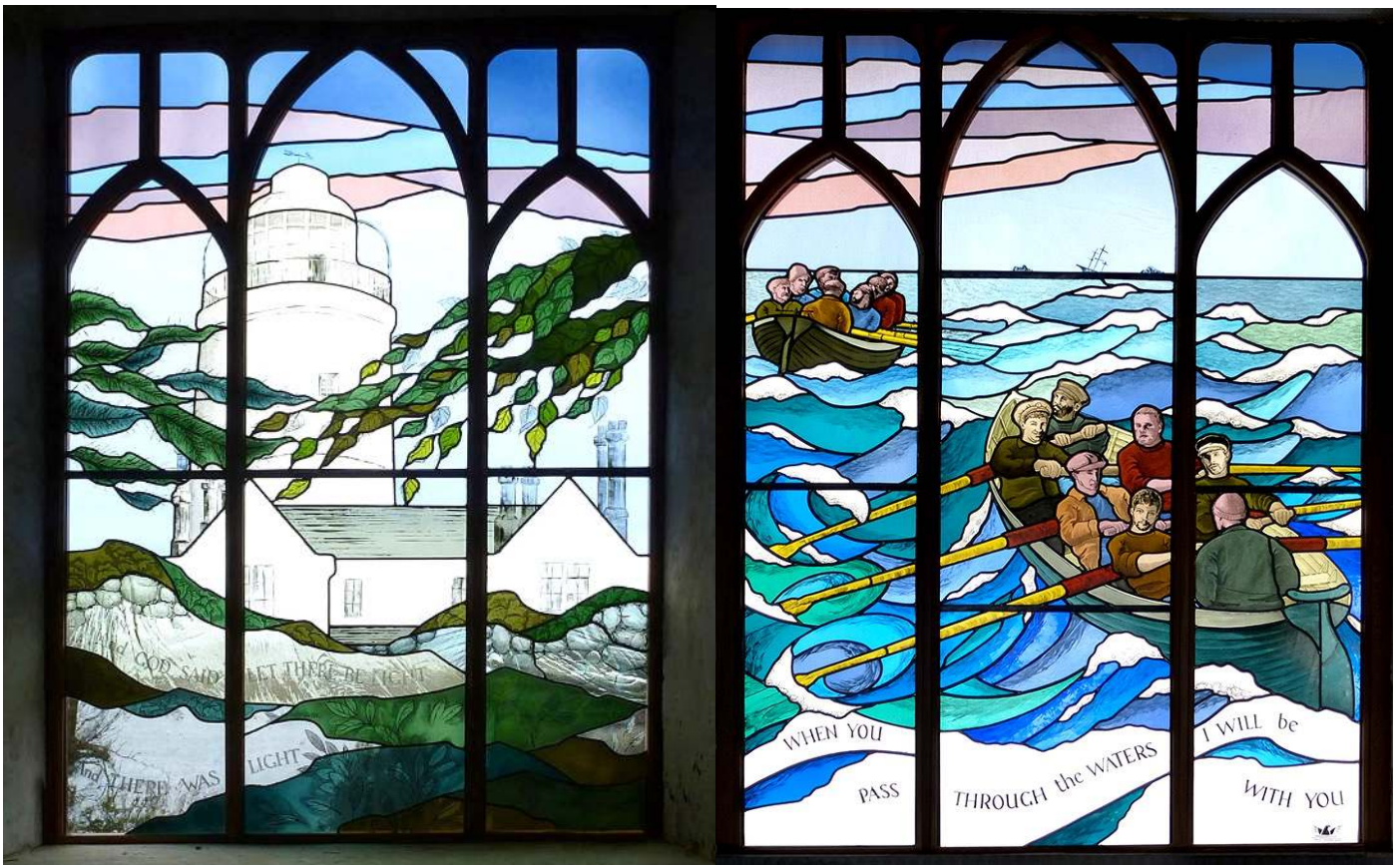
Alastair has always longed to live on an island and only the voice of reason (me) has stopped him, pointing out the isolation, lack of healthcare, cold winds etc.

On our visit to the Isles of Scilly last year we were particularly struck by how different the island way of life is. Obviously the sea is a huge influence. In the winter the ferry only operates a weekly delivery service and can often be cancelled in bad weather so residents have to be prepared with well stocked freezers. Community support is vital. Churches are well attended and doors left unlocked. Very different from mainland life but a reminder of how things used to be with everyone looking out for each other.

We were very taken by the more modern stained glass windows in some of the smaller island churches. These are from St Agnes and designed by Oriel Hicks.

The waters are quite shallow around the Isles of Scilly so lighthouses and lifeboats are vital.

Jane



Remembering Agatha Christie

50 years ago, Dame Agatha Christie, crime novelist, short story writer and playwright, died. She is best known for her characters Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, and for *'The Mousetrap'*, the world's longest running play.

Agatha Christie was born in Torquay in 1890, the daughter of wealthy parents. In 1914 she married Archibald Christie, and Rosalind, their only daughter, was born in 1919.

In 1920, Agatha produced her first detective story, *'The Mysterious Affair at Styles'*, which introduced Hercule Poirot. Her marriage failed in 1928, but not her desire to write - in 1930 she produced *'Murder at the Vicarage'*, in which Miss Marple made her first appearance.



A young Agatha Christie

That same year, 1930, Agatha married again - Max Mallowan, an archaeologist, was 14 years her junior. They had met when Agatha visited an archaeological dig at Ur, in southern Iraq. Later, Max became Professor of Western Asiatic Archaeology at London University and as Director of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq he excavated at Nineveh and Nimrud.

Agatha went with him, and her travels in the Middle East inspired *'Murder in Mesopotamia'*, *'Murder on the Orient Express'* and *'Death on the Nile'*. Back in England, the couple had found a peaceful and elegant home just outside Wallingford, near Oxford, where they lived for many years.



In all, Agatha wrote over 100 novels, plays and short stories. The undisputed 'Queen of Crime', she is the best-selling novelist of all time. Some two billion copies of her books, translated into at least 100 languages, have been sold. *'The Mousetrap'*, has been in continuous performance in London since 1952, breaking all records.

(from the Parish Pump)

Irene from East Kilbride

At Christmas time I telephoned Irene who lives in East Kilbride (just outside Glasgow), where I used to work as a college lecturer. I came to know her because she is the mother of my friend Linda. Due to major mental health issues Linda has lived for about six years in a care home in the area. Sadly, it is very difficult to speak to Linda, even on the telephone or visit her regularly. Talking with Irene keeps me up to date with both of them.

It is a joy to tell you about Irene. She is 94 years of age and walks with a stick due to arthritic joints. For many years she has had an inoperable brain tumour which is still growing and now travelling into her right nostril.

In spite of these hinderances she walks up the short hill every two weeks to catch the bus to visit Linda in the care home. Sometimes she takes the bus into the town centre for lunch.

I love listening to her as she tells me about her life, her lovely Scottish accent blessing my hearing. I wish I could record it on paper so you could hear it. She tells me about her life and how she deals with it in a very matter of fact manner. No fishing for sympathy. She tells the sayings she uses to get her through each day.

‘Some say it’s my resilience that keeps me going. I say it’s my stubbornness.’

‘I say, Make the best you can of the worst.’

‘Here’s a new day, I’ll make it the best I can.’

‘Take care of yourself. Some folks think Doctors can renew you. They can’t. Take care of yourself.’

‘Don’t take everything too seriously just get on with it.’

‘Aye and keep smiling.’

She talks about God in a very relaxed and matter of fact way. *‘He knows what’s ahead and when my time is up.’* Trusting herself, Linda and family to his care.

She is proud to have spent her working life as a nurse and is from that generation of women who knew hardship, hard work, war and love, for whom the only way was

‘to get on with it’ and ‘Aye keep smiling.’

Irene from East Kilbride - a joy and privilege to know.

Ivy Chapple

“Holiness consists of doing the will of God with a smile.” (Mother Teresa)

A Celtic Christmas



"I want to congratulate you, and the others, on the very splendid Celtic Christmas presentation at the Methodist Church last week. I must say that it far exceeded all my hopes and expectations because for me it was a real mindblowing enjoyable experience from start to finish. The history lessons, the musical journey and songs, the monologues, hearing personal experiences, the anecdotes, the lot....even

the cuppa char and mince pie at halftime, all wonderful comforting entertainment for me and your audience. And we felt we were all part of it too. I must confess I knew all of the tunes and most of the words too. Amazing - and it felt so good, absolutely memorable evening. It should have been recorded; but you gotta do it again next year!"

The above letter from a Formby Civic Society member was just one of many lovely comments I have received regarding our Celtic Christmas evening on 4th December. My thanks to all of those who gave me feedback - it made it all so very worthwhile. And of course thanks to all those who took part, and helped to make it such a memorable evening.

So yes, a date for your diary - Thursday 3rd December 2026!! We'll definitely be having another Christmas celebration with a difference - indeed, discussions are already underway! We haven't finalised the theme - watch out for more information - but we can definitely promise not to overrun!!

Alastair

Politicians welcome!!

At the Pearly Gates, St Peter greeted a Church Minister and a Member of Parliament and gave them their room keys. "Your Reverence, here are the keys to one of our nice single rooms. And for you, Mr MP, the keys to our finest penthouse suite."

"This is unfair!" cried the Minister.

"Listen," St Peter said, "Ministers are a ten a penny up here, but this is the first MP we've ever seen!"

Jane Haining

A little known Scottish heroine of the Holocaust

Jane Mathison Haining was born in the little Dumfriesshire village of Dunscore, where she grew up as a member of the United Free Church of Scotland. On leaving school, she trained at a Glasgow Commercial College, before taking up a post in the firm of J & P Coats Ltd, thread manufacturers, in Paisley, first as a clerk then as secretary to the Private Secretary. She maintained her church connections and became a Sunday School teacher.



She also had aspirations to becoming a missionary, and was accepted for the post of matron for the girls' hostel attached to the Jewish Mission School, in the Hungarian capital, Budapest. The Jewish mission ran a school for around 400 girls, aged between 6 and 16, mainly Jewish but also including some Christians. Having completed the necessary additional training, Jane arrived in Budapest in June 1932 - seven months before Adolph Hitler became Chancellor of Germany.

Following the outbreak of War in 1939, the Church of Scotland advised her to return to Scotland but she felt safe in Hungary and ignored the advice. She



wrote: *"The children are gradually getting into harness. Of the war it is better not to speak and indeed there is nothing to say in a letter. Hungary is neutral and anxious to remain so, so we, who are*

enjoying her hospitality, are refraining from talking politics."

According to one colleague, she would rise at 5am on market days to find food for the home and would carry the heavy bags back herself. She is reported to have cut up her leather suitcase to repair the girls' shoes.

Despite repeated calls for her to return home, Jean was determined to stick to her post, and kept her children safe for over four years. *"If these children need me in days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in days of darkness?"* During 1944, however, Nazi persecution of the thousands of Jews in Hungary and those protecting them intensified, and in April, Jean was duly arrested by two Gestapo officers; she had been betrayed by the school cook's son-in-law, who she had reprimanded for stealing provisions intended for the girls. Her former pupil Agnes Rostas recalled her haunting last words to her sobbing children: *"Don't worry, I'll be back by lunch."*

Her charges, to all of which she could only plead 'guilty', were:

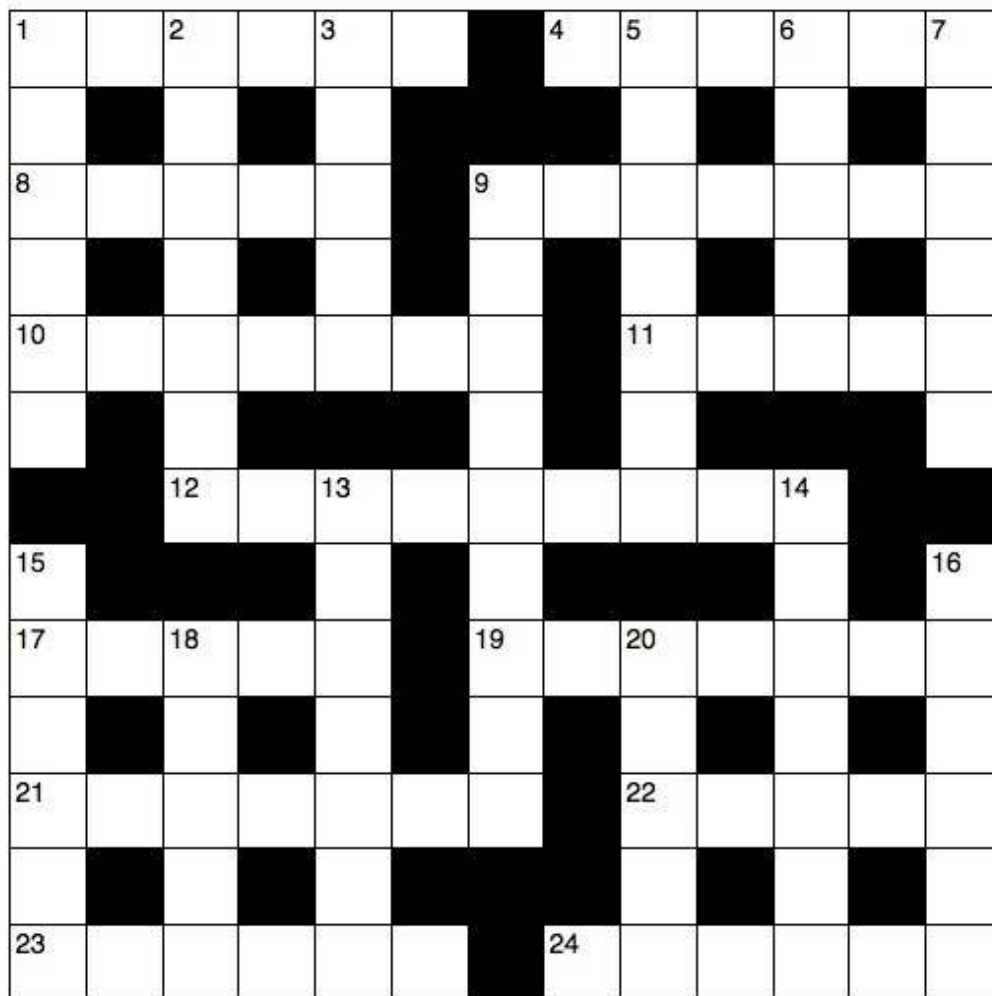
- *She had worked among the Jews*
- *She had wept when putting yellow stars on the girls*
- *She had dismissed her housekeeper, who was an Aryan*
- *She had listened to the news broadcasts of the BBC*
- *She had many British visitors*
- *She had visited British POWs*
- *She had sent them parcels*

Mass Nazi deportation of Jews from Hungary to Auschwitz began in May 1944, and Jean was amongst the first. She survived for just a few months, before she died, either from disease or, more probably, in the gas chambers.

Jean was just 47. In 1997 she was recognised by Yad Vashem in Israel as 'Righteous Among the Nations' - the only Scot ever to receive this honour. Her name is inscribed on a wall of honour in the Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem. A memorial cairn (above) was erected in her home village of Dunscore in 2005 and a road in Budapest by the Danube named after her. In 2010 the British Government declared her a British Hero of the Holocaust. And on Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2026, the artwork for a striking new mural was unveiled in Paisley, to commemorate the bravery of the only Scottish lady who died in Auschwitz.

Alastair





Across

- 1 Arouse (Song of Songs 2:7) (6)
 4 Extinguish (Isaiah 1:31) (6)
 8 ““They — — ,” you’ll say, “but I’m not hurt!”” (Proverbs 23:35) (3,2)
 9 Unhappiness (Nehemiah 2:2) (7)
 10 Jewish (7)
 11 Dirge (anag.) (5)
 12 ‘A truthful witness gives honest — , but a false witness tells lies’ (Proverbs 12:17) (9)
 17 Paul quoted from the second one in his address in the synagogue at Antioch (Acts 13:33) (5)
 19 ‘Do not use your freedom to — the sinful nature’ (Gals 5:13) (7)

- 21 ‘As you can see, he has done nothing to — death’ (Luke 23:15) (7)
 22 Name applied by Isaiah to Jerusalem (Isaiah 29:1) (5)
 23 ‘All the people — — one man, saying, “None of us will go home”’ (Judges 20:8) (4,2)
 24 Lazarus, who was carried by angels to Abraham’s side when he died, was one (Luke 16:20) (6)

Down

- 1 Appalled (Job 26:11) (6)
 2 ‘In an — to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea’ (Acts 27:30) (7)
 3 Expel (Acts 18:16) (5)
 5 ‘But I have a baptism to — , and how distressed I am until it is completed!’ (Luke 12:50) (7)
 6 ‘Of the increase of his government and peace there will be — — ’ (Isaiah 9:7) (2,3)
 7 Hurry (Psalm 119:60) (6)
 9 ‘For I desire mercy, not — , and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings’ (Hosea 6:6) (9)
 13 One of its towns was Sychar, where Jesus met a woman at Jacob’s well (John 4:5) (7)
 14 Shouting (Acts 7:57) (7)
 15 Arachnid (Isaiah 59:5) (6)
 16 One of Paul’s first converts in Philippi was Lydia, a — in purple cloth (Acts 16:14) (6)
 18 Donkeys (5)
 20 Raked (anag.) (5)

(Answers on p39)

Mothering Sunday

Mothering Sunday - 15th March this year, the fourth Sunday of Lent - offers families an opportunity to honour the women who have nurtured them. Lots of different streams and traditions have come together to make today's Mothering Sunday the special day that it is.

In the Middle Ages, it was a day when everyone visited their 'mother' church - where they had been baptised. Later, it was an opportunity for those who worked away from home to visit their mothers.

Today we honour all women who have in one way or another been special to us, and in church this is usually signalled by small bunches of flowers for every woman present. Treating mums and grans to Sunday lunch, chocolates and flowers is also part of the present mix. And will there be a Simnel cake to be seen - a tradition from ages past - with its rich layers of marzipan, and 11 balls of marzipan on top, reminders of the 11 disciples who were faithful to Jesus?

Not everyone has enjoyed a wonderful or enduring relationship with their mum, so lest we get carried away on a wave of love and sentimentality, there is usually space in the Mothering Sunday church service to reflect on and pray for those whose relationships with their mother were not all they might have been.

Also, there are the families blighted by the lack of, or death of a child; families remembering a mum who died tragically young; women who never had a child but would have dearly loved the opportunity; all these and more are a recognition of the imperfections of human love, human life.

These imperfections can be brought in prayer to the God who mothers us. In the Old Testament, Isaiah speaks of God comforting His people like a mother hen. In the New Testament, both Matthew and Luke bear witness to Jesus expressing His desire to gather His people as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Yes, God has strong maternal qualities which He invites us to discover and enjoy!

Have you discovered the mothering, maternal qualities which God offers to all people? It's lovelier than flowers, more long-lasting than cake, better than a visit from family, and it's free to everyone who wants it - it could be yours!

(from the Parish Pump)

A little girl sitting on her grandmother's lap reached up to touch her wrinkled cheek. "Grandma, did God make you?" "Yes, sweetheart, God made me a long time ago." "So Grandma, did God make me too?" Her grandmother assured her that He had. Feeling her wrinkled cheek again, the little girl observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't He?"

Eco News

A big thank you to everyone who donated items, baked, helped at and came along to our Eco Coffee Morning on 17th January. We raised £202.65. We will spend £60 on twinning another toilet, send £50 to the Eco Church organisation and donate the rest to church for more eco-friendly lighting in the family centre.

'Eco Patch'

The 'eco patch' at the front is dotted by some colourful crocuses, a welcome sign of Spring coming. We are eager to see what will flower in our new circular bed. We hope that the longer grass is a refuge and resource for some of our local wildlife. We will give it a bit of a tidy up soon but hope not to disturb too much this time of year. My thanks go to Irene, Jane G and Jenny H who know a lot more about gardening than me and look after the flower tubs and eco patch.



Friends of Duke Street Park

This is a local community group which aims to encourage members of the local community to take part in caring for Duke Street Park. Everyone is welcome to come along to their meetings and organised 'work parties'. Colin and Ivy will keep us updated on the events organised, mainly through the weekly notices.

Formby & Freshfield Beach Litter Angels

Formby & Freshfield Beach Litter Angels will arrange litter picks this Spring/Summer. They tend to be early evening events from late Spring to the end of Summer, starting from Lifeboat Rd/Victoria Rd beach car park. The leaders are well organised and friendly, all are welcome, including supervised children. They just ask that you wear sensible clothing and follow a few simple safety rules. They provide all the equipment apart from gloves. You can contact them at beachlitterangels@gmail.com, look up their Facebook page, or ask Jane Gillies or me for more information.

March

Celebrate Spring – delight in the colour and variety of flowers, breathe in their fragrance, listen to bird song. Thank God for the hope that Spring can bring. Join in Earth Hour (see below).

April

Spend time in your garden and local green spaces. Moments outside are good for us, and give us space to relax on our own, or to chat to friends and to God. Go for walks, bike rides or use buses, trains and shared car journeys to go further. Join in Earth Day (see below).

May

‘No Mow May’ – mowing your lawn less and letting parts grow long helps to give nature a home. It can just be a small patch! I understand that it’s not practical for everyone but, in our garden, I noticed that a lot more insects like ladybirds and moths are attracted to the longer grass. Grasshoppers and frogs also appreciate it!

Dates for Your Diary

- Earth Hour 8.30 – 9.30 pm, 28th March



A time to use less energy by turning off non-essential lights and appliances. The World Wide Fund for Nature says: “As landmarks, businesses, and individuals across the world turn off their lights, we can show our shared commitment to protecting the planet.....” Major global landmarks, including the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera House, the Colosseum, Buckingham Palace and Liverpool Cathedral are expected

to turn off their lights, to highlight the need for climate change action.

- Earth Day, 22nd April

A day to go outside, look through your window or watch a nature programme and celebrate God’s creation. Or perhaps take action – sign petitions, join in community clean-up events, decide to use less plastic, plant trees and create spaces to encourage wildlife in your garden. This year’s theme is “Our power, our planet”, focusing on renewable energy, clean air, clean water and environmental health.

Jeny Wallbams

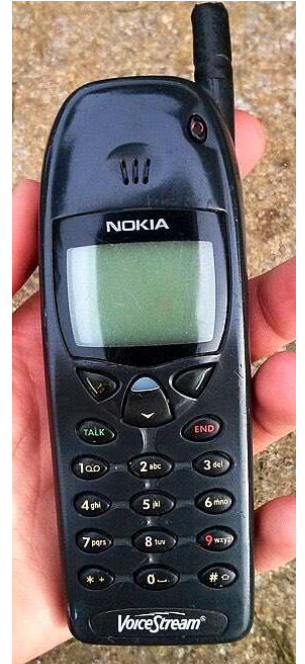
Our love affair with our phones

It was 150 years ago this month, on 10th March 1876, that the world's first telephone call was made. Alexander Graham Bell called his assistant and said: *"Mr Watson, come here. I want you."*

That phone call was the beginning of a worldwide addiction to phones. Phones spread quickly, constantly improved, and after more than 100 years of landlines, mobile phones arrived. The first was introduced by Motorola in 1983 in the USA. The Motorola DynaTAC 8000X weighed nearly two pounds!! And it cost around \$3,995!!

The first smartphone, the IBM Simon Personal Communicator, was released in 1994, combining phone calls with PDA features like email, fax, and a calendar on a touchscreen. It was so expensive it sold only about 50,000.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the Finnish firm of Nokia was a clear market leader. The BlackBerry was another favourite for a few years, with its popular email and messaging services beloved by Barack Obama, among many others.



Then in 2007, Apple released the first iPhone, informally known as the iPhone 2G, with an advanced multi-touch interface and app ecosystem.

Fast forward nearly 20 years, and there are now about 7.5 billion active smartphones in the world. The total number of all connections (SIMs/devices) now even exceeds the human population of about 8.3 billion!!

(from the Parish Pump)

And a moral tale

The woman watched the man. He was sweating and his hands trembled. His right foot jiggled up and down. He loosed his collar and wiped his hand over his forehead. He got up and walked to the window. Then he left the room. This was the third time this had happened. She heard him climb the stairs followed by the opening and closing of drawers in the study. He came

back in and sat down again. His face seemed redder and the sweating was getting worse.

The man eyed the woman surreptitiously out of the corner of his eye. She didn't seem to notice the heat. She just sat there doing yesterday's crossword, sucking the end of the pen. Terrible habit, he thought. *"It's very hot in here"* he said. *"Don't you think it's hot? Is the heating on full?"*

The woman looked up from her crossword. *She smiled "I'm ok, why don't you go out for a walk to cool off. You could go to the shop for the paper and get those eggs we forgot the other day."* She watched him get up again. The trembling seemed a bit better. He just needed a purpose. She heard the door open and for a time all was calm and quiet.

Suddenly the door was flung open and the man rushed in shaking and sweating much worse than before tears streaming down his face. *"I couldn't pay"* he said. *"Oh?"* said the woman

He sat again for a while before beginning to pace up and down, scratching at his arms. *"What have you got planned for today"* said the woman. The man looked at her, a pained expression on his face. *"I don't know"* he said plaintively. *"That's just it, I don't know."* The woman looked at him curiously but after a while said, *"we could take a trip to Tatton Park. We've not been there for ages we've always been too busy. Why don't we do that then?"*

The man perked up again, seeming relieved to have something to do. *"Come on then"* he said, grabbing the car keys and rushing towards the door. The man started the engine and they set off but just after they'd turned the corner he stopped and the panicked expression reappeared. *"I don't know how to get there"* he said. The woman looked closely at him. *"Why don't we look at the map?"* she said calmly.

Eventually they arrived at the visitor centre. *"Are you members?"* said the Jaeger wearing volunteer *"or do you need tickets?"* *"Oh no, we're members"* said the man reaching into his jacket for his phone which held his entire life. It wasn't there and then he remembered that's why he didn't know his plans for the day. That's why he couldn't pay at the shop and that's why he didn't know the way to Tatton Park. Without his phone he was completely lost.

The woman decided enough was enough. She'd made her point. He'd suffered long enough. She took his phone from her handbag and placed it gently in his hands. *"There there dear."*

Anon

Remembering the Hindenburg

90 years ago, on 4th March 1936, the German airship *Hindenburg* made its first flight; it was the largest airship ever constructed. In May 1937, while attempting to dock in New Jersey, after its trans-Atlantic flight, the ship, which was filled with hydrogen, caught fire and was destroyed. And so the era of airship travel was effectively ended.

Not that that was the first disaster involving an airship. Nearly seven years earlier, the British-made R101, while on its maiden flight, bound for India, was forced by bad weather to crash-land in France. Although this was carried out safely, it nevertheless then proceeded to burst into flames, incinerating 48 of the 54 people on board.

Airships had been developed from balloons - the first attempt at lighter-than-air travel pioneered in 1783 by the Montgolfier brothers - because they could be steered using rudders and engines. Representing advances in science, engineering and exploration, they fascinated creative minds.

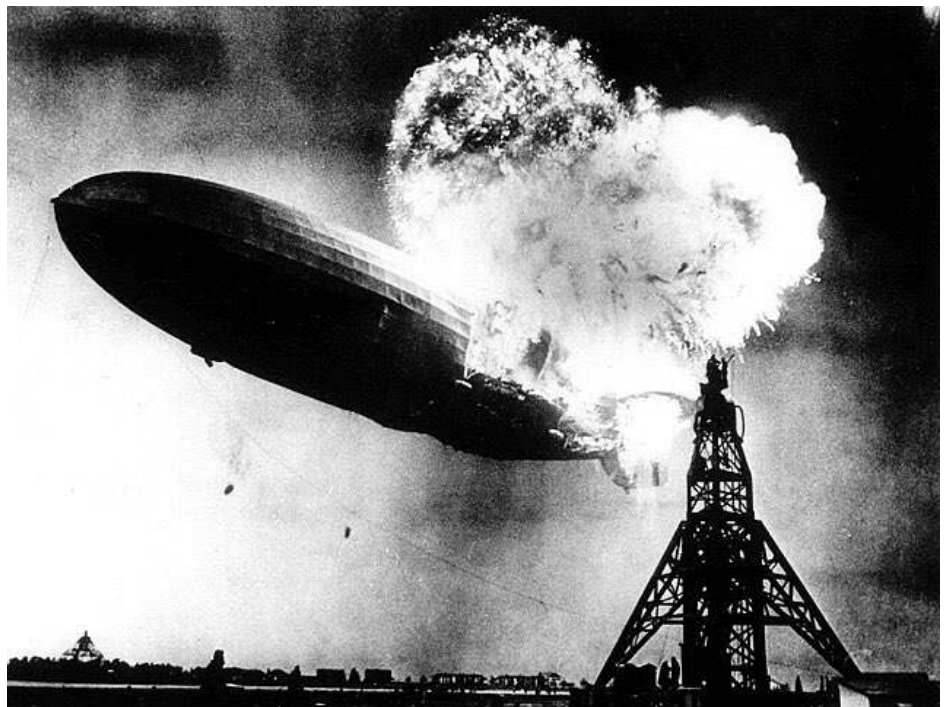
Foremost among them was Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who founded the Zeppelin Company that designed and built the *Hindenburg*.

The causes of the crash were primarily the fragile nature of airships, their use of highly flammable hydrogen gas and combustible construction material, and in the case of the *Hindenburg*, the fact that it was attempting to land during a thunderstorm.

13 passengers, 22 crew members and one ground worker died. The horrific fire

was caught live on camera. Not surprisingly, it heralded the end of the airship era as far as commercial aviation was concerned.

Airships do still exist today, but in a much more advanced and safer form. Their ability to land almost anywhere and carry large payloads makes them particularly valuable for observation and in providing humanitarian aid in disaster-hit areas.



(from the Parish Pump)

Menai Suspension Bridge celebrates 200 years

If you have ever gone to Anglesey, chances are that you used the Menai Suspension Bridge (Pont y Borth, in Welsh). A lot of people do – an average of 13,300 vehicles a day, or about 4.8 million vehicles a year!

The bridge celebrates a big anniversary this year: it is 200 years old. It was formally opened on 30th January 1826, to link Anglesey (Ynys Mon) to mainland Wales (Gogledd Cymru).

It is the world's first ever major suspension bridge, with a 176-metre span. Designed by Thomas Telford, it took seven years to build and has been a huge success. It made the crossing safer (until then farmers had had to swim their livestock across the strait), and it also made the crossing more dependable and quicker for everyone, cutting hours off the trip from London to Holyhead.

To put the history of the bridge into perspective: it was built nearly 25 years before Big Ben (1859) and over 60 years before the Eiffel Tower (1889).

The bridge has changed a bit over 200 years – the original wrought-iron chains were replaced with high-tensile steel chains in 1940, it was reconstructed after a fire in 1970, and in 1998 it was brought under the management of UK Highways A55 Ltd. But it is still a much loved feature for Anglesey.

(from the Parish Pump)

What God won't ask when you die

~ God won't ask what kind of car you drove, He'll ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.

~ God won't ask the square footage of your house, He'll ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

~ God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet, He'll ask how many you helped to clothe.

~ God won't ask what your job title was, He'll ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.

~ God won't ask how many friends you had, He'll ask how many people to whom you were a friend.

~ God won't ask in what neighbourhood you lived, He'll ask how you treated your neighbours.

~ God won't ask about the colour of your skin, He'll ask about the content of your character.

Remembering the Work of L S Lowry



Going to Work, 1959

50 years ago, in February 1976, the artist L S Lowry died of pneumonia. He was known primarily for his bleak industrial landscapes of north-west England, populated with matchstick men, but he also painted original and striking seascapes and impressive portraits.

Laurence Stephen Lowry was born on 1st November 1887 in Stretford. His father worked for an estate agent and his mother was an organist in the local church. Laurence went to Sunday School, but as life later turned difficult, his faith became shadowy. After leaving school he became a rent collector for the Pall Mall Property Company and stayed there until his retirement in 1952. This led to some dismissing him as a 'Sunday painter'.

Lowry's life was restricted by his mother, for whom he took responsibility after his father died. He tried hard to please her, but she showed no appreciation for the quality of his art, looking instead for a middle-class respectable life. He became a solitary figure and never married.

Lowry remains popular as an artist, but he never formally taught or gathered a group of followers around him. He holds the record for rejecting British honours — five, including a knighthood! A collection of his work is on display in 'The Lowry' art gallery on Salford Quays.

During his life he made about 1,000 paintings and over 8,000 drawings. His works often sell for millions of pounds. Buried in Manchester next to his parents, he left an estate valued at £298,459, plus artwork, to Carol Ann Lowry (no relation), whose family he befriended when she was 13, after she asked for help with her own development as an artist.

(from the Parish Pump)

Mary Shelley and Frankenstein

The novelist Mary Shelley died 175 years ago, on 1st February 1851. She is best known for her Gothic novel 'Frankenstein'.

Her parents were the influential philosophers William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft; she was a strong advocate of women's rights who died, from complications, 11 days after Mary's birth. The future Mary Shelley was herself fascinated by books and philosophy but spent two long, enjoyable spells "for her health" with a Scottish dissenting family who lived near Dundee.

She started on the novel 'Frankenstein' – not the name of the eight-foot, lovelorn 'Christian' monster but of the scientist who created him – at the age of 18 after a conversation about



ghosts with her husband, the atheist Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, and others. After her book was published anonymously, many suspected that her husband was co-author or even had actually written it entirely, but this was not the case – at most he may have done some light editing.

Mary, a baptised Anglican who was afflicted with despair and doubt, wrote several other books, but her life was tragic on many levels. Her husband had affairs, and they mixed in circles where infidelity was encouraged. A four-year period in

Italy with Byron and others, initially welcomed by Mary, became especially hard for her to endure. She described Naples as "a paradise inhabited by devils".

Three of her four children died at a very young age; only the fourth, Percy Florence, reached adulthood. And her husband died, aged only 29, in a mysterious sailing accident in 1822 in The Gulf of Spezia near Genoa.

Her last book, however, was very different from 'Frankenstein' – a travel narrative about rambles in Germany and Italy which she had undertaken with son Percy in the early 1840s. She died aged 53 and was buried at St Peter's Church in Bournemouth.

(from the Parish Pump)

Afternoon Tea, anyone?

Do you take afternoon tea? Ever wondered where it started? The custom seems to date back to the mid-19th century, and the 7th Duchess of Bedford, Anna Russell. The Duchess got hungry at about 4pm each day, calling it “that sinking feeling”. As it was still four hours until dinner (in these days, at 8pm), she began to have sandwiches or a small cake with some tea. Her friends thought this was marvellous, and the idea spread quickly through (hungry) upper class circles.

Soon, it seems, thousands were looking forward to Afternoon Tea, and a great British tradition was born. And although, during the last century, the sandwiches and cake gave way to biscuits, we still reached for the teapot each afternoon. But not so much in recent years, as sales of tea and biscuits have dropped. Perhaps we are drinking coffee?!

Coffee is good for you!

London’s first coffee house opened in 1652, using beans from modern-day Yemen. Although many in Cromwell’s Britain had doubts about this new drink, others welcomed its reviving effects – and asked for another cup! And nearly 400 years on, coffee drinking in Britain is a vast industry. We drink 98 million cups of it every day! Even though a takeaway flat white could now cost over £5, coffee has become a daily necessity for millions.

Coffee keeps us awake. This is because when caffeine accesses the brain, it actively blocks our adenosine-producing receptors, which run our sleep-promoting system. And it makes us alert. The caffeine drives our brain towards a more excited state which allows us to process information faster. Coffee can also improve our mood, especially during the winter, when the loss of daylight acts as a depressant.

And although too much coffee can make us jittery and even prone to heart palpitations, there is ever growing evidence that coffee can even help to lower our risk of neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinsons and Alzheimers.

(from the Parish Pump)

Answers to Crossword (see p28)

ACROSS : 1 Awaken 4 Quench 8 Hit me 9 Sadness 10 Semitic 11 Ridge
12 Testimony
17 Psalm 19 Indulge 21 Deserve 22 Ariel 23 Rose as 24 Beggar

DOWN: 1 Aghast 2 Attempt 3 Eject 5 Underg. 6 No end 7 Hasten
9 Sacrifice 13 Samaria 14 Yelling
15 Spider 16 Dealer 18 Asses 20 Drake

*Life is too short for us to do everything we want to do; but it is
long enough for us to do everything God wants us to do. (Anon)*

Easter Sunday at Formby Methodist

Come and help us celebrate...



This Easter join us to celebrate, Jesus is Risen. Feel free to come along to some or all of the following:

Easter Sunday - 5th April

8:30am - Early morning communion

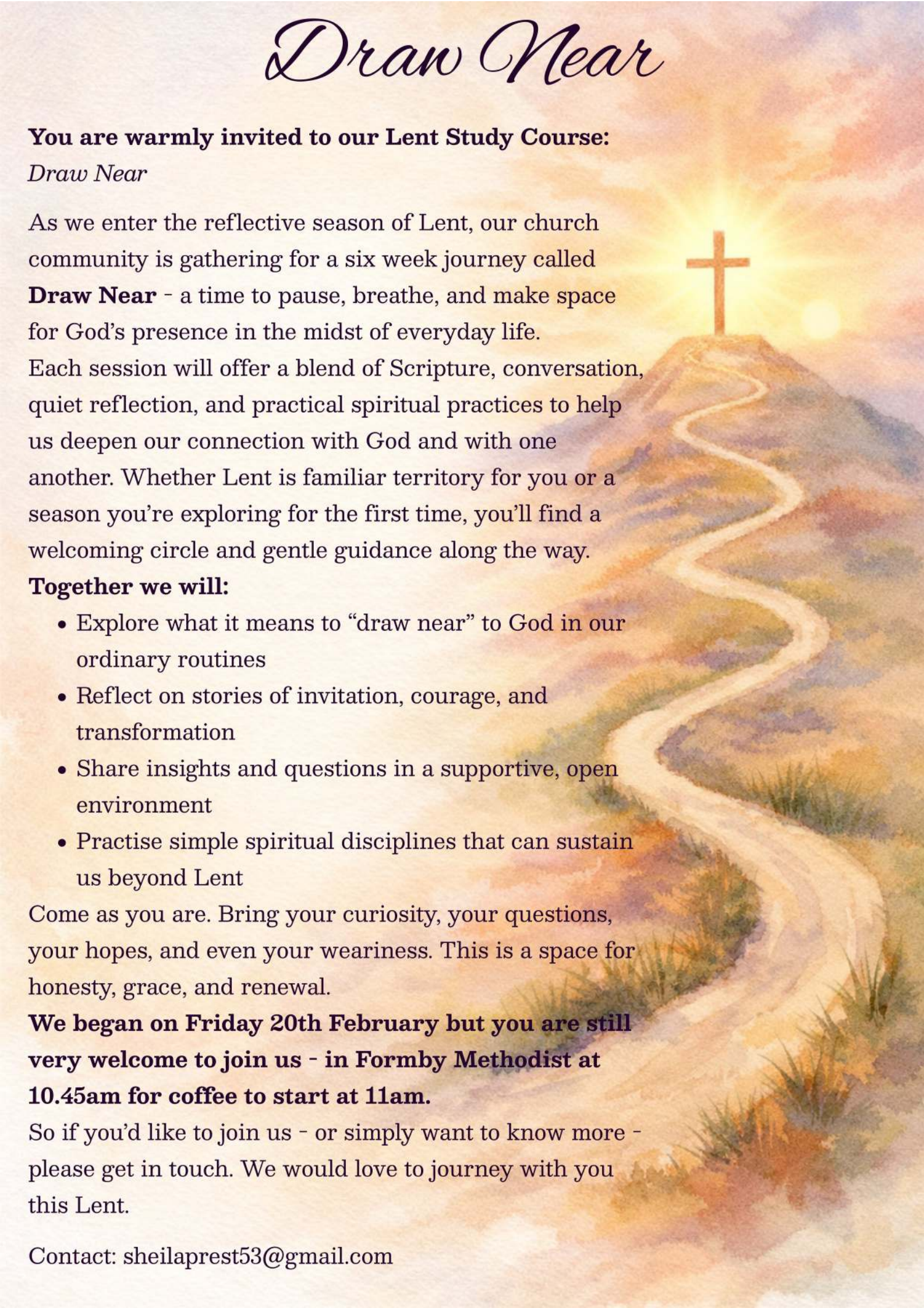
**9:00am - Easter breakfast, no need to book,
just turn up**

10:30am - Easter Sunday communion service.

During the service Adventurers and Explorers will leave for their Easter celebrations, including taking part in an Easter Egg hunt.

If you'd like to come to Maundy Thursday or Good Friday services please look at page 3.

Draw Near

A painting of a winding path leading up a hill to a cross at sunset. The path is light-colored and curves through a landscape of dry grass and shrubs. At the top of the hill, a simple wooden cross stands against a bright, glowing sun. The sky is filled with soft, warm colors like orange, yellow, and pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is peaceful and spiritual.

You are warmly invited to our Lent Study Course:

Draw Near

As we enter the reflective season of Lent, our church community is gathering for a six week journey called **Draw Near** - a time to pause, breathe, and make space for God's presence in the midst of everyday life.

Each session will offer a blend of Scripture, conversation, quiet reflection, and practical spiritual practices to help us deepen our connection with God and with one another. Whether Lent is familiar territory for you or a season you're exploring for the first time, you'll find a welcoming circle and gentle guidance along the way.

Together we will:

- Explore what it means to "draw near" to God in our ordinary routines
- Reflect on stories of invitation, courage, and transformation
- Share insights and questions in a supportive, open environment
- Practise simple spiritual disciplines that can sustain us beyond Lent

Come as you are. Bring your curiosity, your questions, your hopes, and even your weariness. This is a space for honesty, grace, and renewal.

We began on Friday 20th February but you are still very welcome to join us - in Formby Methodist at 10.45am for coffee to start at 11am.

So if you'd like to join us - or simply want to know more - please get in touch. We would love to journey with you this Lent.

Contact: sheilaprest53@gmail.com