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Editor: You may wish to talk this over with your minister before you make the 'appeal'.

Can you help the people hit by the floods?

The Archbishop of York has issued a call for donations to a special fund created for communities in urban areas hit by the recent floods.

The CUF Disaster Relief Fund has been set up to provide much needed help to those devastated by the recent floods. Any money given will go to areas of the greatest need to assist the local work of providing temporary accommodation, food and essential goods, a listening ear and counselling support to those traumatised by recent events.

Donations will also go towards local projects setting up emergency payments for those facing hardship. Monies raised will also go to support practical activities such as the provision of volunteer teams to redecorate homes, buildings being used for storage, meeting points and much more both now and in the aftermath over the next twelve months and beyond.

Launching the fund, Dr. Sentamu said: "As the floods begin to subside, the full extent of their impact will only now become apparent. Local churches will be working to help people long after the TV cameras and reporters have left the scene.

"Local churches are strongly placed to take practical action and many are already doing so but urgently need resources to do more."

Donations to the CUF Disaster Relief Fund can be made in 3 ways:

1. Call 020 7898 1667 to donate by telephone with your debit/credit card
2. Go to www.cuf.org.uk and click the 'Donate NOW' button for secure on-line giving
3. Post a Cheque or CAF voucher (payable to CUF) to Church Urban Fund, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ, with a note to say that your donation is for the 'CUF Disaster Relief Fund'

Requests for support from the Fund should be sent to disaster@cuf.org.uk or call 020 7898 1091.

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Editor: Again, you may wish to talk this over with your minister. Would this be something your Harvest Service collection would like to support this year?

Can you help the flood-hit farmers?

The Archbishop of York has joined HRH the Prince of Wales in supporting an appeal fund for farmers hit by recent floods.

The ARC-Addington Fund, which was originally launched in 2001 to help those farmers who were affected by the foot and mouth crisis, is specifically aimed at those farmers who are facing hardship as a result of having their crops or livestock ruined by the floods.

The ARC-Addington Fund will provide a package of pastoral support and hardship payments to any farmers who have been adversely affected by the recent floods. Working with Farming Help Partners, Farm Crisis Network and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, the ARC-Addington Fund will offer small hardship payments to farmers on a case by case basis. The fund is particularly keen to support farmers who were not able to insure their crops and livestock. These cannot be general compensation payments but if people are insured and are still in genuine hardship, then they should apply.

Farmers can call the Farming Help Partnership on 07002 326 326.

Anyone wishing to support this initiative can send payments by cheque or credit card. The ARC-Addington Fund, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LZ. 024 7669 0587. enquiries@arc-addingtonfund.org.uk

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Editor: You might make this local in several ways. Is there someone in your church who sang in a cathedral choir, and would share their memories? Could you, or someone in your church, do a phone interview with your nearest cathedral school, asking them how they feel about the new proposals? Or - what resources does your nearest cathedral school feel it has, and can offer to churches/peoples across the diocese?

Or do a more general interview on what the cathedral school will be doing this autumn and Christmas? Sort of 'a term in the life of our nearest cathedral school'.

Cathedral schools set to spread expertise

Church of England cathedral schools could soon act as sponsors for city academies or even convert into academies themselves, in a move designed to spread the musical and educational expertise of the country's cathedral schools across their wider communities.

The proposed move seeks to unlock the resources and expertise held by cathedral schools for the wider benefit of their respective cities and regions.

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Editor: This might be great fun to attempt. Is there someone in your church who would 'test' a number of your church families? Or 'test' your church? Or are there several families who would try it – and share the results with your readers, plus ideas of what they were going to do to 'shrink' their footprint? Or you might run the article as it stands this month, and invite people to volunteer to respond to you.

Are you Shrinking your Footprint? - test Defra's new CO2 Calculator

A public trial version of Defra's new CO2calculator has been launched which you can find at: www.direct.gov.uk/ActOnCO2. It enables everyone to understand and measure their carbon footprint and consider appropriate actions to reduce it.

Defra have also issued a methodology paper to go alongside the calculator which sets out the detail that lies behind the rationale for the assumptions and factors used. You can find this at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/individual/actonco2

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Editor: This is a 'good news' story. You could make it local by ringing your diocesan office and finding out how many new clergy have been ordained in your diocese. Is there a new deacon in your deanery? You might invite them to write an article introducing themselves, and telling the story of how God called them to ordination.

Study resource released to explore Ordination

More than 560 men and women will join the Church of England's clergy this year – the highest number since 2000. Among the 566 being ordained as deacons this year, 283 will go on to stipendiary ministry - a figure that has risen over the last two years. It is therefore a fitting time for the Church to publish a new resource that, in one volume, brings together the Common Worship Ordination Services and the 1662 Book of Common Prayer Ordinal, alongside a brief history of ordination rites and a commentary by the Liturgical Commission. [Common Worship: Ordination Services](#) also includes a comprehensive practical guide to planning ordinations, including sections on using the worship space, vesture, music, and compiling the service booklet.

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Editor: Are there any doctors or scientists in your church who might like to add a comment on this story? Do they agree or disagree with the CofE's stand?

Church says no to true human hybrids

The Mission and Public Affairs Council of the Church of England has opposed the creation of true human hybrids but given a cautious acceptance to the proposal to produce cytoplasmic hybrid embryos for research into the alleviation of serious diseases. Research using human embryos donated by IVF patients, it adds, is acceptable but using human embryos created specifically for research from donated eggs and sperm is not.

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Editor: This may be of interest to your readers. Your minister might like to comment on the findings, and how your church could react to this change in society.

Is atheism winning?

The British Social Attitudes Survey is a major non-Government study undertaken annually by interviewing a carefully selected cross-section of the population in over 3,000 households. It asks a variety of questions, but deliberately retains some each year so that trends can be seen over time.

One of the questions it asks is "What is your religion?" and gives a series of choices, one of which is "No religion". Another question is "What was the religion of the family you grew up in?" This question is particularly interesting since one can compare the answers for when a person was a child and what religion they now have.

Thus in 1995 nine per cent of those interviewed said they were brought up in a household with no religion, and 8½% of these said they still had no religion. In the year 2000 12% said they grew up with no religion, and 11½% still had no religion. In 2004, 17% said they grew up with no religion, and 15% said they still didn't have one.

This shows that the percentage of atheistic households (households where there is no religion) has increased over this nine year period. It also shows that the percentage of those in such households who still have no religion has also increased. So is atheism winning?

The figures also show however that a small percentage of those growing up with no religion, ½% in 1995 and 2000, have now found a Christian faith. This percentage increased to two per cent in 2004, a large comparative increase over 2000, suggesting that while atheism is growing and retains its hold on young people as they grow up, a smaller but increasing percentage are breaking out of this mould and finding there is a real God after all!

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Editor: The following is strictly for Anglicans with an appetite for Synod! The General Synod deals with many important issues, and so we offer this article for those who wish to follow the latest decisions.... You may wish to print this on a separate 'insert', and print a smaller number. These could be offered at the back of your church, along with your regular magazine.

Summary of General Synod, July 2007

The General Synod of the Church of England was held at the University of York between Friday 6th and Tuesday 10th July 2007. Here is a report on the major debates.

Marriage Law:- The draft Church of England Marriage Measure returned to Synod for a further revision stage, and was given final approval. The legislation will make it easier for people to get married in a church with special meaning for them. The legislation will now be considered by Parliament's Ecclesiastical Committee before being put before both Houses of Parliament for approval.

Senior Church Appointments:- Synod considered the report of the review group chaired by Sir Joseph Pilling, to consider the law and practice regarding senior appointments. Following the Prime Minister's statement on 3rd July, the debate was widened to reflect the Government's wish to engage in dialogue over how the Prime Minister can discontinue playing an active role in the selection of individual candidates for Church appointments. Synod invited the Archbishops, in consultation with the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops, to oversee the necessary discussions with the Government and to report to the February group of sessions. Synod also endorsed the recommendations of the review group's report and invited the Archbishops' Council to report to Synod during 2008 on progress with implementation.

Anglican Communion Covenant:- The Most Reverend Drexel Gomez, Archbishop of the West Indies and Chair of the Covenant Design Group, addressed the Synod before it debated the Covenant, which seeks to encourage common understanding between the provinces of the Communion. Synod affirmed its willingness to engage with the process for producing a covenant and noted that such a process will only be concluded when any definitive text has been duly considered through the synodical processes of the provinces of the Communion. In the meantime, it invited the Archbishops of Canterbury and York (having consulted the House of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council) to agree the terms of a considered response to the current draft by the end of the year.

Iran:- Following concerns voiced over the possible risk to the current regeneration of the Anglican Church in Iran, Synod voted against continuing with a planned debate on a private member's motion from Canon Simon Bessant, which sought to reflect international concern that the United States administration might be considering military action against the country.

Transforming Worship:- The Synod discussed the Liturgical Commission's initiative in liturgical formation and education, called Transforming Worship. Synod commended the Commission's report Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation (GS 1651) to the Church for study, reflection and action.

Resources:- The Synod endorsed the Archbishops' Council's recommendations on Rules changes to preserve a defined benefit pension scheme for the clergy, following consultation with the 24,000 members of the clergy pension scheme. The Synod also requested that the Archbishops' Council bring forward recommendations with a view to restoring pension levels - following consultation with the Pensions Board, and the Church Commissioners - in the event that the pensions climate improves sufficiently.

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Editor: If you have many parents, or a number of teachers in your church, this may be of interest. Would anyone from your church consider attending the debates this autumn, and reporting back to you?

A good childhood? Growing up in the 21st century

A recent UNICEF report placed the UK bottom of developed countries in terms of children's wellbeing. Many people who work with children have called for a public debate about our market-driven society's impact on childhood.

And so the National Children's Society has set up the first independent national public inquiry into childhood. This autumn, together with St Paul's Institute, it is holding a programme of debates on parenting, consumerism and education together with study days, workshops, meditative services and a retreat.

Debates will include questions such as "do we see children as a blessing, a right or a lifestyle choice?", "what makes for a good childhood and the grounding of a good adulthood?" and will consider such issues as the impact of consumerism on a child's development.

The debates are being held in St Paul's Cathedral, London on 16/23/30 October and 6 November from 6.30pm - 8pm. Meditative services in the Cathedral on 7/14/21 and 28 October are from 6pm - 6.50pm. All these events are free and unticketed.

Details of all these events and more can be found at: <http://www.stpauls.co.uk/institute>

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Editor: If you have many families with children, this may be of interest...

Church youth worker finds faith in popular culture with Harry Potter's magic

A new resource guide published by the Church of England suggests youth leaders should use the popular Harry Potter series of books and films as a launch pad for exploring Christian themes within church youth groups or Sunday schools.

The first six of J K Rowling's Harry Potter books have sold more than 325 million copies in 200 countries. This summer, on the eve of the launch of the seventh book in the series, the resource - published by Church House Publishing - enabled youth leaders to use extracts from the books and films to draw parallels with daily life and help young people discuss 'big issues'.

From using scenes from the films in which the characters have to make tough decisions to prompt discussion within the group about moral choices, to extracts that demonstrate the power of words and their impact on others, the book is packed full of creative ideas for using the books as a basis for Christian teaching.

The book is designed for use with 9-13 year olds. 'Mixing it up with Harry Potter' (ISBN 978 0 7151 4106 9) is priced £8.99 and is available from Christian bookshops including Church House Bookshop, www.chbookshop.co.uk.

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High Days and Holy Days for September

Editor: As saints don't go away, we have added to them this year rather than start afresh. The saint with an asterisk appears on this site for the first time...

- 2 **William of Roskilde**
- 3 **Gregory the Great c 540 – 604**
- 8 **The Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 9 **Peter Claver (1581 – 1654)**
- 11 **Protus and Hyacinth (early church)**
- 11 **Deiniol (d. c.584)**
- 13 **John Chrysostom**
- 15 **Adam of Caithness (bishop 1213 – 22)**
- 18 **Joseph of Copertino (1603 – 63)**
- 20 **Martyrs of Korea**
- 21 **St Matthew the Apostle**
- 23 **Autumnal Equinox**
- 28 * **Lioba**
- 29 **St Michael and All Angels**

2 **William of Roskilde d 1070**

Here is a saint for anyone who thinks Christian leaders should stand up for justice – even at the risk of angering secular powers.

It all began when William was an English priest serving as chaplain to Canute, king of England, (1016-35), who decided to visit Scandinavia. William went along, and was so shocked by the ignorance, idolatry and superstition that he stayed on to help preach the Gospel. Eventually he became bishop of Roskilde (Zeeland), working tirelessly among the people as a beloved pastor.

But William's main challenge came in his determination to improve the conduct of the king, Sweyn Estridsen. The king had had some criminals killed without trial and in a church, violating sanctuary. William then forbade him to enter the church next day until he was absolved from the guilt of shedding blood unjustly. Courtiers drew their swords, and William showed himself ready to die. Instead, Sweyn confessed his crime and donated land to Roskilde church as a peace-offering. Thenceforward until the king's death Sweyn and William worked together to foster Christianity in Scandinavia.

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3 **Gregory the Great c 540 – 604**

Pope Gregory never called himself 'the Great', but instead 'the Servant of the Servants of God'. Nevertheless, Gregory was one of the most important popes and influential writers of the Middle Ages. The son of a very rich Roman senator, he left the service of the State upon his conversion as a young man. Gregory then sold off his tremendous estates to found six monasteries in Sicily and a seventh in Rome, and gave generously to the poor. He became a monk and adopted an austere lifestyle. But he was destined to be a frustrated monk, because successive popes kept appointing him to jobs with major public responsibilities.

Christians in England owe him a great deal. When Gregory came across some English slaves for sale in Rome, he asked who they were, and was told, 'They are Angles.' Moved with compassion for these humiliated and despised men, he replied, 'They are not Angles, but angels!' He wanted to lead a band of missionaries to England to evangelise the Angles, but then plague broke out in Italy, and during this time he was elected Pope.

Reluctantly he accepted, and then sent to work to deal with the crises facing Christendom: plague, floods, famine, and a Lombard invasion. But busy though Gregory was, he did not forget the Angles. He sent Augustine to England, and so indirectly became the apostle of the English

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8 The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

In both eastern and western churches, Mary has always been held as pre-eminent among all the saints. The unique, extraordinary privilege of being the mother of the One who was both God and Man, makes her worthy of special honour. Thomas Aquinas believed she was due *hyperdulia*, or a veneration that exceeds that of other saints, but is at the same time infinitely below the adoration, or *latria*, due to God alone.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke give Mary most mention. Luke even tells the story of Jesus' infancy from Mary's point of view. Her Song, or *Magnificat* appears in Luke 1:46-55.

The virginal conception of Christ is clearly stated in the gospels. But after Jesus' birth, Mary fades quietly into the background. During Jesus' public life, she is mentioned only occasionally, as at the wedding at Cana. She reappears at the foot of the Cross (John's Gospel), and is given into John's care. In the early chapters of Acts, Mary is with the Apostles, and received the Holy Spirit along with them on Whitsunday. But her role was not the active one of teaching and preaching.

Mary's significance grew with the centuries. By the fifth century she was called *Theotokos*, The Mother of God, and from the seventh century onwards, she was given four festivals: the Presentation in the Temple (2 February), the Annunciation (25 March), the Assumption (15 August) and her Nativity (8 September).

Marian devotion has played an enormous role in the church down the years. Mary has been the object of countless prayers, accredited with performing many miracles, and the subject of thousands of artistic endeavours. She has had hundreds of chapels or parish churches named after her.

During the Reformation many images of Mary were destroyed. The Second Vatican Council 1962 made an extended statement on her, stressing her complete dependence on her Son, and regarding her as a model of the Church.

Principal Marian shrines of today include Lourdes (France), Fatima (Portugal), Walsingham (England), Loreto (Italy), Czesochowa (Poland) and Guadalupe (Mexico).

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9 Peter Claver (1581 – 1654) teacher and missionary

Here is a saint for anyone with a social conscience. Claver was born near Barcelona at Verdu, and at 20 became a Jesuit. He went as a missionary to New Granada and worked to alleviate the terrible suffering of the slaves who arrived from West Africa, caged like animals. (It was said that you could smell the stench of a slave ship while it was still seven miles from shore.) Claver helped the poor wretches who survived long enough to reach dry land. He gave them food and medicine as well as spiritual comfort. He is said to have cared for and baptised 300,000 slaves. What a difference one life can make to thousands of people!

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11 Protus and Hyacinth (early church)

On this, the anniversary of the Twin Towers, here are two more innocent people who met their death in the flames of mindless violence. These were Roman martyrs mentioned in the 4th century list of martyrs. Hyacinth's tomb was discovered in the cemetery of Basilla, with his name and the date of his burial (11 September). Inside were charred bones, indicating death by fire. An inscription by Damasus says Protus Hyacinth were brothers, and another ancient source called them 'teachers of the Christian law'.

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11 Deiniol (d. c.584)

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, is not the first mighty bishop to come out of Wales. Deiniol was a monk of Wales who came to be the 'first bishop of Bangor'. And a mighty bishop he was, too: Deiniol founded the two monasteries of Bangor Fawr (on the Menai Straits) and Bangor Iscoed (Clwyd), which, according to Bede, became the most famous monastery of British Christianity and came to number over 2,000 monks. Sadly, they were defeated at the battle of Chester by the pagan Aethelfrith, king of Northumbria. Deiniol is also remembered for his skill in getting disagreeing bishops to come and talk things over at a Synod... surely a skill which his 21st century successor will also put to great use!

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13 John Chrysostom 347 – 407

John Chrysostom is the saint for anyone who applies their Christianity to public life, and also for anyone who hates travelling in bad weather. Chrysostom did both, and had trouble both times.

Born into a wealthy home in Antioch, John Chrysostom studied both oratory and law. In 373 he became a monk, where his talents were soon spotted by the bishop, who put him in charge of the care of the many poor Christians in the city.

Chrysostom's oratorical skills made him a popular preacher – even when he spoke out against the riots against the emperor's taxes. The emperor, in fact, liked him so much that he had him made Archbishop of Constantinople in 397. Then the trouble began: because Chrysostom had firm moral views, and wanted to reform the corrupt morals of the court.

Nobody at court liked that at all – especially the Empress, whose make-up, clothes and behaviour were all criticized by Chrysostom. (It's as if Rowan Williams began attacking the Queen's clothes or Cherie Blair's make-up as immoral.) When his enemies claimed that he had gone on to call her a 'Jezebel', the emperor had to exile him – until an earthquake scared everyone into recalling this strict Archbishop – just in case God was trying to tell them something. Even the Empress was shaken – for a while.

A few years later, Chrysostom was exiled again over another false charge – and forced to travel for many miles in appalling weather. If you've been stranded in any heat-waves or thunderstorms this summer, imagine walking up the M6 in that – for weeks on end. In the end, Chrysostom died in September, on the road to Pontus.

His body was later brought back to Constantinople, and over the ensuing centuries, the Church came to see him as having been a great church leader, in fact, one of the Four Greek Doctors (with Athanasius, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus).

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15 Adam of Caithness bishop 1213 – 22

Teaching people to ‘tithe’ can be a delicate matter. Some clergy teach ‘tithing’ well, and inspire their people to great generosity of spirit. Other clergy teach ‘tithing’ at least well enough, and get their people’s sluggish cooperation.

But – there are clergy who teach ‘tithing’ badly – and then, watch out! St Adam is a good example of how NOT to do it.

Adam was a young Cisterian monk who became abbot of Melrose. Then in 1213 William, king of Scotland, appointed him as bishop in a remote area where his own power was weak and that of the Norse earls was strong.

Adam attempted to enforce law and order, including canon law, and particularly the payment of tithes. The people sullenly obeyed most of his teaching about the law and order, and didn’t care a fig one way or another about canon law. But tithing was a subject on which they had passionate views!

The customary offering at this time was a span of butter to the clergy for every twenty cows that a person owned. Adam said this was not enough. He wanted more butter. He increased the tithe to one span for every fifteen cows. Then one span for every twelve cows. Then one span for every ten cows that a person owned.

And so Adam managed to double his butter income. But any modern-day Diocesan Board of Finance thinking of doubling the parish share should beware what happened next.

For the people revolted. One night they forced their way into his bishop’s house at Halkirke, and burnt him and his followers to death.

The only good news was that his body, although “roasted with fire and livid with bruises, was found entire under a heap of stones, and buried honourably in the church.” Thus ended Adam, and the people kept all their butter tithe – presumably spreading it on toast?

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18 Joseph of Copertino (1603 – 63)

Joseph of Copertino should be the patron saint of all awkward people who mean well, but drive those around them to distraction – especially their church leaders.

Joseph began life in a garden shed, because his father had sold the house to pay debts. He grew up wandering about open-mouthed – his mother despised him and called him ‘The Gaper’.

Young Joseph’s intense devotion to God led him to try and join the Capuchin monks – but he drove them crazy: forgetting to do what he was told, dropping piles of plates on the kitchen floor, and neglecting to tend the all-important kitchen fire. He was finally accepted by the Franciscans as a servant, and grew so religiously fervent that he was accepted as a novice in 1625, and ordained a priest in 1628.

As a priest he was devout, but apt to do anything – much to the irritation of his superiors. One problem was his repeated levitations, of which there were 70 reported instances. The most spectacular stories are of his flying to images placed high above the altars and helping workmen to erect a Calvary Cross 36 feet high by lifting it into place while he was hanging in mid-air himself. Such feats earned him the name of ‘the Flying Friar’ by admiring locals, but gave his superiors headaches. They were also disturbed by his habit of going into states of ecstasy, from which nothing could wake him.

Joseph's reputation for flying about and for occasional ecstasy drew the crowds: they were all eager to see what would happen next. What did happen next was that his superiors kept him in virtual isolation for many years, eager to contain this intensely emotional and erratic priest. In 1767 he was canonised, not for his levitations, but for his extreme patience and humility.

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20 Martyrs of Korea

Korea is known for its thriving Christian church. But it was not always so – in fact no Korean was baptised until as late as 1784. Christianity arrived in Korea through Christian books sent from China, and the Koreans responded warmly as soon as they heard the Good News. A Chinese priest who visited in 1794 found 4,000 Christians. This despite hard times: the Chinese priest was killed in 1801, and the Koreans were left without a priest for 30 years. Pius VII sent a bishop, Laurence Imbert, who arrived in disguise in 1837, who worked with two other priests of the same Paris Missionary Society. Christianity was strictly forbidden by this time, and so the missionaries worked in complete secrecy, rising at 2.30 am and ministering at unusual times in conditions of extreme poverty.

And the Korean Church grew! Soon there were 9,000 Christians, who could not remain secret for ever. Violent persecution broke out, and the three French priests allowed themselves to be taken, in order to avert massacre and apostasy. They were beheaded at Seoul on 21 September 1839. 78 Korean Christians died in the same persecution, among them Agatha Kim and John Ri. The first Korean priest to be martyred was Andrew Kim, in 1846. These shining Christians of the Korean Church were beatified in 1925 and canonized in 1984.

21 St Matthew

Matthew was one of 12 apostles. But he began as a publican i.e. a tax-collector of Jewish race who worked for the Romans, before he left all at the call of Christ. From earliest times, he was regarded as the author of the first of the four Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew is in correct, concise style, very suitable for public reading.

His usual emblem as an evangelist is a man, because his genealogy emphasised the family ties of Christ.

In art, he has been represented as either an evangelist or as an apostle. As an evangelist, he has been depicted sitting at a desk, writing his gospel with an angel holding the inkwell. In the Middle Ages he was even given a pair of spectacles.

Matthew was martyred by a sword or a spear, some think in Ethiopia.

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23 When the sun goes edgewise – and daytime equals night

September 23 is the autumnal equinox (if you live in the northern hemisphere) or the vernal (Spring) equinox (if you live in the southern hemisphere) The equinoxes occur in March and September, when the Sun is 'edgewise' to the Earth's axis of rotation, so that everywhere on earth has twelve hours of daylight and twelve hours of darkness.

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28 * Lioba (d. 782)

What really gets a woman remembered? Loved? Respected? Lioba the abbess of Bischofsheim is the patron saint for any woman who wants to make the most of her life.

Lioba was born in Wessex early in the 8th century. Her family was noble, her mother was a relative of the monk Boniface (the Billy Graham of the day, in that he was the apostle and then archbishop of Germany).

Lioba was educated first at the nunnery of Minster-in-Thanet and then at Wimborne, Dorset. She became a nun. After some years correspondence with Boniface, he invited her to Germany to help him evangelise the people by establishing convents. Convents were sort of the 'Fresh Expressions' of church in those days.

And so Lioba left Dorset with 30 nuns and went to Tauberbischofsheim, where she established a convent. She was a wonderful 'ambassador' of Christianity, for people found her both beautiful and accessible, intelligent and patiently kind. She became so highly esteemed that soon her advice was sought by magnates of both Church and State.

Lioba's convents followed the Rule of St Benedict: all her nuns learned Latin as well as manual work in scriptorium, kitchen, bakery, brewery, and garden. Above all, the regular public prayer of the Church was upheld.

Learning, hard work, and love of God: those were the factors that made Lioba who she was. Her walk with God was evident in her inner strength and dignity, her goodness and kindness. No wonder that even 50 years after her death, the local people were still talking of her with great affection.

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29 St Michael and All Angels

Michael is an archangel, whose name means 'who is like unto God?' He makes various appearances throughout the Bible, from the book of Daniel to the Book of Revelation. In Daniel, he is 'one of the princes' of the heavenly host, and the special guardian of Israel. In Revelation, he is the principal fighter of the heavenly battle against the devil.

From early times, Michael's cult was strong in the British Isles. Churches at Malmesbury (Wiltshire), Clive (Gloucestershire) and Stanmer (East Sussex) were dedicated to him. Bede mentions him. St Michael's Mount in Cornwall was believed to commemorate a vision there in the 8th century. By the end of the Middle Ages, Michael had 686 English churches dedicated to him.

In art Michael is often depicted as slaying the dragon, as in the 14th century East Anglican Psalters, or in Epstein's famous sculpture at Coventry cathedral. Or he is found (in medieval art) as weighing souls, as at Chaldon (Surrey), Swalcliffe (Oxon.), Eaton Bishop (Hereford and Worcester), and Martham in Suffolk. Michael's most famous shrine in western Europe is Mont-Saint-Michel, where a Benedictine abbey was founded in the 10th century.

The 'All Angels' bit of this feast-day was added in 1969 when Gabriel and Raphael were included in with Michael.

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Looking at GOD

God's strength ...

Don't Worry

THE SPIRITUAL RAILWAY

Debt and God's freely given gift

Charles Wesley – 300 years on: A trumpet voice!

SERMON NOTEBOOK: (People from the Old Testament) - Ezekiel

Are you facing a confrontation?

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Editor: Olave Snelling, is a former producer and presenter on Premier Radio in London. She is currently Chairman of the Christian Broadcasting Council.

God's strength ...

“My grace is sufficient for you for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Jesus was speaking directly to Paul. Paul had beseeched God three times to remove a ‘thorn in the flesh’ which was obviously his worst bugbear. It obviously caused him a great deal of aggravation, pain, distraction, torment and trouble and he couldn't understand why God seemed impervious to his prayers and supplications. He would be so much better at taking the Gospel to the entire known world if he were free of this severe limitation.

Ever felt in a similar situation? “Why, oh why,” we wail, “don't you DO something, God?” We strain at the leash, crashing about in sheer frustration at what seems to us to be so obvious a solution. “Get rid of the problem, God. Preferably now.”

One woman related how severe trouble in her marriage had brought her a new understanding of Jesus' sufferings and an amazing new intimacy with God, but the young woman listening lashed out. “I don't actually WANT to enter the fellowship of your sufferings at this moment, Lord, if I'm utterly honest. I'd like my husband changed. You know what I mean, don't you, God?” Well actually, he did. The answer to that dilemma was to let the Lord Jesus love the husband through the young woman. He didn't change the husband. He changed her.

Dr Marjory Foyle, an eighty-five year old psychiatrist and former medical missionary with what is now UCCF, is still travelling the world lecturing and speaking. Do yourself a favour and read her book ‘**Can it be me?**’*

A painfully shy child who had been traumatised by her father's upsettingly violent relationship with her mother and the subsequent marriage break-up, she went on in adult life to find unimaginable wholeness in Christ and a great career in Nepal and India, ultimately becoming Director of the Nur Manzil Psychiatric Centre. At one time, however, she fell into a massive depression herself. Through excellent medical care, talking therapy, prayer and shedding a whole lot of negatives in her life, she slowly emerged even stronger. A former President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists describes her as one of the most influential psychiatrists in the world on stress and mental health issues among missionaries and other expatriates.

2 Corinthians 12:9 is her life's verse. “**My grace is sufficient for you for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly will I rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**”

God's strength is wonderfully manifest through our utter dependence on him in all our frailty.

* Can it be me? By Marjory Foyle, CMF, £8, ISBN 978-0906747360

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Don't Worry

A minister was on a long-haul flight when the sign came on: 'Fasten your seat belts.' A few moments later the announcement came: "We shall not be serving the beverages at this time as we are expecting turbulence."

Sure enough, the plane began to judder. As the minister looked around the aircraft, he saw that some of the passengers were uneasy. Then came another announcement: "We are sorry that we are unable to serve the meal at this time. The main turbulence is still ahead of us."

With that, the storm broke. The ominous cracks of thunder could be heard even above the roar of the engines. Lightning lit up the darkening skies, and within moments that great plane was like a cork tossed around on a celestial ocean. One moment the airplane was lifted on terrific currents of air; the next, it dropped as if it were about to crash.

The minister began to share the discomfort and fear of those around him. Throughout the plane came murmurs of upset and alarm. As the plane juddered and struggled in the night sky, the future seemed ominous.

Then suddenly the minister saw a little girl seated near him. Apparently the storm meant nothing to her. She had tucked her feet beneath her as she sat on her seat; she was reading a book and everything within her small world was calm and orderly.

Despite the buffeting of the terrible storm, and despite the palpable fear of everyone else in the plane, the little girl was completely composed and unafraid. The minister could hardly believe his eyes.

An hour or so later the plane finally reached its destination and all the passengers hurried to disembark. But the minister lingered to speak to the little girl whom he had watched with such astonishment. Having commented about the storm and wild behavior of the plane, he asked why she had not been afraid back there, up in the sky.

"That's easy," the youngster replied, "Cause my Daddy's the pilot, and he's taking me home."

Sometimes in life, we may also feel buffeted and lost. But remember: Our Father is the Pilot, and he, too, is taking us home.

~Author Unknown~

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The death of two navvies on the Ely to Peterborough line on Christmas Eve 1845 elicited this poetic epitaph, inscribed on a tombstone at Ely Cathedral:

THE SPIRITUAL RAILWAY

The line to Heaven by Christ was made
With heavenly truth the rails are laid
From Earth to Heaven the Line extends
To Life Eternal where it ends

Repentance is the Station then
Where Passengers are taken in
No Fee for them is there to pay
For Jesus is himself the way

God's Word is the first Engineer
It points the way to Heaven so clear,
Through tunnels dark and dreary here
It does the way to Glory steer

God's Love the Fire, his Truth the Steam,
Which drives the Engine and the Train
All you who would to Glory ride
Must come to Christ, in him abide

In First and Second, and Third Class,
Repentance, Faith and Holiness
You must the way to Glory gain
Or you with Christ will not remain

Come then poor Sinners, now's the time
At any Station on the Line
If you'll repent and turn from Sin
The train will stop and take you in.

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Editor: Elizabeth Goodridge and Ian Yearsley of Southwark Diocese continue their look at the major challenges of climate change and rising debt...and where God fits in.

Debt and God's freely given gift

Any attempt at a Christian understanding of debt has to reckon with God's gifts being debt-free. Gifts including life, love, relationships, all come free of charge. St. Paul's words in Romans 13, 8: "Owe no-one anything except to love one another" form a pattern of life for a community based not on debt but on gift-giving to the uttermost *. A true gift is without strings; God is not bribing humanity to be faithful; he is expressing his love for us. But it was never easy to relate this to a world of wages, money-prices and bargaining.

Today it is yet more difficult to relate it to a world where debt is at the heart of so much of the economy, both personal and world-wide. Where money, instead of being simply a means of exchange, is treated as though it were a commodity in its own right.

The story of the labourers in the vineyard in Matthew 20, far from being a model for pay policies, is an illustration of God's generosity, offered freely to whomever he chooses. Debt, by contrast, replaces freedom with enslavement. Often described seductively as 'credit', debt it nevertheless remains.

That is why campaigns like Jubilee 2000, to free Third World countries from their enslavement to interest payments on debt, caught the imagination of so many people; they resonated with our half-forgotten memories of Old Testament ethics of debt *.

For Scripture describes opportunities for a fresh start, every fifty years, in the Year of Jubilee. It was then that debts were cancelled. On the Day of Atonement the trumpet sounded to proclaim liberty from debt (Leviticus 25: 8 – 9). Was that the freedom of which Jesus also spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4: 18)? * If so, how do we make that freedom a reality today?

**As quoted by Peter Selby in Grace and Mortgage (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1996)*

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Editor: Charles Wesley, the great hymn-writer, was born in 1707 – 300 years ago. We here continue our series looking at just some of his great hymns. We hope that this series will help your readers to appreciate some of their favourite hymns even more! If you would like the earlier articles in this series, we would be happy to email them to you.

Charles Wesley – 300 years on: A trumpet voice!

Charles Wesley was a classical scholar, an Oxford don, an ordained clergyman, an outstanding hymn-writer – and a passionate evangelist! For 17 years, as a ‘Methodist’ preacher, he itinerated across the British Isles, preaching the gospel mostly out of doors. In later years his ministry was confined mainly to Bristol and London. Church history tells us about the large crowds that gathered to hear the open-air preaching of his brother John Wesley and the preaching of George Whitefield. Charles’ crowds were just as large, the common people loved him dearly and many were converted to Christ under his preaching.

So it is not surprising that the theme of evangelism is very prominent in his hymns. In 1741 he published a collection called ‘Hymns on God’s Everlasting Love’. One of them had ten stanzas outlining the great truths of the gospel and the joy of proclaiming the Good News.

*Let earth and heaven agree
Angels and men be joined
To celebrate with me
The Saviour of mankind.
To adore the all-atoning Lamb
And bless the sound of Jesu’s name.*

Charles Wesley knew that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:12), and he emphasised the great work the Saviour had done.

*No other help is found
No other name is given
By which we can salvation have
But Jesus came the world to save.*

Charles was very skilful at weaving biblical passages into his hymns and in this hymn he used the incident of how the Israelites in the wilderness were stung by scorpions (Numbers 21:6-9). The stricken people were commanded to look at the bronze likeness of a scorpion that Moses had made and all who looked at it were healed. Charles’ hymn ‘Christianises’ this event and speaking of the ‘harmonious’ name of Jesus that the gospel announces to the sinner, he exclaims:

*Stung by the scorpion sin
My poor expiring soul
The balmy sound drinks in
And is at once made whole.
See there my Lord upon the tree,
I hear, I feel He died for me.*

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). His atonement on the cross reconciles us to God and the hymn exults:

*O unexampled Love
O all-redeeming Grace!
How freely didst Thou move
To save a fallen race!*

On Pentecost Sunday morning, 21 May 1738, Charles Wesley experienced God’s salvation and forgiveness of sins. Almost immediately he wanted to tell the good news to others; his evangelical conversion made him an evangelical preacher! In this hymn on the theme of salvation in Christ, he expresses his longing to shout the Good News to the whole world! He wants a trumpet voice!

O for a trumpet voice

*On all the world to call
To bid their hearts rejoice
In Him who died for all.
For all my Lord was crucified
For all, for all my Saviour died.*

In this tercentenary year of Charles Wesley's birth should we not pray that the Church will be given a 'trumpet voice' to proclaim the gospel to the whole world!

Dr Herbert McGonigle is Senior Lecturer in Historical Theology, Church History and Wesley Studies in Nazarene Theological College, Manchester, England.

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Editor: A number of you have requested articles on various people in the Bible. And so the Rev Paul Hardingham of Bolton continues his look at some of the key characters in the Old Testament.

SERMON NOTEBOOK: (People from the Old Testament) - Ezekiel

Ezekiel was one of the Jews who were exiled to Babylon in 597 BC, and helped his people to re-discover their identity in exile. Although a closed book for many Christians today, Ezekiel has vital insights to offer us in our post-Christian society.

The Man Himself

Ezekiel was a priest taken into exile at the age of thirty (1:1). It was at this age that he would have expected to begin ministry in the Temple at Jerusalem. Despite feeling cut off from God's presence (symbolised by the Temple) Ezekiel met with God in a significant way in Babylon.

In what ways have we experienced times of feeling 'cut-off' from God?

God's Vision

God spoke to Ezekiel through a vision of his glory (see chapter 1). It was a bizarre mixture of wheels, living creatures and a throne; however it spoke powerfully of God's transcendence and sovereignty over the whole world. It also reminded Ezekiel that God had not abandoned his people; his presence was not limited to the Temple - he was to be found even in exile.

How should this truth affect our daily choices?

Ezekiel's Call

Ezekiel was told to speak God's word to his fellow Jews, whether they chose to listen or not (see chapters 2&3). As a sign of his commitment to this word, Ezekiel ate a scroll containing the message, which tasted as sweet as honey. God's word had to become central to Ezekiel's life before he could speak it out with authority.

How can we fully digest God's word so that it becomes part of us?

Ezekiel's name means 'God strengthens', which is exactly what God did in the face of the cynicism and rejection of his fellow Jews. Let's pray that we too might know God's strengthening to live out God's word today.

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Are you facing a confrontation?

The blessing of God is on peacemakers, not just peace-lovers. There's a difference: peacemakers pay the price, peace-lovers enjoy the benefits.

Sometimes you've got to 'make waves' before you can make peace. Jesus said if you've got a problem with somebody go to them privately. If that doesn't work, take someone with you who can help. If that fails, take

the matter to the church leadership. If the offender still refuses to respond, then you must love them and leave them in the hands of God. (Matthew 18:17). Those are the steps Jesus gave us for handling conflict. In our modern workaday lives, we can prayerfully adapt these principles to our immediate situation. Paul advised "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone." But sometimes it is NOT possible! And then boundary lines have got to be drawn, and stands made. Peace should never mean a giving in to wrong-doing.

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Looking at You – daily life in the 21st century

Going crazy – yet?

Grandparents wanted!

The Sound of Music

Young and depressed

Baby boomers drink too much

Beware - violent toddlers!

Sleepy workers

**

Editor: You might want to make this local by inviting parents to write in with their tips of how to keep children happy on long trips.... Or you could ring around ahead of time, and publish their tips alongside the article.

Going crazy – yet?

Did you drive children any distance this summer? Then almost certainly you will have heard the immortal phrase: ‘Are we there yet?’

Children ask the question about one hour and 40 minutes into the average car journey, according to a recent survey by the AA. By then they’ve reached the limit of their boredom threshold.

Sadly, as it may take the driver a great deal longer to reach the desired destination, the AA recommends regular breaks – to prevent adults reaching the limit of their patience threshold.

Just out of interest: next time you drive your children any great distance, make a note of what time you set out – and when the words ‘Are we there yet?’ are heard from the back seat...

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Editor: This snippet could be made local if you ring your local school, and find out what openings the school has for grandparents and parents this autumn.

Grandparents wanted!

Grandparents should go back to school. That is the verdict of Ofsted, who has discovered what a good difference their presence in the classroom can make on students’ behaviour and motivation.

Ofsted has found that schools who encourage the involvement of wider family members have seen significant improvement in their children’s attitudes and achievements. Grandparents can be invaluable in helping with reading and in other lessons. Those from ethnic minorities are also valued as translators and role models for the pupils.

**

Editor: This is fun. Why not ring around four or five people in your church, inviting them to share what music they most enjoy for various activities – and how it helps them. For example, what does the minister listen to while writing sermons?

The Sound of Music

The sound of music can release the same ‘feelgood’ chemicals as eating, winning a bet, taking drugs, or even having sex, researchers have found.

Music activates the part of the brain which is responsible for feeling pleasure, excitement and satisfaction, according to the neuroscientist Prof Daniel Levitin of McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

When a person listens to songs or tunes they enjoy, they experience a release of dopamine, the hormone linked to reward and happiness.

He said: "Research shows that music has specific effects on the body's physiology, including heart rate, respiration, sweating and mental activity. Music is effective at moderating arousal levels, concentration, and helping to regulate mood through its action on the brain's natural chemistry. People who can have music follow them around during their daily lives can use these properties of music effectively, to form a soundtrack for their day and their lives."

Research found that instrumental music such as classical, jazz, techno or bluegrass is best for people studying. Lively tunes with a tempo above 96 beats per minutes are best for anyone doing cooking, cleaning or household chores.

**

Editor: If you have teachers or doctors in your church, you may want to show this to them, and invite them to add a comment. They may be able to offer some advice to worried parents. Or perhaps there are parents in your church who may have some tips on how they protect their children from the stresses of modern life?

Young and depressed

Are your children depressed? The number of under-16s on antidepressants and other mind-altering drugs has more than quadrupled in the past decade.

Recent figures reveal that last year GPs treated under-16s with mental health problems 631,000 times, as compared with 146,000 in the mid-Nineties.

Children needed the help to combat stress, violent behaviour and even tiredness. The huge increase in mental illness has been brought on by family breakdown and high-stakes school exams.

The figures were recently quoted by David Laws, the Liberal Democrat shadow children's secretary. He said: "It shows some of the pressure many youngsters are under – their lives are chaotic and there isn't much stability at home."

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Editor: Few people will publicly admit to drinking too much! But this may alert some of them to the potential problem.

Baby boomers drink too much

It's not just young people who are drinking too much: beware the baby boomers. Now entering their 60s, baby boomers are likely to drink more alcohol in old age than their parents did, simply because they have always drunk more.

Recent research from Brunel University warns that this could create problems, as age affects the body's ability to metabolise alcohol. People should therefore reduce consumption with age. They should drink less than The Food Standards Agency's current recommendation of three to four units a day for men, and no more than two or three units a day for women. A unit is half a pint of standard strength beer. A glass of wine is about two units. Currently, there are no official guidelines for older people.

**

Editor: This may be of real help to young parents. You could run it, and then invite any parents in your church to share their tips for entertaining children without excessive TV...

Beware - violent toddlers!

Watching too much television can make toddlers aggressive and leave them with a poor attention span.

Yet recent research has found that by the age of three months, 50% of children are regular viewers of TV, video or DVDs. By the time they are two, 90% of them are regular viewers.

The study, published in the American Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine journal, follows a warning from a British psychologist who is alarmed by the number of British children who spend hours each day slumped in front of the TV. It is “the greatest unacknowledged health threat of our time,” says Dr Aric Sigman, as associate fellow of the British Psychological Society. He advises that children under three should not be allowed to watch any TV at all..

Dr Sigman recently advised MPs that TV viewing should be rationed. Children aged 3 to 7 should be limited to about thirty minutes a day. Seven to 12 year olds could be allowed an hour daily. This would be raised to 90 minutes for 12 to 15 year olds, and two hours a day for the over 16s.

The National Literacy Trust in London said: “It is alarming just how many young children have TVs in their bedrooms. That is to be discouraged, because it is very isolating. It is very sad... a baby ...would be very happy to just listen to a parent pottering around the kitchen and talking.” So – try turning the TV off this evening!

**

Editor: You might make this local by inviting people to say how they spend their weekend – and how much sleep they get! You might wish to choose the members of your choir, or the church council, or a specific group, such as couples under 30, for example..

Sleepy workers

Do your weekends burn you out? If so, you are not alone. It seems that many people are so exhausted after late-night weekends that they return to work on Monday with a ‘sleep debt’ equivalent to a night flight from New York.

Two thirds of people admit going to work on Mondays feeling cranky and unproductive. They are thought to cost £120 million a year in wasted wages, as each one spends an extra 20 minutes a day dreaming and making coffee before settling to work.

The survey was carried out by the recruitment firm, Office Angels.

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Looking at your CHURCH and Christians worldwide

Back to Church Sunday - 30 September - takes off across the country

Aye Carumba! The Simpsons help liven up Christian teaching

How Harvest Festivals began

Onward Christian bloggers

Some rural churches are growing!

YouTube provides new online audience for Church Army

New teens mag – for girls with minds as well as spirit

WHO ARE THEY? – the Methodist Churches

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Editor: If your minister is going to hold this in your church, this article might be useful by way of 'back up'. More information about Back to Church Sunday can be found at: www.backtochurch.co.uk

Back to Church Sunday - 30 September - takes off across the country

More than 17,000 people are expected to return to church at the end of this month (September) as Back to Church Sunday expands to take in 1700 churches across England.

In all, more than one in 10 of the Church of England's churches are taking part.

With 19 dioceses involved this year, the 1700 churches is a tenfold increase on the 160 churches that took up the venture when it began, in Manchester, in 2004. The dioceses involved are Bath and Wells, Birmingham, Blackburn, Chelmsford, Chester, Coventry, Derby, Ely, Exeter, Guildford, Lichfield, Manchester, Oxford, Peterborough, Ripon and Leeds, Rochester, Southwark, Southwell and Nottingham and Wakefield.

On past records, participating churches welcome back an average of 10 former worshippers each, meaning that 17,000 people could come back to church in one day in September; equivalent to one per cent of the total monthly attendance of the Church of England.

Recent research revealed nearly three million people would consider going to church with 'the right invitation'.

The Bishop of Manchester said: "Inviting people into church is as important as taking the Gospel out to them. With three million ready to consider a personal invitation, the growth of Back to Church Sunday could prove one of the most effective aspects of the Church's witness."

**

Editor: This may be of interest to your young-at-heart readers...would your own church be interested in using the book as a basis for an autumn course?

Aye Carumba! The Simpsons help liven up Christian teaching

The exploits of Bart, Lisa, Maggie, Marge and Homer Simpson - alongside the other animated residents of Springfield - are being used to encourage children to reflect on the big issues in life in a new book from the Church of England.

Along with the recent first Simpsons' feature film, 'Mixing it up with The Simpsons' suggests screening extracts from episodes of the hit show to invigorate church youth group programmes, as part of a new series providing contemporary material for youth workers to use in mid-week groups or 'Sunday School' settings.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, is known to be a fan of the American animated series, and believes that it represents "one of the most subtle pieces of propaganda around in the cause of sense,

humility and virtue." With its compelling characters and comical storylines, the Church hopes that Springfield will become a springboard for discussion of important themes.

After watching the suggested sections from the animation, groups using the book are guided through a range of discussions on the emerging theme, relevant Bible passages are listed to present the Christian perspective, and a 'prayer activity' is provided to conclude the session.

'Mixing it up with The Simpsons' (ISBN 978 0 7151 4104 5) is priced £8.99 and is available from Christian bookshops including Church House Bookshop, on the web at: www.chbookshop.co.uk.

**

Editor: Churches across the country will soon be holding their Harvest Festivals. Here is a piece to remind people of what they are all about...

How Harvest Festivals began

Our Harvest Festivals have very ancient origins. Festivals that celebrate the harvest by giving thanks to God have been held right back in time to hundreds of years before Jesus. You can read about them in Leviticus (chapter 23) and Deuteronomy (chapter 15 & 16).

In Old Testament times, the first thanksgiving of the year was Passover, with the sacrifice of the first spring lamb and presentation of the first sheaf of wheat. The wheat harvest went on for fifty days and ended with the Festival of Weeks, Shavuot, (Pentecost, meaning 'fiftieth'). Later there was the Feast of Tabernacles, a celebration of the wine harvest.

These were all offerings of first fruits at the shrine, or Temple, to thank God for liberation from Egypt and the desert and for the gift of the Law, as well as for the provision of food. Thus they linked thanksgiving for that year's food with Israel's historical faith in being the chosen people of God. God was always to be thanked, for the land was the Lord's, and the people of Israel had only a 'life interest' in it.

Some produce was to be left on the vine or in the field for 'the alien, the fatherless and the widow' because: 'Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt therefore I am commanding you to do this' Deut 24.21.

In Deuteronomy – a very practical book - it says that if it is not possible to transport the animals and grain, they could be converted into money and taken to the shrine, where other animals and grain could be bought with the money, offered and eaten. (Tithing to support the servants of the Temple, the Levites, also developed from these offerings.)

In Britain, for many years, there were unofficial religious festivals of thanksgiving for the harvest. By the mid-nineteenth century 'it was common to hold an annual parochial festival', which linked the gift of the fruits of the earth with our responsibility to God to use them 'to his glory, for our own well being and for the relief of those in need'. The emphasis thus became less on 'first fruits', and more on thankfulness for the ingathering of the harvest.

So this autumn's Harvest Festival is still a reminder to give thanks to God. And we bring gifts of food and money to help God's work of feeding other people, near and far.

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Editor: This may interest the bloggers among your readers!

Onward Christian bloggers

Christians with blogs and websites have been sharing their sites with a national audience by entering the first

Christian Blog Awards at www.christianblogawards.com, this summer.

The awards, created by Premier Christian Media, the parent organisation of Premier Radio and Christianity Magazine, will see eight Christian websites and blogs celebrated at a black tie event at St Stephen Wallbrook, the internet church, this month (September).

"Worldwide, the blogging phenomenon is growing, and the impact it is having on faith is staggering." Awards host and radio presenter Maria Toth said. "Christians are using blogs and websites to evangelise, share counsel, have fellowship, resource one another and join together in prayer."

Christians of all denominations have been encouraged to enter their own blogs and websites, alongside those of their church by logging onto www.christianblogawards.com.

Blogs and websites must be entered under one of the following categories: Most Original Worship Blog, Most Inspiring Leadership Blog, Most Successful Evangelistic Blog, Best Christian Newcomer Blog, Best Young Christian Blog (under 25), Best Christian Review Site, Best Provision for Youth Blog or Website and Best Church Website.

**

Editor: If your church is in a rural area, this may be of interest.

Some rural churches are growing!

What is it that Ryedale in North Yorkshire, Cannock Chase in Staffordshire and Herefordshire have in common?

They are all rural areas where the church grew between 1998 and 2005. The reason was similar in all three areas – a number of families had moved into the area with young children, and a sufficient number of these started attending church so that the percentage of children in the congregations was greater than the average in other parts of the county or (in Herefordshire's case) country.

The parents were part of the 350,000 people who, between 2000 and 2003, decided to "greenshift", that is, move from the urban or suburban area where they were living to some of the more remote rural areas in Britain. These parents were often those who make a living through working on the internet or web; they are an increasing phenomenon in the 21st century.

Many rural churches share a minister and therefore depend on lay people to help run the youth work, or other community work during the week. Having young families in the congregation will mean that there are some in their late 20s or 30s with energy and willingness to help with the leadership. The church thus gains from an infusion of young people (often changing the age structure), greater energy from volunteers and the opportunity of welcoming new people – all positive elements which impact the church and its ministry. The consequence is simply stated: growth!

By Dr Peter Brierley, former Executive Director, Christian Research

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Editor: For enthusiasts of YouTube!

YouTube provides new online audience for Church Army

Who would ever have dreamed that a 125 year old mission agency would be using the world's most popular video sharing website to share stories of faith in words and action?

YouTube, with an estimated 20 million visitors each month now hosts short stories of Church Army evangelists reaching out to their communities with the gospel through new and exciting fresh expressions of

church. The featured videos focus on the work of a skateboarding evangelist, a former Sikh and others working in urban, inner city and rural settings. The Church Army page on YouTube aims to showcase the good work being done by its 300 or so evangelists all over the UK and Ireland.

**

Editor: Here is a new magazine for teenage girls. It is well worth supporting – compare it with what is on offer for them in the local newsagents!

If you have a number of teenage girls in your church, you may want to ask your minister about buying in some copies on the special introductory offer, and giving them out as free samples.

New teens mag – for girls with minds as well as spirit

Caris is a new, glossy, teenage lifestyle magazine for 11 to 16-year-old girls with ‘minds as well as bodies’. The 48-page, handbag-sized publication includes real-life stories, fashion, music, beauty, campaigns and reviews – all informed by Christian values, but without being preachy.

Christine Miles, Editor of Caris said, ‘Girls have big questions to deal with. In our target age-range, girls are changing from children into adults. They have questions about themselves and the world around them. Part of the job of Caris is to help girls to think through serious topics.

‘Girls don’t need more pressure to buy things. Caris features new products, events, festivals, fashion and accessories etc. But our editorial doesn’t push a ‘must have – must buy’ agenda or unrealistic, celebrity lifestyles.’

In a recent feature on a pilot edition of Caris, the Independent on Sunday asked teenage girls about the magazines aimed at their age group. Tayra Fuentes, 13, said: ‘Other magazines make you feel like you’re growing up too quickly - you’ve got to get a boy, got to wear lots of make-up. This one shows there are other things to worry about, like school and friends and sports.’

Caris magazine has been developed by the Church Times with the backing of individuals – called Caris Angels – as well as trusts and charities; 50,000 copies of the first issue were to be distributed free at youth festivals and through youth groups nationally in August and September. The cover price is £2.50, but youth groups ordering more than 10 copies pay only £1 a copy. For details or to become a Caris Angel visit www.carismag.co.uk or write to Caris, 13-17 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9PN.

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Editor: Here is the eighth in a series which will trace the background of ALL the major Christian denominations. It runs long, but we think it well worth the two – or even two and half pages needed in your magazine! If you would like the earlier articles in the series, we would be happy to email them to you.

WHO ARE THEY? - where did all the Christian denominations come from? Methodist Churches

All the various branches of the Methodist Church date back to the 18th century ‘Methodists’ in Britain. The description ‘Methodist’ was given to the group that began in Oxford University in about 1728 under the leadership of Charles Wesley. Later John Wesley became the leader and while other epithets like ‘Bible Moths,’ ‘Bible Bigots,’ ‘Sacramentarians’ and ‘Holy Club’ were heaped on them, it was ‘Methodist’ that stuck and became permanent.

These first Oxford ‘Methodists’ were all Anglicans. Their desire was to pursue a holy life and be active in good works. At Easter 1735 one of their number, George Whitefield, experienced an evangelical conversion, and this was followed at Pentecost 1738 with the conversions of Charles and John Wesley.

Soon afterwards both Whitefield and the Wesleys, all three ordained ministers in the Church of England, were forced to preach out-of-doors. This was because the Anglican Church, in general, did not favour the evangelical fervour of this 'Methodist' preaching. Whitefield and the Wesleys not only emphasised that all people need to be born again but declared that we can know our sins forgiven. The Holy Spirit will give us the certainty of salvation in our hearts. This is in line with Paul's words in Romans 8:16 that the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits that 'we are children of God.' The Established Church rejected these doctrines as gross 'enthusiasm' and when the church doors closed against them, these 'Methodists' took the gospel to the streets.

When John Wesley died in 1791, there were about 70,000 people enrolled in the Methodist Societies in Britain and about 30,000 in America. Himself a very loyal Anglican, John Wesley had always hoped that the Church of England would embrace the Methodist Revival but this didn't happen. Early in the 19th century these Methodist Societies became more independent of the Anglican Church and finally became totally independent.

The largest group were the Wesleyan Methodists, the immediate followers of John and Charles Wesley. The followers of George Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon were known as Calvinistic Methodists. Later the Countess organised her own followers into the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion. The Calvinistic Methodists, mostly in Wales, later became the Welsh Presbyterians. The Wesleyan Methodists grew rapidly in the first half of the 19th century and other Methodist groups also appeared. The first was the Methodist New Connexion, organised in Leeds in 1797. Then came the Primitive Methodists whose beginnings were in Staffordshire in 1807. Later the Bible Christians emerged in Shebbear in Devon in 1815.

These various groups were not the result of any doctrinal divisions; rather they resulted from disputes over the role of lay people in the church and differing attitudes to revivalism. In 1932 the various Methodist groups in Britain joined together to form The Methodist Church of Great Britain.

The Methodist Church in America soon outgrew its mother organisation in Britain. As early as the 1780s the Methodists were sending missionaries to the Caribbean Islands and other places. Methodism became a world church in the 20th century and its current world membership is about 60 million. Other Church groups like the Holiness Churches and some Pentecostal Churches grew out of Methodism. Most of the world Methodist Churches have bishops except the British Methodist Church. This reflects John Wesley's outlook that although he did ordain some of his preachers, he adamantly refused to be called a bishop. He famously said, 'Men may call me a knave, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content. But they shall never, by my consent, call me Bishop!'

Although it is an independent Church, Methodism has always leaned towards Anglicanism, a reminder of John Wesley's love for the Church in which he lived and died. In Britain there have been 'Conversations' between Methodists and Anglicans about a union of the two Churches but so far this has not happened. In its worship Methodism often reflects its Anglican origins by having some elements of liturgy in its services, combined with its Nonconformist practices.

The most distinctive feature of Methodist worship has always been its congregational singing. Charles Wesley gave the 18th century 'Methodists' more than six thousand hymns to sing and this is the origin of the saying, 'Methodism was born in song.' John Wesley encouraged the 'Methodists' to sing, gave them 'Directions' for congregational singing and published *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists* in 1779. Methodists worldwide still sing some of Charles Wesley's most famous hymns, including 'And can it be?' 'O for a thousand tongues,' 'Love divine, all loves excelling,' 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' 'Rejoice, the Lord is King,' 'Christ the Lord is risen today.'

Doctrinally Methodists are classic Trinitarian and evangelical Christians. What developed as 'The Four Alls of Methodism' gives a good summary of Methodist (i.e. Wesleyan) doctrine. First, all people need salvation. John Wesley stressed the biblical doctrine of the Fall. We are all sinners and salvation is not by our works, or our religious persuasion or even by our orthodox doctrine but only by faith through grace. Second, all people can have salvation. Methodism has always stressed the universal love of God and that Christ died for

the sins of the world. John Wesley was strongly opposed to any doctrines that limited the scope of salvation. This is not universalism; meaning that all people will be saved; rather it means that all can be saved.

Third, all the saved can know they are saved. This is often referred to as the doctrine of assurance or the witness of the Spirit. In line with Romans 8:16 it proclaims that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that 'we are children of God.' Fourthly, historic Methodism preached that all who are saved can be saved completely. This was John Wesley's insistence on what he called scriptural holiness. By God's grace and the indwelling Spirit, Christians are enabled to have victory over all sin and to 'love God with all their heart ... and their neighbour as themselves' (Matt. 22:37-39).

Dr Herbert McGonigle is Senior Lecturer in Historical Theology, Church History and Wesley Studies in Nazarene Theological College, Manchester, England.

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Looking at your COMMUNITY

Jonathan Webb – World Cup player with a chocolate éclair
World Animal Day – 4 October
Faith and finance: making ethical choices
Fewer approve of road safety claims
Yews for the Millennium

**

Editor: September means the World Cup! So this may interest your readers.

Jonathan Webb – World Cup rugby player with a chocolate éclair

Some players go through a career without ever playing in a World Cup. Jonathan Webb got his first cap for England in the World Cup! He went on to play in a second one.

The 1987 World Cup was in the amateur era with no substitutes except for injury. Dr Jonathan Webb had got leave from the hospital and sat on the bench as an uncapped reserve full-back to watch England play Australia. He recalls having “a chocolate éclair in my mouth”.

When Marcus Rose the England fullback was flattened in about the second minute by the Australian winger, everything changed suddenly. Rose was knocked unconscious and out of the whole World Cup. Jonathan was gaining his first England cap. He went on to play in four games and score 43 points. England lost in the quarter-final to Wales.

As a place-kicker in club rugby, he was quickly called upon to perform that role for England. “It was nerve wracking to say the least. I had always been used as a kicker and was now being thrust into the same role in the limelight of an international. This was another step up. The pressure not to fail was enough to make me sweat”. He managed 43 points in the tournament.

When the 1991 World Cup came around, Jonathan was an established member of the England team. The World Cup was in England with some games in neighbouring countries. England faced France in Paris in the quarter-final. “It was a monumental game. The atmosphere was incredible. I had never been in a match like it”. Jonathan’s nerve held when he landed a crucial place kick at 10-10, which set England up for a 19-10 win.

The semi-final saw England beat Scotland 9-6 in Edinburgh. Jonathan recalls it as “a tight, dour game, often remembered for Gavin Hastings’ missed kicks but that let me off the hook as I missed kicks as well”.

In the final England lost 12-6 to Australia with Webb kicking two penalties. “The score does not reflect the intensity. Our pack had a huge possession advantage; we pressurised them for much of the game but they had a superb defence and we couldn't break it down”.

Jonathan grew up in a Christian family but rejected his parents’ faith as a teenager. It was rugby that brought him back. “The pressure of playing international rugby made me search for answers, ways to withstand the pressure. There is great pressure to succeed and my own fear of failure was very real. As a place-kicker you are very exposed. The fear of failure is a terrible inhibitor and if you haven't taken account of it or try to ignore it, it will find you out.

“I couldn't find any easy answers. Friends saying ‘good luck’ or ‘you will be okay’ was great but not really helpful when the crunch comes and you are standing over the vital kick. I started to read the Bible. Some of what I read was not initially very helpful. Jesus did not promise me that I would be a successful rugby player. He promised, rather, that if I had disaster it would be the best thing for me and that he would give me comfort in hard times. It was a great comfort to know that the worst thing that could happen could be the best thing

for me and that he was in control. Now I would say that my relationship with Jesus underpins or overarches everything I do.”

Then at the age of 30 Jonathan retired from rugby. “Rugby was always a hobby that just took off further than I thought it would. Medicine was my career and I had a family. I was living in Bristol, working in Swindon, playing for Bath and studying in Oxford. Something had to go. With some sadness but no real regret I stopped playing”. He now works as an orthopaedic surgeon in Bristol, sometimes treating injured rugby players.

Of the World Cup he says “New Zealand are favourites but haven’t we said that for the last two World Cups? This time they have got to deliver. England are not far from being a good team. They have good players. A few tweaks here and there is all that is needed”.

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*Editor: You may wish to ask your minister if your church could somehow remember animals on this day. Idea might include an animal service, or else a collection to raise money for needy animals in your locality. If you do decide to do something in your church, the notes below may be of use....
If you do decide to do something, the WAD people would love to hear from you. Contact them at: World Animal Day, 14 Hewlett Road, Cheltenham GL52 6AA. Telephone: 01242 252871 Email: info@worldanimalday.org.uk*

World Animal Day – 4 October

World Animal Day takes place every year on 4 October. The aim is to unite the animal welfare movement by encouraging people to use this special day to express their love and concern for animals.

There are lots of ways to get involved: for some ideas, visit www.worldanimalday.org.uk

Our church is going to hold a collection on the day, and donate the money raised to our local animal shelter,

Or you might wish to bring a tin of dog or cat food to church on that day, for us to send on the local shelter.

Our church is also considering sponsoring a shelter animal that cannot be rehomed ...

Our church will help raise funds for the local shelter by holding a coffee morning/car boot/garage sale on the morning of.....

We are going to make our churchyard more wildlife-friendly, by setting up a wild corner/ birdbath/or table/water feature/ planting bee-friendly plants.....

**

Editor: Philip Barron, our community reporter, considers your money - and ethics.

Faith and finance: making ethical choices

Whether you want to invest savings or just choose a green energy supplier, you could find it helpful to browse a new section at Moneyfacts, the independent website that monitors matters of personal finance.* The new section covers specifically companies that claim to have an ethical policy, and compares their products.

The Co-operative Bank, which has had a mandatory ethical policy for 15 years, stated in a recent report that ethical consumerism is now worth £26bn per year, with ethical personal finance alone accounting for £11.5bn. But with so much noise in the market, it can be hard to make the best choices.

Commenting on the new move by Moneyfacts, Alex Gibbons, Head of Personal Banking at another ethical bank, Triodos, said: “Increasingly people care about the impact of their money. But it can be difficult to distinguish between products that really make a difference, and headline-grabbing accounts with little lasting benefit for the environment. An independent source of green and ethical savings accounts is welcome.”

The new service coincides with the release of a statement by the Manchester Centre for Public Theology on faith-based economics, in which the authors bring together Christian and Muslim insights.

From the Christian viewpoint, the statement says “We are committed as churches and Christians, working with others...to building up the social capital of communities, through our distinctive contribution of religious capital.”

Another part of the statement looks at the theory and practice of Islamic finance. “The core Islamic belief is that the universe is created and controlled by the One God... Obedience to God is required not only in worship but also in economic activities, even though it is at the price of some benefits, because these benefits may go against the collective interests of society.”

* The website is at <http://www.moneyfacts.co.uk/ethical/default.aspx>

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Editor: What do your readers think of road cameras? You might run this article, and invite them to write in with their comments! Ask them if they would ban cameras, or increase them!

Fewer approve of road safety claims

Public approval for road safety cameras has now fallen to 69 per cent, compared to 90 per cent in 1999. This seems to be due to motorists’ cynicism about where and why ‘speed’ cameras are used, and the Institute of Advanced Motorists is concerned.

Just 35 per cent of respondents to a survey by the IAM Motoring Trust believed that cameras are positioned only at serious crash-sites, and only 42 per cent believed that revenue-raising was not the motive for using speed cameras.

However, there has been a huge increase in the number of drivers caught speeding by cameras. Among those surveyed, 28 per cent said that they, or a member of their household, had been ‘flashed and fined’ in the last three years, compared to 18 per cent in 2002.

Under new rules introduced this year, road-safety funding for local authorities will be linked to lowering of death and injury rates. Until now, the practice of funding enforcement operations from motoring fines served to increase cynicism and reduce public support.

Kevin Delaney, Head of Road Safety for the IAM Motoring Trust, says: “Breaking the link between enforcement and revenue should encourage local authorities to deploy the right counter-measure for each safety problem, and use cameras only where they are the best tool for the job. The Government must ensure that the new funding arrangements not only fulfil the prime aim of reducing death and injury, but also convince motorists that, properly deployed, ‘speed’ cameras really are ‘road safety’ cameras.”

For older drivers and others who might feel they could benefit, the IAM has introduced DriveCheck, a short Driving Assessment aimed at anyone who is interested in getting reassurance about the safety of their driving. It is friendly and informal and isn’t a pass/fail test.

Applicants are put in touch with their local IAM Group who will arrange a mutually convenient time for the assessment, which takes about an hour. It comprises an initial introduction followed by a 35-40 minute drive with the Group Observer; then there’s a feedback session.

For further info on DriveCheck, call 0208 996 9600 or email: inquiries@iam.org.uk.

**

Editor: We continue our series by David Shreeve of the Conservation Foundation, which reports on environmental issues around the country. This one may be of interest if you have planted a yew tree – or would still like to do so!

Yews for the Millennium

Did you plant a Millennium Yew? A lot of people did. Almost half the parishes in the country took part in a unique tree planting project to celebrate the year 2000.

The project began in 1987 when The Conservation Foundation launched a campaign to raise the awareness of ancient yew trees throughout the country, many of which are found in churchyards. The project involved measuring trees and recording their positions in respect of the church building in order to estimate ages. Certificates recording the estimated ages were provided so that awareness of the trees' age could be promoted and their preservation encouraged.

Many trees were estimated to be older than their church! That suggests that the site may have been used for worship before Christian times or that a place of worship may have once stood near the site.

As the Millennium year approached David Bellamy and David Shreeve came up with the idea of propagating from some of the trees estimated to be 2000 years old or more to provide young trees which could trace their roots back to the time of Christ.

The response from parishes was overwhelming, with some 8500 Millennium Yews given away at distribution services in all the dioceses. Many of the trees were planted in 2000 and are now well established and several feet tall, but some were considered too small to be planted at the time and have been nurtured in their pots slowly growing to become suitable for planting in their future churchyard homes.

The Conservation Foundation is still able to supply replacement trees for Millennium Yews which failed to grow, or met untimely ends. Next year more young trees will be available for parishes which did not order a tree for Millennium, but who still wish to plant a tree with links to the time of Christ.

As part of the Foundation's 25th Anniversary celebrations thirty three of the original cuttings taken from ancient yews around England and Wales have been planted at The National Arboretum at Westonbirt, Gloucestershire where they will form part of a unique collection of this country's tree heritage.

Full details see www.conservationfoundation.co.uk tel: 020 7591 3111

Reviews

God's Gentle Whisper: Developing a Responsive Heart to God

Praying with Paul

Bible Turn and Learn

The Hansie Cronje Story - an authorised biography

Dead Women Walking - how three Taiwanese girls overcame horrendous opposition

Why Do People Suffer?

Alternative Medicine: The Options, the Claims, the Evidence...

**

God's Gentle Whisper: Developing a Responsive Heart to God

By Denise George, Christian Focus, £7.99.

“Why don't I hear God's voice?” is a thought, maybe even a cry that every Christian has uttered to themselves. We yearn to hear God's voice speak to us but also have a curious impatience for his answers. We live in a society that has only three standards of results – ‘I want it now’, ‘I might just be able to wait until tomorrow’ and ‘I'll get it somewhere else!’ It's not surprising that we can't wait for, or often hear, God's voice in our lives.

Denise George challenges us to seek an intimate dynamic relationship with God through three aspects of waiting on him in prayer:

We know him by listening with our heart.

We love him by hearing his voice.

We serve him by responding to his gentle whisper.

Denise George is well known for her inspirational books. Her husband Timothy is the executive editor of Christianity Today and is the founding dean of Beeson Divinity school in America.

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Praying with Paul

By Tom Smail, BRF, £6.99

Most of us, when we think of the apostle Paul, may not immediately think of ‘prayer’, despite the fact that Paul uses the word ‘pray’ in his letters twice as much as ‘salvation’ or ‘justified’.

There have been extensive studies of Paul's thoughts on the great mysteries of election and justification, yet there are few books celebrating and exploring his life of prayer.

Acclaimed speaker, minister and author Tom Smail addresses this paucity head on in this book of stimulating Bible-based teaching. He considers the practice of prayer as demonstrated by Paul, drawing on key chapters in his letters.

After 15 years of parish ministry in his native Scotland and four in the troubled Northern Ireland of the early 70s, Tom Smail joined the Fountain Trust, promoting charismatic renewal in Britain and beyond. From 1979 - 85 he was Vice-Principal and Lecturer in Doctrine at St John's College, Nottingham, and then led a church in Croydon until retirement in 1994.

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Bible Turn and Learn

By Sally Ann Wright, BRF, £7.99

This simple Bible in 40 short episodes is ideal for inquisitive toddlers as they find out about Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, Moses, Joshua, and more, and also learn about the life and teachings of Jesus.

Very young children can take an active part in the storytelling, turning the wheel to choose the right pictures to match the short stories.

**

The Hansie Cronje Story - an authorised biography

By Garth King, Monarch, £9.99

Hansie Cronje captained the South African cricket team for six years and played in 68 Test Matches. Statistically he remains South Africa's greatest cricket captain ever. His global popularity stemmed from his bright and boyish approach to life, a man with the common touch but a ruthless dedication to excellence. His well-known spirituality added to the legend - and made his controversial involvement with the Indian gambling mafia even more incredible.

Accused of match-fixing and other irregularities, Hansie made a dramatic confession to the South African Commission of Inquiry, watched live by a global TV audience. He was banned for life from any involvement in cricket by the United Cricket Board of South Africa. When, two years later, he died in a plane crash, he was still picking up the pieces of his life, faith and future.

A journalist by profession, Garth King has been senior editor on the South African edition of Reader's Digest.

**

Dead Women Walking - how three Taiwanese girls overcame horrendous opposition to find faith

By Jennifer Su, Lion, £8.99

Mei Chen had spent her life running, from sexual abuse, violence and the spirits. The drugs no longer dulled their voices, and she couldn't escape. She was suicidal.

Ling and Yufen are two other women ruled by the spirits they worship, equally overtaken by misfortune and disaster. To escape the mess of broken relationships and painful memories seems impossible.

Taiwan's churches have reached the middle classes, but for these working-class women old superstitions held sway, compounded by brutality and drug use. These three stories, skilfully intertwined, show that no situation is beyond the reach of God's grace.

**

Why Do People Suffer?

James Jones, Lion, £6.99

“It is remarkable that in a world of such dreadful suffering so many people should persist in believing in a good and loving God. It is in spite of the evil, and not because of it, that people hold on to such a faith. The fact of suffering is the strongest and the loudest argument against there being a God at all.”

Why does a God of love allow such evil in the world? Did God make evil? What sort of God would create a world of pain and suffering? Why doesn't he do something to help us?

It is questions such as these that make believing in God so difficult for many people, and not just for those who are suffering at the time. *Why do people suffer?* addresses these questions with sensitivity and candour, helping the reader to think through the issues and offering hope in a God who understands and shares in our suffering.

James Jones has served Anglican parishes in Bristol and Croydon. He is currently Bishop of Liverpool and a regular contributor to BBC Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day'.

**

Alternative Medicine: The Options, the Claims, the Evidence...
By Donal O'Mathuna and Walt Larimore M.D., Zondervan, £13.99

Easy to use, this thoroughly revised and expanded edition of Alternative Medicine keeps pace with the latest findings and developments in alternative medicine. Here is the most comprehensive, current, well-balanced, and trustworthy information available from both a scientific and a biblical perspective.

People in the West are increasingly spending more and more money on alternative medicine. By 2002, 18.6 percent of Americans were using herbal remedies, not including vitamins and dietary supplements not of plant origin. No longer can it be said that alternative medicine is a small fringe market. It is a major business enterprise with all of the advantages and limitations that this brings.

Before you embark on any path that takes you into the world of alternative medicine, even to buy an herbal remedy suggested by a friend, we recommend that you investigate the realities of alternative medicine — the prospective benefits as well as the potential costs and the risks you might face. Not all stories are positive.

A researcher for the British Research Council for Complementary Medicine visited twenty-nine health food stores in London asking advice about frequent, severe headaches. Her fictitious symptoms were carefully chosen so that a trained professional would easily recognize them as suggesting a brain tumor or other serious problem. The researcher was told by health food store employees that her headaches were caused by the flu, low blood sugar, tension, the weather, or using her brain too much. Forty-two different therapies were recommended, with no consistency in the advice given. At fewer than one in four of the stores was the researcher advised to see a physician.

PRAYERS and POEMS

Sheep's Tale
September
Night Sanctification
Repentance
Evil all about us

**

Sheep's Tale
(Luke 15:1-7)

I didn't know I was lost,
Just thought I'd try a new path,
Walk a different way for a while.
After all, the rest of the flock
Seemed so comfortable, so sure of themselves.
I'd sometimes felt alone
Even with the ninety-nine all around me.
Then there was my voice - always one bleat behind,
And just because I sat behind that particular bush
Where the ewes always congregate,
I got pushed to the edge of the flock.
So, yes, I'd strayed a bit,
But I wouldn't say I was lost exactly,
Just wandering.

That was until night fell,
And I fell
Deep into danger,
Far from the flock,
Lonely and yes, lost now
And wanting so much to go home,
Not knowing how,
Needing help,
And the night so dark.

Then out of darkness
His voice of light,
Searching,
His arms of rescue,
Saving,

His heart of love,
Rejoicing
Because he found me,
My Shepherd.

He came to look
For *me*.

Daphne Kitching

**

September

There are twelve months throughout the year,
From January to December –
And the primest month of all the twelve
Is the merry month of September!
Then apples so red
Hang overhead,
And nuts ripe-brown
Come showering down
In the bountiful days of September!

There are flowers enough in the summer-time,
More flowers than I can remember –
But none the purple, gold and red
That dye the flowers of September!
And the sun looks through
A clearer blue,
And the moon at night
Sheds a clearer light
On the beautiful flowers of September!

Mary Howitt

**

Night Sanctification

Father, bless me and my body keep,
Father, bless me in my soul;
Father, bless me through this night of sleep,
In my body and my soul.

Father, bless me as I live my days,
Father, bless me in my creed;
Father, bless me in my binding ways,
To my life and to my creed.

Father, sanctify to me my speech,
Father, sanctify my heart;
Father, sanctify my portion each,
In my speech and in my heart.

From Poems of the Western Highlanders

**

Repentance

Lord God, take pity on me.
During my infancy I ignored you;
During my boyhood I had no interest in you.
During my adolescence I pursued vain pleasures.
But now, Lord Jesus, I crave your mercy.
I want to know you,
I want to understand your truth,
I want to feel your joy.

Richard Rolle (c 1300 – 1349) Hermit in Yorkshire

**

Evil all about us

Lord, I don't understand how people do the horrible things to each other which I read about in the newspapers. Lord, I cry to you to help those who inflict such injuries. Take hatred from their hearts; give them understanding of the evil they do. Strengthen the persecuted; give them courage and a firm belief in you.

Give me and all who try to serve you the desire to serve the suffering and fill us with the love with will defeat the power of evil in the world.

Michael Hollings, 1921 – 1997 A Catholic priest in London who was acutely politically and socially aware.

**

St James the Least of All - September

Editor: The Rev Dr Gary Bowness continues his letters from 'Uncle Eustace'...

**

On plums, dull sermons, falling leaves and Harvest

The Rectory,
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

It is good to be back from my holidays – even if I discovered on arriving home that, as I motored back with my car full of my exchange colleague's plums in the boot, he was doing the same with my apples; I had expected better of him.

I was equally disappointed that he insisted on inviting parishioners back to the Rectory after Mattins for a sherry, as it creates a dangerous precedent. That he entertained them on my sherry was a step too far. I think a letter of reproach will be called for – or at least as soon as I feel he will have got over the discovery that I liberated the plums from his own orchard.

One of the main reasons I allowed him to come here was that I remembered his sermons being long and memorably dull. Sadly, he has had a conversion experience and they are now short and interesting, which was definitely not what I wanted. I am already making tentative plans to exchange with a colleague next year who has a heavy Welsh accent and speaks with a stutter.

You rather smugly commented that at least on the Norfolk coast I didn't have to worry about marauding pythons, as you did in your somewhat more exotic holiday. But had you had to deal with an irate dowager marchioness whose flower arrangement had been moved from the pulpit to the font without her permission, you would understand where real danger lurks. You can be inoculated before your holiday against typhoid; there is no known medical protection against a lady of substance in full charge.

So the Autumn round approaches. Afternoons are occupied in sweeping up leaves from the lawns and evenings, after dark, of tipping them over the wall into Colonel Adamson's garden. That will be an activity quite foreign to you, I know. Imagine your morning collection of discarded take-away containers dumped in your garden and you have a close parallel.

And then there is harvest to prepare for. The plums that I brought back from my colleague's trees that remain uneaten should find a good home on the church window sills – which may almost compensate for the absence of the Rectory apples. They will sit, totally upstaged, alongside Miss Fanshawe's Harrod's hamper – which she always makes sure everyone knows she donated anonymously. Some, as they say, have their reward already.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

God in the Arts

Editor: This month we bring you the sixth of our new series 'God in the Arts', by the Rev Michael Burgess. Mr Burgess looks after two parishes in the diocese of Chester and is the diocesan MU chaplain, with a great love and interest in art and music.

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'HE GAVE US EYES TO SEE THEM'

At this time of the year churches up and down the land will be celebrating Harvest Thanksgiving, and they will be filled with the good things of God's creation as an expression of the earth's bounty and God's generosity to us. Window ledges and pulpits and porches will be sporting displays of fruit and vegetables, of tinned goods and packet food to remind us of these truths.

But I doubt if any of them will be arranged like the subject of this month's painting: 'Autumn' by Giuseppe Archimboldo.

He was an Italian artist who began his painting career as a student of Leonardo da Vinci, but moved to Vienna and Prague when he was appointed the court painter for the Hapsburg emperors. His duties included copying portraits for the imperial family and planning colourful pageants for royal parties. And in his spare time he gave expression to his own imaginative sense of fun, painting arrangements of vegetables, fruit and other natural objects to form faces celebrating the four seasons and the elements.

Children learn this form of art early on at school when they arrange pieces of carrot and peas to depict funny or sad faces. At the other extreme there are those sophisticated arrangements of fish and the riches of the sea for those lucky enough to shop in Harrod's Food Hall in London. And there is this painting, 'Autumn.'

As we look at it, we can see grapes and apples, a pumpkin and a potato, mushrooms, nuts, leaves and flowers forming a quirky, slightly pagan face, reminiscent of the Green Man found in carvings in Rosslyn Chapel and other churches. But Archimboldo's painting is executed with a sense of carefree relish and fun: the gifts of creation brought together in a spirit of enjoyment. Here, says the artist, are the good gifts of creation: look on them and enjoy them. That is the Harvest message: God's gifts to us, preaching a richness and a variety that point to God as Lord of creation.

As we give thanks for the fruits of the earth at this Harvest, we can remember our Lord's words: 'Consider the lilies of the field.' In other words, ask yourself: what is it that you see as you look on these gifts? Just the bounty of creation or signs of a generous Creator? Archimboldo invites us all to celebrate Harvest with a sense of delight and exhilaration as we rejoice in God's creation and praise him for all that is.



Smile Lines for September

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Theme songs for Bible characters

Noah: "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head"
Adam and Eve: "Strangers in Paradise"
Lazarus: "The Second Time Around"
Esther: "I Feel Pretty"
Job: "I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues"
Moses: "The Wanderer"
Jezebel: "The Lady is a Tramp"
Samson: "Hair"
Salome: "I Could Have Danced All Night"
Daniel: "The Lion Sleeps Tonight"
Joshua: "Good Vibrations"
Peter: "I'm Sorry"
Esau: "Born To Be Wild"
Jeremiah: "Take This Job and Shove It"
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: "Great Balls of Fire!"
The Three Kings: "When You Wish Upon a Star"
Jonah: "Got a Whale of a Tale"
Elijah: "Up, Up, and Away"
Methuselah: "Stayin' Alive"
Nebuchadnezzar: "Crazy"

**

Young and Baptist

A mother looked out a window and saw her young son playing 'church' with the family's three kittens. He had them lined up and was preaching to them. The mother turned away to do some work. A while later she heard meowing and sounds of struggle. She went to the window and saw her son trying to immerse the kittens in a bucket of water. Quickly she opened the window and called: "James, stop that! You'll drown those kittens."

James protested: "But they knew I was a Baptist before they joined my church!"

**

Teeth

The minister had all of his remaining teeth pulled out, and new dentures made. The first Sunday, he only preached 10 minutes. The second Sunday, he preached only 20 minutes. But, on the third Sunday, he preached over an hour without even drawing breath. When asked about this by some of the congregation, he explained:

"The first Sunday, my gums were so sore it hurt to talk. The second Sunday, my new dentures were working fine. The third Sunday, I accidentally grabbed my wife's dentures..."

**

Second time around...

When our second child was on the way, my wife and I attended a pre-birth class aimed at couples who had already had at least one child. The instructor raised the issue of breaking the news to the older child. It went

like this: "Some parents," she said, "tell the older child, 'We love you so much we decided to bring another child into this family.' But think about that. Ladies, what if your husband came home one day and said, 'Darling, I love you so much I decided to bring home another wife?'"

One of the women spoke up immediately. "Does she cook??"

**

Angels - As Explained by Children

I only know the names of two angels. Hark and Harold. -- Gregory, 5

Everybody's got it all wrong. Angels don't wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it. -- Olive, 9

It's not easy to become an angel! First, you gotta die. Then you go to heaven, then there's still the flight training to go through. And then you got to agree to wear those angel clothes. -- Matthew, 9

Angels work for God and watch over kids when God has to go do something else. -- Mitchell, 7

My guardian angel helps me with Maths, but he's not much good for Science. -- Henry, 8

Angels don't eat, but they drink milk from Holy Cows!!! -- Jack, 6

Angels talk all the way while they're flying you up to heaven. The main subject is where you went wrong before you go dead. -- Daniel, 9

When an angel gets mad, he takes a deep breath and counts to ten. And when he lets out his breath, somewhere there's a tornado. -- Reagan, 10

Angels have a lot to do and they keep very busy. If you lose a tooth, an angel comes in through your window and leaves money under your pillow. Then when it gets cold, angels go south for the winter. -- Sara, 6

Angels live in cloud houses made by God and his son, who's a very good carpenter. -- Jared, 8

All angels are girls because they gotta wear dresses and boys didn't go for it.-- Antonio, 9

My angel is my grandma who died last year. She got a big head start on helping me while she was still down here on earth. -- Katelynn, 9

Some of the angels are in charge of helping heal sick animals and pets. And if they don't make the animals get better, they help the child get over it. -- Vicki, 8

What I don't get about angels is why, when someone is in love, they shoot arrows at them. -- Sarah, 7

**

Barking mad

A couple were trying to sleep one night when a neighbour's dog started barking. This carried late on into the night until the husband cracked. "Dat's it, I've had enough!" and out he rushed into the night.

Ten minutes later he returned to bed, then after a couple of minutes the barking started up again. His wife turned to him and said: "So what did you do, den?"

"I put da wretched dog in our garden, to see how dey like it!"

**

Census Taker: "How many children do you have?"

Woman: "Four."

Census Taker: "May I have their names, please?"

Woman: "Eenee, Meenee, Minee and Frank."

Census Taker: "Okay, that's fine. May I ask why you named your fourth child Frank?"

Woman: "Because we didn't want any Moe."

**

Sad Reflection: "My wild oats have turned into bran flakes."

**

While leading a tour of nursery school children through our hospital, I overheard a conversation between one little girl and an x-ray technician. "Have you ever broken a bone?" he asked.

"Yes," the girl replied.

"Did it hurt?"

"No."

"Really? Which bone did you break?"

"My sister's arm."

**

Pun

A man entered a local newspaper competition that offered a prize for the best pun. He sent in ten entries, hoping that one would win. Unfortunately, no pun in ten did.

**

Shipwrecked

There were two men shipwrecked on this island. The minute they got on to the island one of them started screaming and yelling, "We're going to die! We're going to die! There's no food! No water! We're going to die!" The second man was propped up against a palm tree and acting so calmly it drove the first man crazy. "Don't you understand? We're going to DIE!"

The second man replied, "You don't understand, I make £50,000 a week."

The first man looked at him quite dumbfounded and asked, "What difference does that make? We're on an island with no food and no water! We're going to DIE!!!"

The second man answered, "You just don't get it. I make £50,000 a week and I tithe ten per cent on that £50,000 a week. My pastor will find me!"

**

Parents

Two youngsters were talking to each other. One said, "I'm really worried. My dad works twelve hours a day to give me a great home and good food. My mum spends the whole day cleaning and cooking for me. I'm worried sick!"

His friend was baffled. "What have you got to worry about? You've got it made!"
The worried youngster replied: "Yes, but what if they try to escape?"

**

Zoo

One day Joe's mother turned to Joe's father and said, "It's such a nice day, I think I'll take Joe to the zoo."
"I wouldn't bother," said father. "If they want him, let them come and get him!"

**

What this country needs is a telephone that doesn't ring when you are in the shower.

**

Flat

At the side of a road, a young woman looked hopelessly at a flat tyre. A friendly motorist stopped to help her. After the tyre was changed, the woman said: "Please let the jack down gently. My husband is sleeping in the back seat."

**

Keeping up....

An ambitious young woman who sought to rise on the social ladder made her husband's life miserable trying to get him to rent a more expensive apartment. One evening he came home in a wonderfully good humour. "Good news, my dear," he exclaimed. "We don't have to move after all. The landlord has raised the rent."

**

Feelings

"Why did you break off your engagement?"
"I no longer have a strong feeling for John."
"Will you give back the ring?"
"Oh, no. I still have a strong feeling for the ring."

**

Size

Medical people claim that we are taller in the morning than we are in the evening. All I know is that I am shorter around the end of each month....

**

Food

Not long ago a mother and her young son were shopping in a supermarket. The child, trying to be helpful, picked up a package and brought it to her. "Oh no, dear," protested the mother. "Go put it back. You have to cook that."

**

Preaching

The enthusiastic young minister was talking to the oldest member of his congregation about the falling numbers of people in church on Sunday. “Would you say that I should put more fire into my preaching, then?” he demanded with a gleam in his eye.

“No,” said the older man wearily. “Though it might help if you put more of your preaching into the fire...”

**

A pound goes a long way today. You can carry it around for weeks before you find something cheap enough to buy with it.

**

First school day

A mother greeted her little girl at the end of the first day of school: “Well, dear, how did you get on? What did they teach you today?”

“Not enough, I guess,” the little girl replied. “‘Cause they said I’ve got to go back again tomorrow.”

**

Why are you driving me crazy when you know it's within walking distance?

Quotes of the month

Editor: September is the time of new beginnings – a busy autumn ahead. With this in mind:

It is more important to know where you are going than to get there quickly. Do not mistake activity for achievement. -- Mabel Newcomer

Two quick ways to disaster are to take nobody's advice and to take everybody's advice.

Ambition is the grand enemy of all peace. -- John Powys

God doesn't want our success; he wants us. He doesn't demand our achievements; he demands our obedience. -- Charles Colson

Character is not made in a crisis – it is only exhibited. -- Robert Freeman

I can always tell when I am going to give birth to an idea. My writer's cramps start coming two minutes apart.

Waiting is not a waste of time so don't waste waiting.

I've worked myself up from nothing to a state of extreme poverty. -- Groucho Marx

**

Editor: September is also the time of church life picking up once again...

When we are truly abandoned to God he works through us all the time. -- Oswald Chambers

Modern prophets write as though God existed by kind permission of man but the prophets of old wrote as though man existed by kind permission of God.

I know the Bible is inspired because it finds me at a greater depth of my being than any other book. -- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

A Christian is never in a state of completion but always in a process of becoming. -- Martin Luther

**

Editor: September is also a time when children return to school...

There is just one way to bring up a child in the way he should go, and that is to travel that way yourself. -- Abraham Lincoln

Parenting is a marathon, not a sprint.

If I could get to the highest place in Athen, I would lift up my voice and say: "What mean ye, fellow citizens, that ye turn every stone to scrape wealth together, and take so little care of your children, to whom ye must one day relinquish all?" -- Socrates

Children have become so expensive that only the poor can afford them.

If all the college students who slept in class were placed end to end, they would be much more comfortable.

**

Editor: And finally, some miscellaneous observations on modern life:

The last time we went to New York, it was incredible. We circled the airport for two hours. What made it so incredible was that we were in a bus.

Being around negative people can make you sick. -- John Gray

Most poets say that rhyme doesn't pay.

My advice, if you insist on slimming, is to eat just as much as you like but just don't swallow it. -- Harry Secombe

Looking at modern art is like trying to follow the plot in a bowl of alphabet soup.