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# The Messenger

*The Parish Magazine of St Mary the Virgin Stanwell and St Matthew's, Ashford*

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ISSUE 119 • JANUARY 2025

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The Parish of  
*St Mary the Virgin*  
STANWELL  
&  
*St Matthew*  
ASHFORD

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The Parish of  
*St Mary the Virgin*  
STANWELL  
&  
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ASHFORD

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## Parish Magazine

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Matter for publication should be submitted to [magazine@smam.org.uk](mailto:magazine@smam.org.uk)  
Copy deadline is 20th of the month and articles should be no longer than 750 words. News items or reports should be factual and no longer than 250 words. Articles are copyright to the author and may not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the author or Editor. The Editor's decision is final regarding content.

**Disclaimers:** The Editor does not necessarily agree with all of the views expressed in this magazine.

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## SERVICE TIMES

<i>Time</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Place</i>
<b>Weekdays:</b>		
08:30	Lauds - Morning Prayer	Online
18:00	Evening Prayer & Holy Hour - Tuesday	St Matthew's
19:00	Low Mass - Tue	St Matthew's
12:30	Low Mass - Wed	St Mary's
09:15	Low Mass - Thurs	St Matthew's
18:00	Evening Prayer & Holy Hour - Fri	St Mary's
19:00	Low Mass - Fri	St Mary's
<b>Saturdays:</b>		
09:00	The Holy Rosary	Online
<b>Sunday</b>		
09:30	Parish Mass	St Matthew's
11:00	Parish Mass	St Mary's
18:30	Evensong & Benediction	St Matthew's

### REGULAR EVENTS -

<b>Wednesday:</b>	Morning Café	10:00-12:00 before Mass
<b>Thursday:</b>	Coffee Morning	After 09:15 Mass
	Bell Ringing *	19:00
<b>Friday:</b>	Choir Practice	20:00

\*(Alternate between St Mary's and St Matthew's please contact the Tower Captain for more details.)

### PASTORAL CARE

Feasts, Saint's days, Holy days and other special occasions occur through the year; see notices in Church, in the weekly news sheet and the website for details.

Please advise Fr Stuart or one of the Pastoral Team of those who are sick at home or in hospital, so that they can be prayed for and visited as appropriate.

### PASTORAL OFFICES

Preliminary information and relevant forms for Baptism and Marriage can be collected from the parish office at the advertised times. Baptisms usually take place on the first Saturday or third Sunday at St Mary's and St Matthew's. If you would like to have your child baptised, then come along any Sunday for the main Mass and meet us there!

For information about preparing your own or a loved one's funeral, please contact the parish office.

# LET US PONDER TOGETHER...

## THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST: A REFLECTION ON ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN ORTHODOX AND ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION

As I reflect on the Baptism of Christ, I am reminded of how this profound event holds deep meaning in both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. It is a moment that not only marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry but also carries rich theological implications for us as Christians. The Baptism of Christ speaks to the heart of our own calling—inviting us to enter into the waters of baptism and embrace the transformative power of God's grace.

In both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, the Baptism of Christ is celebrated with great reverence, though on different days—January 6th in the East (Theophany) and the Sunday after Epiphany in the West. While the liturgical details may vary, the underlying message remains the same: this event reveals Christ's divine identity and mission. But I often find myself pondering one key question: why would the sinless Son of God, who is without sin, submit to baptism at all?

In the Catholic tradition, we understand that Christ's baptism is a profound act of humility. Although He is without sin, Christ enters the waters of the Jordan to identify with humanity's fallen condition. By doing so, He sanctifies the waters of baptism, making them a source of grace for all believers. As St. John the Baptist initially protests, saying that Jesus should baptise him, Christ answers, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). This is a statement of divine necessity—Jesus is fulfilling God's plan for salvation, and His baptism marks the beginning of the redemptive mission He is about to undertake for the world. His submission to baptism, far from being symbolic alone, is a step in sanctifying humanity and the world.

For the Orthodox Church, the Baptism of Christ is not only a powerful sign of Christ's humility but also a theophany—a visible manifestation of the Trinity. At Christ's baptism, the Father's voice proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17), and the Holy Spirit descends upon Christ in the form of a dove. This moment affirms the unity and distinct persons of the Trinity and reveals the mission of Jesus as the divine Son sent to redeem humanity. As the faithful in the Orthodox

tradition partake in the blessed waters, they are reminded that Christ's baptism sanctifies the entire creation, and through it, we too are called to participate in the divine life.

Both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions emphasize the necessity of baptism for all believers. Christ, though sinless, underwent baptism to show us that we, too, must be baptized. It is a powerful invitation to enter into the waters of baptism, not merely as a ritual of repentance, but as a sign of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. When I consider this, I see that baptism is not just a one-time event; it is the beginning of a lifelong journey of conversion and spiritual transformation. It is an invitation to be united with Christ, to share in His life, and to live out His mission in the world.

Through the example of Christ's baptism, we are also called to humility. Jesus, though divine, humbled Himself before God and before humanity. As Christians, we too are invited to live lives of humility, service, and obedience to God's will. Christ's baptism challenges us to live not in self-sufficiency but in dependence on God's grace. It invites us to continue the journey of transformation that began in baptism, to strive toward holiness and to become more fully the people God has called us to be.

In conclusion, the Baptism of Christ is not just an event to be commemorated once a year but a profound mystery that speaks to the heart of our Christian calling. It invites us to reflect on the significance of baptism, to embrace the humility of Christ, and to recognize the call to live lives of holiness and service. May we, like Christ, enter into the waters of baptism with gratitude and reverence, knowing that through them, we are sanctified and called to share in the divine life.

Yours in Christ

Fr Stuart



## Supporting Our Church – A Shared Mission

As we gather in faith and fellowship, we are reminded of our church's vital role in our lives and community. From offering a place of worship and welcome to extending outreach and care, your generosity makes the work of the church possible.

Our weekly giving stands at around £480, while it costs £3,500 each week to keep our churches open and running. 86% of our running costs must be sourced from other avenues.

We're inviting you to consider giving regularly or increasing your current gift to support our church's mission and ministries. Even a small change can make a significant impact.

For instance, a coffee and cake at Costa costs at least £8. If every adult we saw each week gave this amount, our weekly giving would increase to £792, reducing our reliance on external funding. This would free up resources to invest in missionary and evangelistic work, helping to ensure our parish community's long-term spiritual health and vitality.

Every gift matters. Whether you give through the QR code, the offertory plate, or the card reader at the back of the church, your support sustains the ministries that nurture faith, extend outreach, and bring hope to so many.

Thank you for being part of this sacred mission. Together, we can ensure that God's light continues to shine brightly in our community and beyond, touching hearts and transforming lives for generations to come.

For an easy way to scan the QR code, use the link below.

[Donation.](#)



Please see the information on the next page if you would like to start giving a regular donation.



### REGULAR GIVING BY DIRECT DEBIT

The Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) is a secure and simple way of giving to St Mary and St Matthew on a regular monthly basis

(or quarterly or annually if you prefer). It works by making a Direct Debit from your bank account on the 1st of the month, which is credited to our parish bank account by the 10th of the month. If eligible, you can opt to add Gift Aid and PGS claims this on our behalf, passing it back to St Mary and St Matthew which benefits our cash flow.

### OPTIONAL ANNUAL INCREASE

It is also possible to make a one-off gift online and add Gift Aid if you are eligible. Instead of setting up a new Direct Debit, you use a debit or credit card, Apple Pay or Google Pay. Scan the QR code to get started.

### ONE-OFF GIVING

It is also possible to make a one-off gift online and add Gift Aid if you are eligible. Instead of setting up a new Direct Debit, you use a debit or credit card, Apple Pay or Google Pay. Scan the QR code to get started.

### THREE WAYS YOU CAN SET UP A REGULAR GIFT WITH PGS

- The simplest way is online - click [here](#).
- By phone: 0333 002 1271, Monday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00
- By post using an application form available from the office.

You will need your bank details to set up the Direct Debit and, for phone or postal applications, the St Mary and St Matthew unique parish code 230623271.

**Thank you for considering this option in your support of  
St Mary Stanwell and St Matthew Ashford.**



<b>PRAYING TOGETHER: JANUARY</b>		
Wed	1st	Mary the Holy Mother of God
Thurs	2nd	The joy and anticipation of a New Year
Fri	3rd	All on long term sick
Sat	4th	UK farmers
Sun	5th	<b>The Epiphany of the Lord (transferred)</b>
Mon	6th	Vegetable pickers
Tues	7th	Our local High Streets
Wed	8th	Lincoln Jopp our Spelthorne MP
Thurs	9th	Doctors and dentists
Fri	10th	Our friends
Sat	11th	All who feel alone
Sun	12th	<b>3rd Sunday of Christmas - The Baptism of the Lord</b>
Mon	13th	The hospice movement
Tues	14th	Engineers and technicians
Wed	15th	Seafarers
Thurs	16th	HMRC staff
Fri	17th	The AA and RAC
Sat	18th	The homeless
Sun	19th	<b>4th Sunday of Christmas - our clergy team</b>
Mon	20th	Job Centre staff and those looking for work
Tues	21st	The UK parliament - wisdom
Wed	22nd	Any suffering a terminal illness
Thurs	23rd	Those suffering with addiction and their families
Fri	24th	School teachers and teaching assistants
Sat	25th	<b>The Conversion of S. Paul Apostle</b>
Sun	26th	<b>5th Sunday of Christmas - the Church of England</b>
Mon	27th	Those caught up in war
Tues	28th	Peace: in the world, between countries and in our own hearts
Wed	29th	Those searching for truth
Thurs	30th	The religious life
Fri	31st	Grandparents
<p>God doesn't want us to do extraordinary things; He wants us to do ordinary things extraordinarily well.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Bishop Gore</p>		



## LECTIONARY PAGE

Date	Sunday	Readings
5 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 2025	The Epiphany of the Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isaiah 60:1-6</li> <li>• Psalm 72(71):1-2. 7-8. 10-11. 12-13. <i>R</i>cf. 11</li> <li>• Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6</li> <li>• Matthew 2:1-12</li> </ul>
12 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 2025	The Baptism of the Lord & Confirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11</li> <li>• Psalm 125(126)</li> <li>• Acts 10:34-38</li> <li>• Luke 3:15-16, 21-22</li> </ul>
19 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 2025	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isaiah 62:1-5</li> <li>• Psalm 96(95):1-2A. 2B-3. 7-8A. 9-10AC. <i>R</i>3</li> <li>• 1 Corinthians 12:4-11</li> <li>• John 2:1-11</li> </ul>
26 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 2025	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10</li> <li>• Psalm 19(18):8. 9. 10. 15. <i>R</i> JOHN 6:63C</li> <li>• 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27</li> <li>• Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb. 2025	The Presentation of the Lord (Candlemass)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hebrews 2:14-18</li> <li>• Psalm 23(24) 7-10</li> <li>• Luke 2:22-32</li> </ul>
9 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 2025	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8</li> <li>• 138(137):1-2A. 2BC, 3. 4-5. 7C-8. <i>R</i>1C</li> <li>• 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 11</li> <li>• Luke 5:1-11</li> </ul>
16 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 2025	6 <sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeremiah 17:5-8</li> <li>• Psalm 1:1-2. 3. 4, 6. <i>R</i> Psalm 40(39):5a</li> <li>• 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20</li> <li>• Luke 6:17, 20-26</li> </ul>

# MESSY CHURCH

## December 2024 Messy Church A Christmas Celebration to Remember!

December's Messy Church was truly brimming with festive cheer as we came together to celebrate the joy of Christmas! The theme for the month, naturally, was *Christmas*, and a variety of creative and engaging activities helped bring the story of Jesus' birth to life in a hands-on and memorable way.

Children and adults alike enjoyed decorating wooden baubles, carefully adding glitter, paint, and their own artistic flair. The Nativity scratch art kits were a hit, revealing beautiful, vibrant designs as participants scratched away to uncover the Nativity scene. The playdough baubles were a fantastic way to combine creativity with sensory play, and there was plenty of concentration as little hands worked to mould their masterpieces. For those who love a challenge, the Nativity maze kept young minds engaged as they navigated their way through the puzzle.

In total, six children and four adults attended, making it a cosy gathering filled with a sense of community and purpose. It was heartening to see everyone, young and old, coming together to share in the spirit of the season.

After the activities, Antonia gathered the children to share the Christmas story. Her warm and engaging storytelling captured their attention, painting a vivid picture of the events in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. As the story concluded, the room came alive with the sound of joyful voices as we sang *Away in a Manger*, a poignant reminder of the true meaning of Christmas.

Of course, no Messy Church would be complete without a delicious meal, and this month's spread didn't disappoint! Plates were piled high with pizza, fresh fruit, cakes, crisps, and, of course, mince pies—a festive favourite! The room buzzed with laughter and cheerful conversation as everyone tucked in, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere that truly embodied the joy of the season.

We'd love for you to join us at our next Messy Church gathering on **Saturday, 18th January 2025**, starting at 15:00 at *St Mary the Virgin, Stanwell*. Whether you're a regular attendee or considering coming along for the first time, you'll be met with friendly faces, fun activities, and the chance to explore the stories that inspire us. All are welcome—come and be part of the Messy Church family!



The Parish of  
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&  
*St Matthew*  
ASHFORD



## DATES FOR THE NEXT TERM

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2024

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2025

between 1500 - 1700 hrs

St Mary the Virgin,  
Church Approach,  
Stanwell,  
TW19 7JS

There is no cost for attending these sessions  
For all the family! Children must bring a grown up  
[office@smam.org.uk](mailto:office@smam.org.uk) 01784-259093



22nd of March 2025

18:00

# I AM MARK

St Matthew's  
Church Road, Ashford  
TW15 2NY

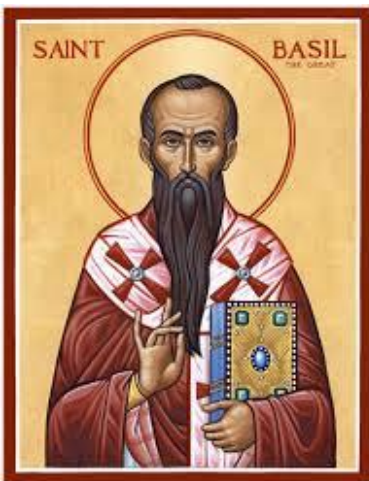
A Daring New Staging of Mark's Gospel  
Performed by Stefan Smart

Adult £5  
Child £1

Tickets from the parish website [www.smam.org.uk](http://www.smam.org.uk)  
or from the office 01784 259093 / [office@smam.org.uk](mailto:office@smam.org.uk)

## SAINTS FOR JANUARY

### JANUARY 2<sup>nd</sup> : ST BASIL THE GREAT (330 - 379)



Basil was born in 330 at Caesarea in Cappadocia, of a Christian family. A brilliant scholar and a virtuous man, he started by becoming a hermit but was made bishop of Caesarea in 370.

He fought against the Arians and wrote many notable works, in particular the monastic rule that bears his name and which many monks in the East follow to this day. He was also generous to the poor. He died on 1 January 379.

*REFLECTION: God our Father, you enriched your Church and gave examples for us to follow in the life and teaching of Saint Basil. Grant that, learning your truth with humility, we may practise it in faith and love.*

## 17<sup>th</sup> JANUARY: ST ANTONY, ABBOT (251 - 356)



St Antony is the originator of the monastic life. He was born in Egypt: when his parents died, he listened to the words of the Gospel and gave all his belongings to the poor. He went out into the wilderness to begin a life of penitence, living in absolute poverty, praying, meditating, and supporting himself by manual work. He suffered many temptations, both physical and spiritual, but he overcame them. Disciples gathered round him, attracted by his wisdom, moderation, and holiness. He gave support to the victims of the persecutions of Diocletian and helped St Athanasius in his fight against the Arians. He lived to be over a hundred years old and died in 356.

The Gospels are full of wise sayings of Jesus that seem to be ignored, and one of the most poignant of these was in his meeting with that young man who asked over and over again, insistently, “What must I do to have eternal life?”. When, in the end, Jesus told him that if he wanted to be *perfect* he would have to sell all that he had and give the money to the poor, the young man went away, sorrowing; because he was very rich. What could be more of a waste than that? You tell someone what he has to do, and he is afraid to do it. And yet... 250 years later, St Antony hears the story, and gives away all that he has, and becomes the founder of monasticism. And then again, over 1,000 years later, St Francis of Assisi hears the story, and gives away his possessions (and some of his father’s) and revolutionises Christianity again.

Not all the words that we speak are forgotten, even though we cannot see their effects ourselves. Let us pray that those unknown effects may always be good ones.

*REFLECTION: Lord God, you bestowed on Saint Antony the grace of serving you in the wilderness. Grant that through his intercession we may deny ourselves and love you above all things.*

# THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

## A MAGICAL CELEBRATION

The holiday season was made even brighter this year with the return of the beloved Christmas Tree Festival at St. Matthew's Church, which was sponsored by Lodge Brothers Funeral Directors.

This cherished annual tradition brought joy, warmth, and a deep sense of community to all who attended. Families, friends, and visitors from near and far gathered to celebrate Christmas and enjoy the stunning display of decorated trees throughout the church.

The church was beautifully transformed, with dozens of Christmas trees filling the space. Each tree was uniquely adorned by local schools, businesses, community groups, and families. From sparkling lights to creative ornaments, every tree told its own story, showcasing the imagination and talent of the local community. The variety of decorations was a feast for the eyes, and it was clear that much thought and care went into each tree. The church glowed with the magic of Christmas, providing the perfect setting for this heartwarming event.

This year the Christmas Tree Festival raised £1276 through the tree donation pots and the sale of brick-a-brack, handmade gifts and raffle tickets.

Save the Date for next year's Christmas Tree Festival

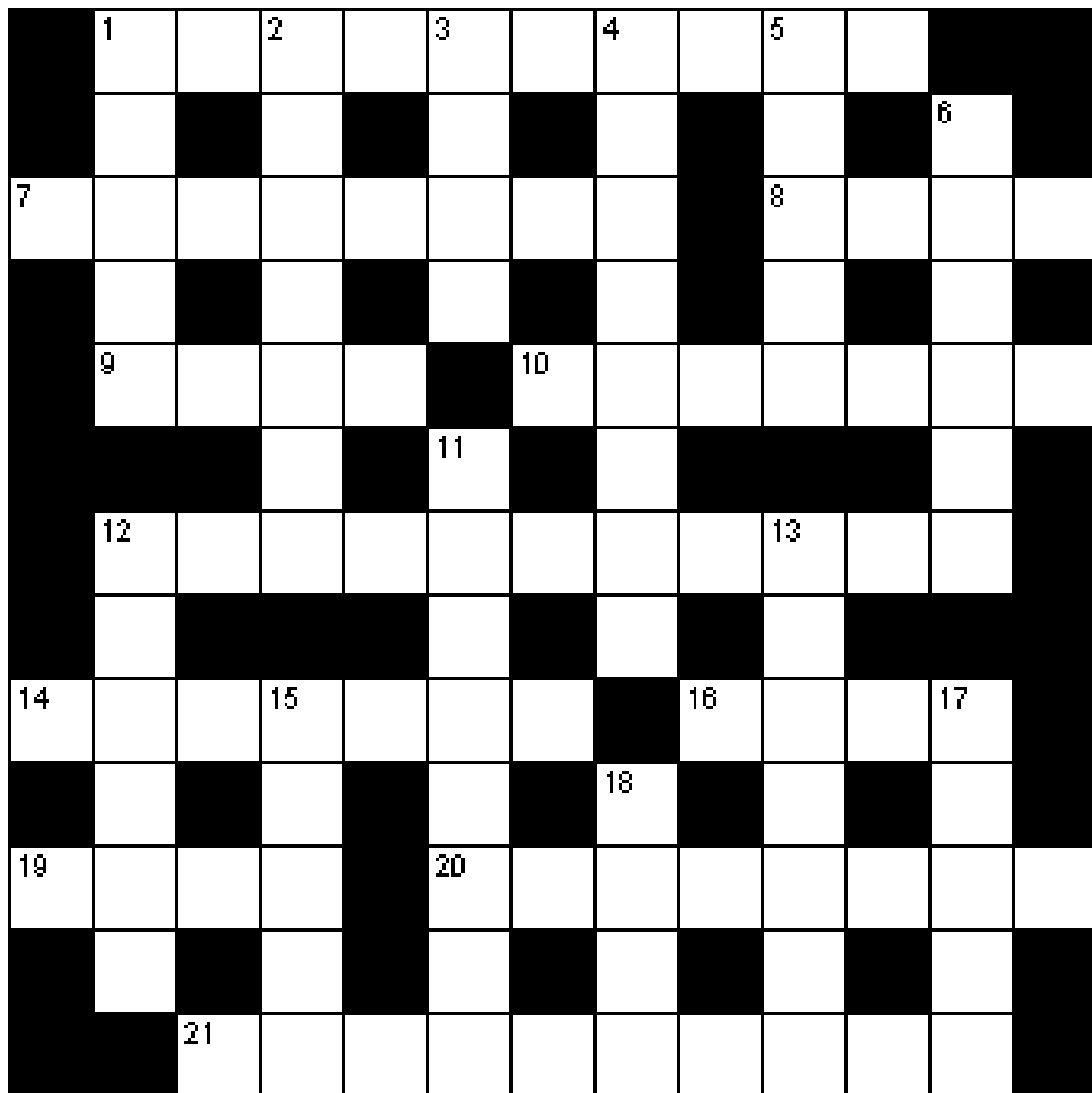
- Setting the Trees up - *Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025*
- When: *Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November - 14<sup>th</sup> December 2025*
- Where: *St. Matthew's Church*
- Activities: *Tree viewing, music and carol, Raffle and more!*
- Taking down the trees - *Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025*

If you would like to enter a tree for 2025, please contact the parish office.



# CROSSWORD

*(solution on P20)*



## Across

- 1 Meat-eaters (10)
- 7 Marine mammal (8)
- 8 Melody (4)
- 9 Be acquainted with (4)
- 10 Eight-sided figure (7)
- 12 English county (11)
- 14 Elongate (7)
- 16 Encounter (4)
- 19 Profound (4)
- 20 Friendly (8)
- 21 Great painters of the past (3,7)

## Down

- 1 Speak huskily (5)
- 2 Rebuke (7)
- 3 Part of the eye (4)
- 4 Cloudy (8)
- 5 Additional (5)
- 6 Nap (6)
- 11 Announce (8)
- 12 One who attends to horses (6)
- 13 Repeat (7)
- 15 Eject (5)
- 17 Stories (5)
- 18 Cans (4)

# SUDOKU

*(solution on P20)*

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

## FEBRUARY MAGAZINE

Items for the next issue should be received  
by **SUNDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER**. These may be sent via emailed to -  
[magazine@smam.org.uk](mailto:magazine@smam.org.uk)



# COLOURING PAGE



## RECIPE PAGE

### RECIPE: CREAMY SMOKED SALMON COBBLER

#### INGREDIENTS (serves 6)

- 50 g butter
- 2 leeks, thickly sliced
- 40 g plain flour
- 400 ml semi-skimmed milk, plus extra to brush
- 50 ml vermouth
- Finely grated zest 1 lemon
- 350 g frozen white fish fillets, defrosted

#### FOR THE COBBLER

- 175 g self-raising flour
- 1/2 Tbsp. baking powder
- 2 tsp. dried chives
- 75 g cream cheese
- 75 ml milk, plus extra to brush
- 1 medium egg
- 1/2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 50 g smoked salmon trimmings



#### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan) mark 6. Melt butter in a medium pan and gently fry leeks over medium heat for 10min, until softened. Stir in flour. Gradually add the milk, stirring until smooth. Bring to the boil, stirring, then turn down the heat and simmer until thickened, giving an occasional stir. Stir in vermouth, lemon zest and some seasoning. Set aside.
2. For the cobbler, mix flour, baking powder and chives with some seasoning in a bowl. In a jug whisk together the cream cheese, milk, egg and oil. Add the liquid to the dry ingredients and stir until evenly mixed. Stir in smoked salmon.
3. Cut fish fillets into large chunks and put into an ovenproof serving dish. Mix through leek sauce. Spoon the cobbler mix on top in six evenly spaced dollops.
4. Brush the cobbler with milk and cook in oven for 25min until piping hot and golden. Serve.

# TOUR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

## THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Of all the letters of Paul, that to the Christians at Rome has long held pride of place. It is the longest and most systematic unfolding of the apostle's thought, expounding the gospel of God's righteousness that saves all who believe ([Rom 1:16-17](#)); it reflects a universal outlook, with special implications for Israel's relation to the church ([Rom 9-11](#)). Yet, like all Paul's letters, Romans too arose out of a specific situation, when the apostle wrote from Greece, likely Corinth, between A.D. 56 and 58 (cf. [Acts 20:2-3](#)). Paul at that time was about to leave for Jerusalem with a collection of funds for the impoverished Jewish Christian believers there, taken up from his predominantly Gentile congregations ([Rom 15:25-27](#)). He planned then to travel on to Rome and to enlist support there for a mission to Spain ([Rom 15:24, 28](#)). Such a journey had long been on his mind ([Rom 1:9-13](#); [15:23](#)). Now, with much missionary preaching successfully accomplished in the East ([Rom 15:19](#)), he sought new opportunities in the West ([Rom 15:20-21](#)), in order to complete the divine plan of evangelization in the Roman world. Yet he recognized that the visit to Jerusalem would be hazardous ([Rom 15:30-32](#)), and we know from Acts that Paul was arrested there and came to Rome only in chains, as a prisoner ([Acts 21-28](#), especially [Acts 21:30-33](#) and [Acts 28:14, 30-31](#)).

The existence of a Christian community in Rome antedates Paul's letter there. When it arose, likely within the sizable Jewish population at Rome, and how, we do not know. The Roman historian Suetonius mentions an edict of the Emperor Claudius about A.D. 49 ordering the expulsion of Jews from Rome in connection with a certain "Chrestus," probably involving a dispute in the Jewish community over Jesus as the Messiah ("Christus"). According to [Acts 18:2](#), Aquila and Priscilla (or Prisca, as in [Rom 16:3](#)) were among those driven out; from them, in Corinth, Paul may have learned about conditions in the church at Rome.

Opinions vary as to whether Jewish or Gentile Christians predominated in the house churches (cf. [Rom 16:5](#)) in the capital city of the empire at the time Paul wrote. Perhaps already by then Gentile Christians were in the majority. Paul speaks in Romans of both Jews and Gentiles ([Rom 3:9, 29](#); see note on [Rom 1:14](#)). The letter also refers to those "weak in faith" ([Rom 14:1](#)) and those "who are strong" ([Rom 15:1](#)); this terminology may reflect not so much differences between believers of Jewish and of Gentile background,

respectively, as an ascetic tendency in some converts ([Rom 14:2](#)) combined with Jewish laws about clean and unclean foods ([Rom 14:14, 20](#)). The issues were similar to problems that Paul had faced in Corinth ([1 Cor 8](#)). If [Rom 16](#) is part of the letter to Rome (see note on [Rom 16:1-23](#)), then Paul had considerable information about conditions in Rome through all these people there whom he knew, and our letter does not just reflect a generalized picture of an earlier situation in Corinth.

In any case, Paul writes to introduce himself and his message to the Christians at Rome, seeking to enlist their support for the proposed mission to Spain. He therefore employs formulations likely familiar to the Christians at Rome; see note on the confessional material at [Rom 1:3-4](#) and compare [Rom 3:25-26](#); [4:25](#). He cites the Old Testament frequently ([Rom 1:17](#); [3:10-18](#); [4](#); [9:7](#), [12-13](#), [15](#), [17](#), [25-29](#), [33](#); [10:5-13](#), [15-21](#); [15:9-12](#)). The gospel Paul presents is meant to be a familiar one to those in Rome, even though they heard it first from other preachers.

As the outline below shows, this gospel of Paul (see [Rom 16:25](#)) finds its center in salvation and justification through faith in Christ ([Rom 1:16-17](#)). While God's wrath is revealed against all sin and wickedness of Gentile and Jew alike ([Rom 1:18-3:20](#)), God's power to save by divine righteous or justifying action in Christ is also revealed ([Rom 1:16-17](#); [3:21-5:21](#)). The consequences and implications for those who believe are set forth ([Rom 6:1-8:39](#)), as are results for those in Israel ([Rom 9-11](#)) who, to Paul's great sorrow ([Rom 9:1-5](#)), disbelieve. The apostle's hope is that, just as rejection of the gospel by some in Israel has led to a ministry of salvation for non-Jews, so one day, in God's mercy, "all Israel" will be saved ([Rom 11:11-15](#), [25-29](#), [30-32](#)). The fuller ethical response of believers is also drawn out, both with reference to life in Christ's body ([Rom 12](#)) and with regard to the world ([Rom 13:1-7](#)), on the basis of the eschatological situation ([Rom 13:11-14](#)) and conditions in the community ([Rom 14:1-15:13](#)).

Others have viewed Romans more in the light of Paul's earlier, quite polemical Letter to the Galatians and so see the theme as the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, a topic judged to be much in the minds of the Roman Christians. Each of these religious faiths claimed to be the way of salvation based upon a covenant between God and a people chosen and made the beneficiary of divine gifts. But Christianity regarded itself as the prophetic development and fulfillment of the faith of the Old Testament, declaring that the preparatory Mosaic covenant must now give way to the new and more perfect covenant in Jesus Christ. Paul himself had been the implacable

advocate of freedom of Gentiles from the laws of the Mosaic covenant and, especially in Galatia, had refused to allow attempts to impose them on Gentile converts to the gospel. He had witnessed the personal hostilities that developed between the adherents of the two faiths and had written his strongly worded Letter to the Galatians against those Jewish Christians who were seeking to persuade Gentile Christians to adopt the religious practices of Judaism. For him, the purity of the religious understanding of Jesus as the source of salvation would be seriously impaired if Gentile Christians were obligated to amalgamate the two religious faiths.

Still others find the theme of Israel and the church as expressed in [Rom 9-11](#) to be the heart of Romans. Then the implication of Paul's exposition of justification by faith rather than by means of law is that the divine plan of salvation works itself out on a broad theological plane to include the whole of humanity, despite the differences in the content of the given religious system to which a human culture is heir. Romans presents a plan of salvation stretching from Adam through Abraham and Moses to Christ ([Rom 4; 5](#)) and on to the future revelation at Christ's parousia ([Rom 8:18-25](#)). Its outlook is universal.

Paul's Letter to the Romans is a powerful exposition of the doctrine of the supremacy of Christ and of faith in Christ as the source of salvation. It is an implicit plea to the Christians at Rome, and to all Christians, to hold fast to that faith. They are to resist any pressure put on them to accept a doctrine of salvation through works of the law (see note on [Rom 10:4](#)). At the same time they are not to exaggerate Christian freedom as an abdication of responsibility for others ([Rom 12:1-2](#)) or as a repudiation of God's law and will (see notes on [Rom 3:9-26; 3:31; 7:7-12, 13-25](#)).

**The principal divisions of the Letter to the Romans are the following:**

- i. Address ([1:1-15](#))
- ii. Humanity Lost without the Gospel ([1:16-3:20](#))
- iii. Justification through Faith in Christ ([3:21-5:21](#))
- iv. Justification and the Christian Life ([6:1-8:39](#))
- v. Jews and Gentiles in God's Plan ([9:1-11:36](#))
- vi. The Duties of Christians ([12:1-15:13](#))
- vii. Conclusion ([15:14-16:27](#))

# FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

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28/12/2024

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Kaleb Tilley  
Florence Burton  
Tilley Burton

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03/12/2024

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10/12/2024

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12/12/2024

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17/12/2024

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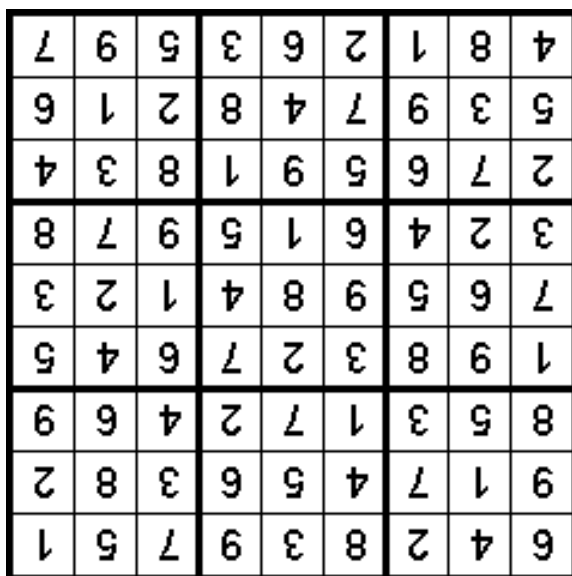
Ann Wright

20/12/2024

Percival James Mitchell

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and rise in Glory. Amen*

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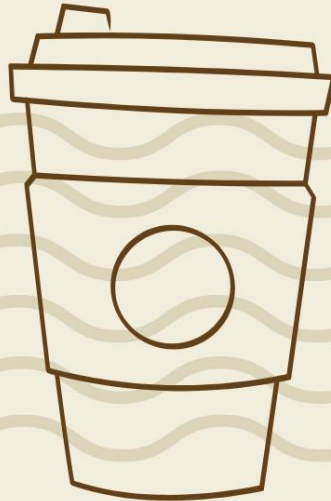
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