

# PARISH NEWS

† *St John's Parish Church: Faith, Fellowship, and Friendship* †

**FEBRUARY 2026    £1**

**VALENTINE SPECIAL: LOVE ROOTED IN FAITH**

[www.stjohnsspalding.org](http://www.stjohnsspalding.org)

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## 'INTERESTING' TIMES

### We need real Christianity for 'interesting' times

'May you live in interesting times' used to be a kind of ironic curse. Apparently, people thought it was originally Chinese in origin, but a little digging on the internet suggests that this isn't in fact the case. According to Wikipedia, the closest possible Chinese expression it might be derived from is the saying: "Better to be a dog in times of tranquillity than a human in times of chaos."

As I write this editorial and look at the news headlines, it's only fair to say that the times are certainly 'interesting', even if we are not yet at a point of total chaos.

President Maduro has been exfiltrated (the technical term) from Venezuela by the USA and is currently on trial in New York; Iran is currently in turmoil with protests on the street, an internet blackout, and the US threatening to intervene; and in Western Europe there is nervousness

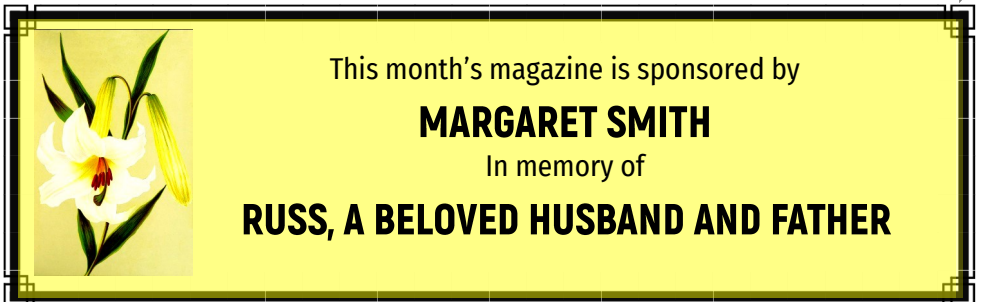
about the future of Greenland. I have no intention of making any geopolitical predictions about the state of the world by the time you read this!

I don't know how you respond to those headlines. Perhaps understandably many prefer not to think about them and to think about other things. As someone who does follow these headlines it feels very much like the world is getting more fragmented, more confusing and confused, and potentially much more violent. If newspapers choose headlines that grab our attentions by appealing to our very basic emotions like fear, then it seems there's plenty of material to work with!

Fear is a powerful driver of human behaviour. Furthermore, even when it's not in the driving seat, it can certainly influence how we make the decisions we do and how we perceive and respond to our circumstances.



*Rev Greg*



This month's magazine is sponsored by  
**MARGARET SMITH**  
In memory of  
**RUSS, A BELOVED HUSBAND AND FATHER**



# Games Afternoons

1.30pm to 4.30pm

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January  
Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February  
Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March  
Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April  
Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May  
Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June  
Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July  
Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August  
Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September  
Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October  
Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November  
Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December



It might be that this increase in fear has been a contributing factor to what some have called *The Quiet Revival* as many churches, especially in urban settings, have seen an increase in attendance and interest in Christian faith (see the Bible Society for more details: [www.biblesociety.org.uk/research/quiet-revival](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/research/quiet-revival)). This would be a good instinctive response, especially when we consider that the command to 'fear not' (or words to that effect) appears more than 100 times in the Bible.

The scriptures tell us of a God who, through faith in Christ, is: bigger than our fears; strong enough to sustain us through them; and kind enough to love us in all circumstances. This is good news for a hurting and fearful world.

But there is more than just peace for our fears at the very heart of real Christianity. In this age, as in every age, it can be tempting for some to want the peace without also having the God of peace. It can be tempting for some to want some of the benefits of the gospel but not to want to know the God of the gospel. But you can't have the fruit without the roots.

When we are rooted and grounded and getting spiritual life and nourishment from God, then we enjoy the fruit of knowing he holds all our days in his hands, and that

we have a heavenly future with him where we will be free of everything that causes anxiety or fear in this life.

Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins is profoundly mistaken in this sense. He has, despite being an avowed atheist, been calling himself culturally Christian (as opposed to, for example, culturally Muslim) for some time. But is it possible to be truly inspired by the loving example of Christ without believing in a real Christ to set that example?

**“The  
command  
to ‘fear not’  
appears  
more than  
100 times  
in the Bible”**

There's lots to like about Christianity and it has formed societies in all sorts of wonderful ways. Ordained minister Glen Scrivener has written a provocative book called *The Air We Breathe: How we all came to believe in freedom, progress, kindness and equality*. He explains

how some of the most central aspects of our society (equality; compassion; consent; enlightenment; science; freedom; and progress) are the fruits of Christianity and not secular thinking.

An implication of this that needs considering is that when we try to have the fruit (peace) without the roots (forgiveness and relationship with God through Christ) we might just be left with nothing but dead wood. However, when we embrace the roots then in time the fruit will come, and we will have both a peace that passes all understanding and a God beyond all praising.

## DECEMBER LOTTERY WINNERS

£20	20	Graham Chappell
£10	4	Rebecca Clark
£5	27	Cliff and Anne Isley
£5	38	Pat and Irene Blackman

## CHRISTMAS BONUS DRAW WINNERS

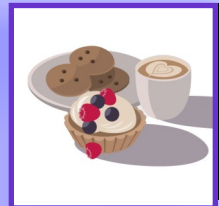
£20	37	Sheila Cleary
£20	12	Jenny Coley
£10	5	Pat Willson
£10	36	Jane Arnold
£10	10	Annie Stacey
£10	21	D Cooper
£5	33	Joan Pybus
£5	29	Bettie Lennie
£5	34	Dorothy Clements
£5	19	Keith Bollons
£5	30	Hildegard Carter

# DROP IN

FOR COFFEE AND CAKE

In St John's Church lounge

Every Tuesday, from 8.30 to 11.30am



All welcome

Come to meet new friends and have a chat

## FEBRUARY SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

### **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup>**

9.15am Informal Service  
10.40am Book of Remembrance  
10.45am Choral Communion

### **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup>**

8.30am Drop in Coffee Morning  
8.45am Little Seeds  
7.30pm The Bible Course  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup>**

7.30pm Alpha  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>**

10am Communion in the lounge  
11am Bible Study  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>**

8am Holy Communion  
9.15am Informal Service  
10.45am Choral Communion

### **Monday 9<sup>th</sup>**

7.30pm PCC Meeting

### **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup>**

8.30am Drop in Coffee Morning  
8.45am Little Seeds  
7.30pm The Bible Course  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>**

7.30pm Alpha  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>**

10am Communion in the lounge  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup>**

5.30pm TREK

### **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>**

9.15am Informal Service  
10.45am Choral Communion  
6.30pm Deeper Worship Evening

### **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>**

8.30am Drop in Coffee Morning  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>**

6pm Ash Wednesday Service  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>**

10am Communion in the lounge  
11am Bible Study  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>**

8am Holy Communion  
9.15am Informal Service  
10.45am Choral Communion

### **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup>**

8.30am Drop in Coffee Morning  
8.45am Little Seeds  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>**

7.30pm Alpha  
7.30pm Fellowship Group


### **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>**

10am Communion in the lounge  
7.30pm Fellowship Group

### **Friday 27<sup>th</sup>**

5.30pm TREK

## EATING DISORDERS WEEK: FEBRUARY 23<sup>rd</sup> TO MARCH 1<sup>st</sup>

 Do you suffer from an eating disorder? Or are you close to someone who struggles with one? If so, then you will know the long battle that sufferers can wage with anorexia, bulimia, binge eating and EDNOS (eating disorder not otherwise specified).

Eating disorders ruin lives. They ruin relationships. They also ruin careers. They are estimated to cost the UK economy about £9.5 billion a year.

The Eating Disorders Awareness Week website says: “An eating disorder can be isolating... whether someone has an eating disorder themselves or whether they are supporting someone.” Visit: [edaw.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://edaw.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

If you would like a prayer about your eating disorder, or about the problem of someone you love, please speak to Rev Greg or Richard directly, or contact the Parish Office (see page 2 for contact details).

This issue has focused on St Valentine and, therefore, romance. Sadly, this is an elusive thing for many of us. So, if you are single, and looking to at least meet other Christian singles, consider visiting Christian Connection: [www.christianconnection.com](http://www.christianconnection.com) You might meet the person of your dreams!



# Stay Curious Try Alpha

## Curious about faith?

Explore the basics of the Christian faith in an open, friendly environment.

**Everyone's welcome. You're invited.**

@ St John's Church, Hawthorn Bank, Spalding, PE11 1JQ

for more info email: [revrichard@stjohnsspalding.org](mailto:revrichard@stjohnsspalding.org)

call 07747 792497

or visit [www.stjohnsspalding.org/alpha](http://www.stjohnsspalding.org/alpha)



## THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS: **GREED**

**C**e continue our seven-part series with that all-consuming sin: greed.

*“How much money is enough?  
Just a little bit more”  
(John D Rockefeller)*

It is the overwhelming desire for more and more in our lives. In our consumer culture it can be hard to tell the difference between needs and wants. We need to ask: How much is enough?

Jesus was approached by a man who wanted Him to settle a dispute about family inheritance. He said: “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” (Luke 12:15).

Jesus goes on to tell the story of a rich farmer who builds bigger and bigger barns, but whose life is unexpectedly cut short by death. He concludes: “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God.” (21).

How do we overcome greed and become ‘rich towards God’? Paul writes: “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” (Philippians 4:13).



Overcoming greed involves learning to be content in whatever situation we find ourselves, in need or plenty. Paul is not saying that there is anything wrong with having food, money or possessions, but these cannot be the primary source of our contentment.

The secret of contentment is found in a transforming relationship with Jesus: “I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.” (13).

He is the one who enables us to overcome greed and know riches.

*“Contentment makes poor men rich;  
discontent makes rich men poor”  
(Benjamin Franklin)*

*By Canon Paul Hardingham*

**"Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction"**

*Erich Fromm*

# ST VALENTINE

## MARTYR, MYSTERY, AND THE ENDURING LANGUAGE OF LOVE

Every February 14th, we celebrate love, but the true story of St Valentine is shrouded in mystery. Though his life and death remain uncertain, his legacy points to a love that sacrifices and endures – the kind of love God shows us. In this feature, **PARISH NEWS** explores the myths, history, deeper meaning – and romance – behind Valentine’s Day

Each February, hearts, flowers, and handwritten cards fill our shops and letterboxes, yet behind the sweetness of St Valentine’s Day lies a far older, richer – and far less certain – story. Strip away the chocolates and commercial gloss, and we meet a Christian martyr (or perhaps several), a Church seeking to reshape pagan customs, and a deep human instinct to celebrate love at winter’s turning point.

intended to purify and prepare people for new life.



When Christianity took hold in Rome, Church leaders faced the challenge of redirecting popular devotion away from pagan festivals. In 496 AD, Pope Gelasius I formally marked February 14th as a Christian feast day, honouring a martyr named Valentine. Whether this was a deliberate attempt to replace Lupercalia or simply providential timing remains

*“Love is patient, love is kind...  
Love never fails”  
(1 Corinthians 13:4,8)*

debated. Christianity has often transformed existing customs rather than erasing them – redirecting human longing toward God, rather than denying it.

### Love Before Valentine

Long before St Valentine entered the picture, mid-February was already associated with love, fertility, and renewal. In ancient Rome, the festival of Lupercalia marked the coming of spring. It honoured gods associated with protection, fertility and marriage, and included rituals

### Who Was St Valentine?

Early Christian records are fragmentary, and later devotion filled the gaps with legend. What’s clear is that Valentine was a real Christian martyr, executed during the Roman persecutions of the third century.

What is less clear is *which* Valentine.

By the Middle Ages, at least two – and possibly three – different martyrs named Valentine had been combined:

- **Valentine of Rome**, a priest martyred under Emperor Claudius II
- **Valentine of Terni**, a bishop from Umbria, in central Italy
- A lesser-known Valentine who died with companions in Africa

All are associated with February 14<sup>th</sup> and with the *Via Flaminia*, the road between Rome and Terni.

*“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life”*  
(Revelation 2:10)

### The Legend of the First Valentine

The best-loved legend tells of a priest imprisoned for defying imperial orders – either for secretly marrying Christian couples or for converting pagans. While awaiting execution, he healed a jailer’s blind daughter through prayer. On the eve of his death, he sent her a note signed: “Your Valentine”.

This first ‘Valentine’ message, if legend is to be believed, was not romantic flirtation but an expression of compassion, gratitude, and faith.

Whether historical or symbolic, the story reflects a Christian understanding of love as self-giving and costly.

### From Martyr to Matchmaker

For centuries, Valentine’s feast had no special link to romance. That changed in the Middle Ages, when it was believed that birds paired in mid-February.

Poets such as Geoffrey Chaucer popularized the idea, and Valentine’s Day became linked with courtship and choice.

Across Britain and Europe, young people drew names, exchanged tokens, and trusted providence with their hearts.

*“Above all, love each other deeply... love covers over a multitude of sins”*  
(1 Peter 4:8)

### Relics, Pilgrimage, and Devotion

St Valentine’s physical legacy is as scattered as his story. Churches across Europe claim relics – reflecting medieval devotion rather than historical certainty.

Terni and Rome; Dublin and Glasgow; Chelmsford in Poland; Madrid; Prague; Malta; and others all honour Valentine.

The Catholic Church still recognizes St Valentine as a saint, though his feast was removed from the General Roman Calendar due to historical uncertainty. He remains patron of lovers, engaged couples, happy marriages – and, curiously, beekeepers and those with epilepsy.



The widespread devotion to Valentine reminds us that saints are remembered not for perfect records but for faithful witness.



A Victorian Valentine card

### **A Victorian View of Valentine and the Evolution of Sending Cards**

Valentine's Day cards became widely popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fuelled by the Victorian era's romantic customs, advances in printing technology (such as chromolithography), and the Penny Post of 1840, which made sending cards affordable.

While handwritten valentines date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and commercial cards appeared in the 1700s, it was the Victorian period that saw the explosion of card-sending culture.

- *15<sup>th</sup> century*

The first known Valentine's message was written by Charles, Duke of Orléans, to his wife in 1415

- *1700s*

The trend of sending love notes grew, with publications like *The Young Man's Valentine Writer* (1797) offering its readers guidance on how to compose messages

- *The Victorian boom (19<sup>th</sup> century)*

Advances in printing allowed mass production, making intricate cards widely accessible

- *The Penny Post (1840)*

This major postal reform drastically lowered the cost of sending letters and cards, increasing their circulation

- *Explosive growth*

By the mid-1800s, millions of valentine cards were exchanged each year, with numbers continuing to rise in Britain throughout the century. In the United States, valentine card-sending became a booming business after the Civil War, especially in the late 1860s

Valentine cards ranged from romantic and sweet, to humorous or rude, including the notorious 'vinegar valentines'.

Vinegar valentines were the Victorian kick-back to sugary romance. They were designed to mock, offend, or outright reject an unwanted love. Cards included insulting poems or caricatures and were sometimes even delivered postage-due to add insult to injury.

Puzzle purses were also popular, which were often-intricate designs, originating from Japanese paper folding (tatogami).

Inscriptions varied according to their intention. Some were romantic and sweet:

- *From a puzzle purse:* "When loyal hearts are crossed by none, true love will join them both in one"
- *From poetry:* "My heart is like a singing bird" (Christina Rossetti) or, "Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (Emily Brontë)

Others were simple and direct:

- "You are my heart, my life, my one and only thought" (Arthur Conan Doyle)

While the infamous vinegar inscriptions targeted whatever the sender wished to attack most:

- *Targeting Appearance:* "Square up, my lover of gin twist, I care not for thy mutton fist" or, "The smile that on your face appears, Stretching your mouth to meet your ears, You think, no doubt, as sweet as honey, Whereas, dear girl, it's only funny"
- *Questioning honour:* "'Tis said you share your love with many"
- *Attacking character:* "You're as vulgar a cad as I'd wish to meet, And yet you're devoured by pride and conceit, But I fancy before very long you'll find out, That everyone thinks you an ignorant lout"

More subtly, Victorians used flowers like roses, violets, and forget-me-nots to convey hidden meanings.



St Valentine by Matija Bradaška, c1900

### A Christian View of Romance

Scripture leaves no doubt that God values love and commitment. From Adam and Eve, through Abraham and Sarah, to Joseph's gentle faithfulness to Mary, human love plays a vital role in salvation history.

There is even a whole book of the Bible celebrating romantic love:

*"Many waters cannot quench love;  
rivers cannot sweep it away"*  
(Song of Songs 8:7)

St Paul, though unmarried, wrote some of Scripture's most profound teaching on love — words still read at weddings across the world.

### The Greatest Love Story

Ultimately, Christianity frames romance within a greater love story:

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her”*  
(Ephesians 5:25)

The Bible begins with a marriage in Eden and ends with a wedding feast (the bride in question is the Church itself):

*“Let us rejoice and be glad... For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready”*  
(Revelation 19:7)

Whatever the truth about St Valentine, his legacy points beyond fleeting romance to faithful, enduring love rooted in God Himself.



## **A Brief Timeline of St Valentine and Valentine's Day**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> century (c. 269–273 AD)  
Christian martyrs named Valentine are executed during Roman persecutions, possibly on the Via Flaminia

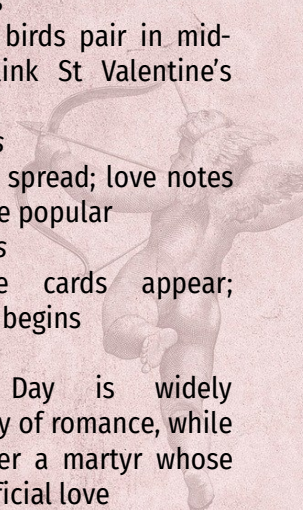
- 496 AD  
Pope Gelasius I declares February 14<sup>th</sup> a feast day in honour of St Valentine

- 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries  
Belief grows that birds pair in mid-February; poets link St Valentine's Day with romance

- 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries  
Valentine customs spread; love notes and tokens become popular

- 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries  
Printed valentine cards appear; commercialization begins

- Modern day  
St Valentine's Day is widely celebrated as a day of romance, while churches remember a martyr whose life points to sacrificial love



**The Leprosy Mission**  
England and Wales


Thank you to all those who contributed to The Leprosy Mission this year through collection boxes.

£750 was raised for the factory in Nigeria that produces aids for those affected by leprosy. If you have a collection box that has not been emptied this year, please may I have it soon.

If anyone would like a collection box, please contact me.

**Mary Wood**

## CHURCH'S CONCERN FOR VENEZUELA

 The Episcopal Church in America has spoken out about the people of Venezuela.

Following the Trump administration's recent night-time swoop on the capital Caracas, and the capture of the country's President, the Episcopal Church says it fears for the people because of the inevitable instability that will follow the dramatic raid.

President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, are in New York facing charges on weapons and drug-trafficking.

The Episcopal Church's General Convention has a long-standing policy that 'condemns in any nation the first use of armed force in the form of a preventive or pre-emptive strike

that is aimed at disrupting a non-imminent, uncertain military threat.'


The Church goes on: "Even as we recognize that intervention in sovereign states can sometimes be necessary to prevent atrocities, we discourage the abuse of this norm to rationalize military actions in sovereign states for political ends.

"We urge Congress to call for an investigation and accountability for this most recent unauthorized operation, as well as the related military actions carried out in recent months."

After the raid, President Trump announced that the US would run Venezuela, and that US oil firms would take over its oil industry.

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## CHURCH LEADERS APPEAL FOR PEACE

 As the fourth anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine approaches, Ukrainian church leaders have appealed for just measures to be put in place so that the invasion will end.

The country's Greek Catholic Primate, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, said: "Let the modern creators of history protect human life from modern-day Herods – and let us pray that those who make fateful decisions will be inspired by the Holy Spirit, not to start wars, but to stop them."

The Primate of the Ukrainian independent Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Epiphany (Dumenko), also compared Russia's rulers to King Herod, who had used "ostentatious, external religiosity" to conceal a "rejection of God's truth".

He went on to say that divine retribution was "inevitable" for those who continued to abduct Ukrainian children and rape Ukrainian women, and for Patriarch Kirill, who had "blessed war, crimes, and murders" from the pulpit.



# PRAYERS FOR FEBRUARY

*If you are unable to use all the prayers every day, then it is suggested that you use a prayer for that day and the Parish prayer, if possible. In this way we shall all be praying together to bring about God's kingdom*

## **A PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH**

**Christ, son of the living God,  
Teach us to walk in your way more trustfully,  
To accept your truth more faithfully  
And to share your life more lovingly.  
By the power of the Holy Spirit  
Guide us in our work for our church  
That we may come, as a family,  
To the Kingdom of the Father  
Where you live for ever.  
Amen**

### *A Sunday prayer for places of learning*

Bless the work of universities, colleges and schools, that in them your name be honoured, and from them may come men and women concerned to know and to teach the truth as it is revealed in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

### *A Monday prayer for St John's School*

We thank you, Lord, for St John's School; for its foundation and continuing life under your directing power; for all who work in it and for it. Thank you for the service given by teachers and pupils, by classroom assistants, support staff, and those who govern its business, and by parents and friends; may all these work together for its common purpose. We pray that individual gifts and talents may be discovered, developed and used for you and the good of others; Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### *A Tuesday prayer for teachers in Spalding schools*

Almighty and everlasting God, the giver of every good and perfect gift; we ask your blessing upon all who teach in Spalding schools. Strengthen them by the grace of the Holy Spirit that they may build up, in the faith and love of your dear Son, those committed to their care; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

*A Wednesday prayer*

Father we bless you for the priceless gift of education passed on from one generation to another. For the knowledge that teaches us how the world is made and how we belong to it, thank you. For the skills by which we harness and direct the world's energies and resources, thank you.

May our children learn how to use words with imagination, truth and accuracy. May they see the ways in which knowledge can benefit human beings and understand, too, how its abuse can destroy them.

May they gain those skills that, in their own generation, will make the world happier, safer and more just.

*A Thursday prayer for children at school*

O God, our Father, we pray for the children in our schools. May they learn the lessons of worth; self-discipline, integrity of character, care for others and a true sense of values. May they acquire wisdom as well as knowledge, and be strong in spirit to serve their generation and to further your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*A Friday prayer for pupils, teachers, and parents*

Lord we pray for pupils; preparing for exams that will decide their future; maturing into responsible citizens.

Lord we pray for teachers: for patience to teach those who are slow to learn; for ability to open the eyes of those who learn quickly; for kindness and understanding when there is sadness and distress; for justice and firmness when discipline is needed.

Lord we pray for parents: help them to encourage their young to enjoy their education; strengthen those who support the teachers; and grant wisdom to those who serve as governors.

*A Saturday prayer of thanks for teachers*

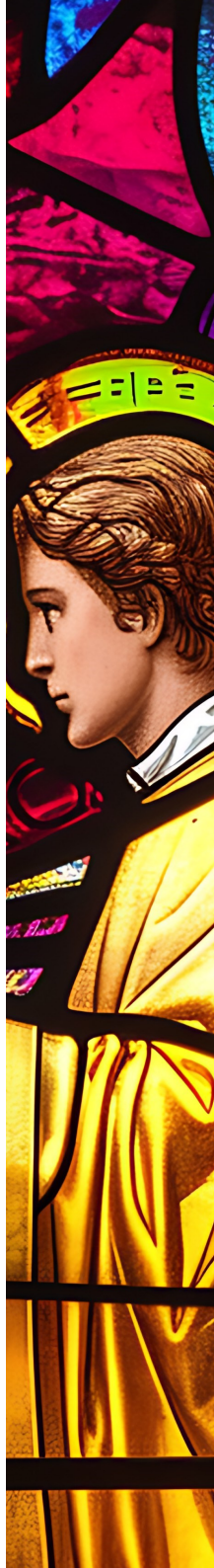
Father, thank you for teachers' gifts of knowledge and communication. Give them patience and understanding in their work; the wisdom to listen to you and to be directed by your Kingdom values.

*A prayer of thanks for Candlemas, by Daphne Kitching*

Dear Lord; the snowdrop month! Those beautiful little flowers, also called Candlemas Bells. Thank you, Lord, for the beauty and the hope.

Thank you for when Jesus was presented at the Temple as a baby; for Simeon recognising in that vulnerable baby the promised Saviour.

Open eyes to see you and to know you. Open ears to hear your message of hope and reconciliation. Open hearts to receive your love and to share it, for the sake of all the suffering people of the world. *Amen*





**BENNETT BUTCHERS**  
*HOME KILLED  
 HIGH CLASS  
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## PEOPLE COME TO FAITH ADMIDST 'DARKNESS'

**S**o says several Church of England bishops. They believe that increasing numbers of people have been turning to the Christian faith.

The Bishop of Rochester, Jonathan Gibbs, said: "Something is going on. Or rather, God Himself seems to be up to something – way beyond what we as Christians have been doing to share the message of the gospel with the people around us.

"Humanly speaking, I believe this is happening because people have begun to realize that the things in which they had placed their hopes – things like ever-increasing prosperity or the ability of science and technology to solve all our problems – have started to crumble in the face of economic crises, global pandemics and climate change."

The Bishop of Gloucester, Rachel Treweek said: "As I have listened to the voices of children, young people and adults across this diocese; the voices in Westminster and, indeed, in prisons; I believe there is a yearning for certainty amid the turbulence, anxiety and uncertainty, and the endless messaging of crises."

The Bishop of Chichester, Martin Warner, speaks of joyful celebrations of baptisms and confirmations in his Diocese and new congregation members at Chichester Cathedral.

"A new generation attending Chichester Cathedral have shifted the atmosphere," he said. "Buggies now take their place alongside the Zimmer frames, to the delight of everyone."

## WINTER OLYMPICS RETURNS TO EUROPE

**I**f you like snow-sports, you are in for a great month. From 6<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> February, Italy will be hosting the 2026 Winter Olympics, officially known as Milano Cortina 2026. The opening ceremony is at football's famous San Siro stadium. The Paralympic Winter Games follows, from 6<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March.

For the first time, the Winter Games will have two host cities, Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, with

events spread across 15 venues in northern Italy, using existing infrastructure to reduce costs. Milan will host indoor events like hockey and figure skating, while Cortina hosts alpine skiing and snowboarding.

Around 3,500 athletes from more than 90 countries are expected to compete for 195 medals across 16 Olympic disciplines. New this year is ski-mountaineering.

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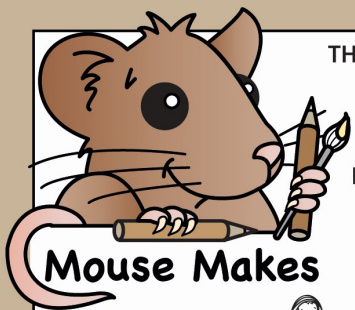
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# Mouse Makes

Read the story in  
Luke 4:1-13



## THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

After Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan where did the Holy Spirit lead him to? v1

How many days was Jesus being tempted by the devil? v2

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into? What did Jesus say? v3-4

What did the devil offer Jesus if He worshipped him? What did Jesus say? v7-8

What did the devil ask Jesus to do? What did Jesus say? v9

## FIRST TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:  
"If you are God's Son order this stone to turn into bread."

JESUS REPLIED:  
"Man shall not live on bread alone."

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

WE LEARN:  
Read the Bible  
Learn God's word.



## SECOND TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:  
"I will give you power and wealth if you worship me."

JESUS REPLIED:  
"Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him."

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

WE LEARN:  
Put God first  
Worship only Him.



What did the devil ask Jesus to do? What did Jesus say? v9



F O R T Y D A Y S S O N K L O R D N H  
T D O W N O N W O R S H I P  
T E S T W O R L D L T U N B  
L V T E M P T A T I O N G R  
E I A M J E S U S F N G D E  
N L K P D E S E R T E R O A  
T H O L Y S P I R I T Y M D  
I M J E R U S A L E M F S J  
W I L D E R N E S S J U M P

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## THIRD TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:  
"If you are God's Son throw yourself down, the scriptures say God will take care of you."

JESUS REPLIED:  
"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."  
Read Deuteronomy 6:16

WE LEARN:  
God cares, trust  
Him do not test Him.





# HIGH DAYS & HOLY DAYS FEBRUARY

## **February 1<sup>st</sup>: Brigid of Ireland, showing compassion and love**

Historical facts about this first abbess of Kildare (dc 525) may be scarce, but her 'Lives', written from the 7th century, tell many anecdotes and miracles, which over the centuries have become deeply rooted in Irish folklore. Brigid came from a village near Kildare, of parents of humble origin, and is said to have become a nun at an early age. She is credited with founding the monastery of Kildare – a powerful influence for Christianity in Ireland.

Miracles attributed to Brigid show her to have been a woman of great compassion and generosity. There are stories of how she could multiply food, especially butter, for the poor. Other stories tell of her changing her



St Brigid is patron of poets, healers and blacksmiths. She is usually depicted with a cow lying at her feet, which recalls her phase as a nun-cowgirl.

bathwater to beer, in order to satisfy the thirst of unexpected visitors. Even her cows gave milk three times the same day.

## **February 2<sup>nd</sup>: Candlemas, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple**

In bygone centuries, Christians said their last farewells to the Christmas season on Candlemas, February 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is exactly 40 days after Christmas Day itself.

In New Testament times, 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first public appearance. Mary went to the Temple with Jesus to 'present Him to the Lord'. At the same time she, as a new mother, was 'purified'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

So, where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day, hence 'Candlemas'.

The story of how Candlemas began can be found in Luke. The *Nunc Dimittis* is the biblical canticle (hymn) spoken by Simeon, a devout man who recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah when presented at the Temple, as recorded in Luke 2:29-32. In medieval times, the *Nunc Dimittis* was mostly used just on this day, during the distribution of candles before the Eucharist. Gradually it became part of daily prayer..

**February 17<sup>th</sup>: Janani Luwum, archbishop and martyr of Uganda**

The Most Reverend Janani Luwum (1922-1977) was murdered by the dictator Idi Amin 35 years ago this month. At the time, the Church in Uganda was on the verge of centennial celebrations of its birth through the seed of the early Ugandan martyrs, and so Luwum became the first martyr of the second century of Christianity in Uganda.



A statue of him stands in Westminster Abbey in London.

Janani Luwum was greatly loved in Uganda. He was an exceptional leader with a great personal godliness, a holistic vision, pastoral compassion and evangelistic fervour.

Luwum converted to Christianity in 1948, started at theological college in Buwalasi the following year, became a deacon in 1955 and was ordained a priest in 1956.

He served in the upper Nile Diocese of Uganda and the diocese of Mbale, and was consecrated Bishop of Northern Uganda in 1969 and Archbishop of Uganda in 1974, three years after Idi Amin came to power in a military coup.

His death was mourned by millions in East Africa.

**February 18<sup>th</sup>: Ash Wednesday**

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, but why 'Ash' Wednesday? In the Old Testament, sinning Israelites mourned for the damage and evil they had done. As part of this repentance, they covered their heads with ashes. This act was an outward sign of their heartfelt repentance and acknowledgement of sin. (See Genesis 18:27; 2 Samuel 13:19; Job 2:8, 30:19; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Jonah 3:6)

In the early Christian Church, the yearly 'class' of penitents had ashes sprinkled over them at the beginning of Lent. They were turning to God for the first time and mourning their sins. Soon, many other Christians wanted to take part in the custom, and to do so at the very start of Lent. Ash Wednesday became known as either the 'beginning of the fast' or 'the day of the ashes'.

The actual custom of ashing was abolished at the Reformation, though the old name for the day remained. Today, throughout the Church of England, receiving the mark of ashes on one's forehead is optional.

The late-medieval custom was to burn the branches used on Palm Sunday in the previous year in order to create the ashes for today.





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## RESISTING TEMPTATION

 The most famous quote about temptation has got to be:

*"I can resist everything  
but temptation"*  
Oscar Wilde

During Lent we remember Jesus's experience in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), when "He was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil" (1).

Temptation is a test of whether we do things our way or God's way. After 40 days of fasting, Jesus was tired, hungry and vulnerable. Like Him, the Devil will attack us at our most venerable moments, especially when we are stressed.



*The Temptation of Christ  
by Ary Scheffer*

### **The first temptation was to turn stones into bread**

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

### **The second temptation tested God**

Jumping off the Temple pinnacle would be a dramatic way for Jesus to gain popularity, but this was not God's way!

"Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deuteronomy 6:16). We too need to learn this lesson!

### **The third temptation was Satan**

The devil took Jesus up a mountain to offer Him worldly power. In contrast, His calling as Messiah was to be marked by suffering and honouring God.

"Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (Deuteronomy 6:13). This is to be our experience of living for God.

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

### **Verses to consider**

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

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

*By Canon Paul Hardingham*

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 **Deeper** 

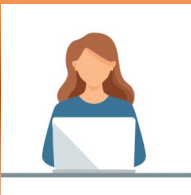
**Sunday 15th February**  
**6:30-7:30pm**

An informal gathering of sung worship, youth-accessible Bible teaching, and a chance to respond in prayer. Also a space for those who've served on Sunday mornings in their home churches to come and find some input, encouragement and refreshment.

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Material for the March magazine should be with  
**Heather Brookes**  
email: [heather.brookes@stjohnsspalding.org](mailto:heather.brookes@stjohnsspalding.org)  
**by the 12<sup>th</sup> of February**

# ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL

BY PETUNIA FLOWERS

FEBRUARY

*"While it is February one can taste the full joys of anticipation.  
Spring stands at the gate with her finger on the latch"*

Patience Strong

*"In February, nature reminds us that even in the coldest moments,  
beauty can still flourish"*

Gabriela Alemán

**W**ith the month of February, there are signs that spring is coming and the seasons are on the turn, with hints of new life and longer days. It may well still be cold outside, but with the promise of new growth slowly emerging from the ground and the slow-but-sure increase in the temperature, there is much to look forward to and prepare for.

Cold, bright days provide their own joy and beauty, while reminding us that there are jobs to be done as the garden comes to life again.

Wrap up and enjoy the anticipation and wonder of new life and growth in your garden. 

## A GARDENER'S VALENTINE PRAYER FOR FEBRUARY

**L**ord, in this month of love, I thank You for the seeds of affection You have planted in my life. Just as I tend to my garden with patience and hope, help me to nurture my relationships with the same diligence. May my heart be fertile soil for kindness, my words be like gentle rain to those I love, and my commitment be as steadfast as the perennials that return each spring. Let the love I share bloom into a masterpiece of Your creation. Amen

## FLOWERS

Continue to deadhead winter pansies and other winter bedding. Pansies will carry on into the spring, and even to early summer, if deadheaded frequently.

Alpine bulbs coming up in rock gardens or containers benefit from overhead protection from the rain and snow. A sheet of glass or reused Perspex placed on piles of bricks will do the job.

Hardy annuals can be sown in pots or modules to provide colour.

Divide and plant bulbs-in-the-green such as snowdrops and winter aconites.

Sweet peas can be sown in a cold frame or in a cool room in the house. Any sweet peas that were sown in autumn can now be potted on individually.

Improve heavy soil drainage by working in lots of organic matter.



## TREES and SHRUBS

Prune winter-flowering jasmine after flowering, to encourage new growth for next year's blooms. Cut back the previous year's growth to 5cm from the old wood.

Take notice of your climbers, as some may need pruning before the end of the month.

Many summer-flowering deciduous shrubs can be pruned between February and March; usually those that flower on the current year's growth. Shrubs that need regular pruning include *Buddleja davidii*, *Hydrangea paniculata*, *Lavatera*, hardy fuchsias, and deciduous *Ceanothus*.

Cut or renovate deciduous hedges, if necessary. They can still be renovated before leaf emergence.



## FRUIT and VEGETABLES

Winter prune apple trees and pear trees while they're still dormant. This is your last chance to do so.



Force rhubarb plants for an early crop.

Cover outdoor strawberries with cloches to encourage an earlier crop.

Top dress fruit bushes with a slow-release, potassium-rich fertiliser to feed plants for the coming season.

Start chitting early potatoes — stand them on end in a module tray or egg box and place them in a bright, cool, frost-free place

Prepare vegetable seed beds by removing all weeds and forking in plenty of compost.

Cover prepared soil with sheets of black plastic to keep it drier and warmer in preparation for spring planting.

Tidy up vegetable plots, removing any remaining plant debris.

Remove yellowing leaves from brassicas, including Brussels sprouts, to prevent brassica downy mildew and grey mould from spreading.

## GREENHOUSE

Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria*) that was lifted from the garden to use as winter-flowering pot plants in the greenhouse, should now be planted back outside.

Check your glasshouse insulation is still secure for the remainder of the cold weather.

Clear leaves and twigs from guttering on greenhouses and sheds.

## LAWN

Avoid walking on a frosty lawn, as this can damage the blades of grass, which go brittle in the cold. It may even leave brown footprints, which can take ages to disappear.

Repair bare patches, especially around lawn edges, using turf cut from other areas of the garden (if available).

With spring on the way it's worth preparing your lawn for the season ahead. Try installing lawn edging, which gives a neat and tidy appearance, and makes maintenance easier.

Mow if the weather is warm – grass will start to grow at temperatures above 5°C (41°F) – but set the cutting height to its maximum, and only mow when the grass is dry.

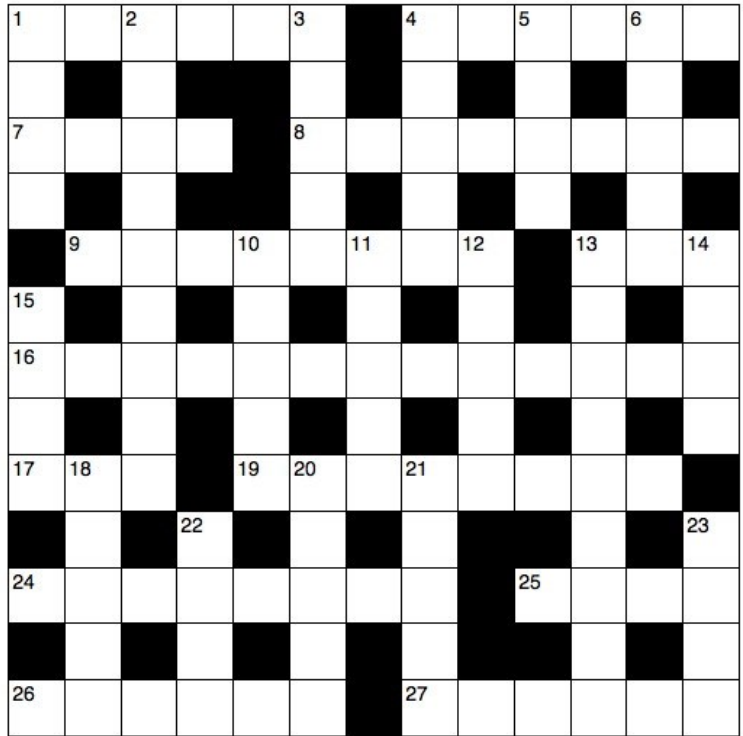
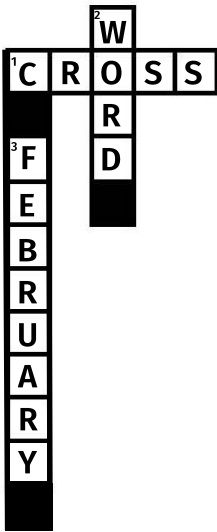


## TIPS

Check your tools are sound and your garden machinery is working. Give your tools and equipment the once over and apply a little TLC to anything that needs it. While you're at it, tidy your shed ahead of the imminent planting & sowing season - you'll thank yourself for a clean & tidy space later!

Trim deciduous hedges before the birds start nesting.

Happy Gardening  
***Petunia Flowers***



**Across**

- 1 "If you love those who love you, what – is that to you?" (Luke 6:32) (6)
- 4 "They threw the ship's – overboard" (Acts 27:19) (6)
- 7 The first murderer (Genesis 4:8) (4)
- 8 He was the head Levite in charge of the singing when the ark of God was brought back to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:22) (8)
- 9 Samson was noted for this (Judges 16:6) (8)
- 13 Solicit money or food from passers by (Acts 3:2) (3)
- 16 What William Booth's Christian Mission became in 1878 (9,4)
- 17 Alliance of Religions and Conservation (1,1,1)
- 19 "I will praise your name for ever and ever. – – I will praise you" (Psalm 145:1-2) (5,3)
- 24 Simon had (anagram) (8)
- 25 Desperate (Deuteronomy 28:48) (4)
- 26 Elisha witnessed the boy he was seeking to resuscitate do this seven times before opening his eyes (2 Kings 4:35) (6)
- 27 The belly and thighs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were made of this (Daniel 2:32) (6)

**Down**

- 1 “Before the — crows, you will disown me three times” (Matthew 26:75) (4)
- 2 Relating to the books of the Bible between Acts and Revelation (9)
- 3 “They have — the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” (John 20:2) (5)
- 4 Belief (5)
- 5 “Take the following fine spices: ... 250 shekels of fragrant — ” (Exodus 30:23) (4)
- 6 “Do not — Jerusalem, but wait for the gift” (Acts 1:4) (5)
- 10 A seer (anagram) (5)
- 11 “Even there your hand will — me” (Psalm 139:10) (5)
- 12 The wild variety was part of John the Baptist’s diet (Mark 1:6) (5)
- 13 A non-Greek speaker who was looked down on by civilized people (Colossians 3:11) (9)
- 14 Famous 1950s musical whose characters included members of 16 Across, — and Dolls (4)
- 15 The province from which Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:19) (4)
- 18 “He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring — — his hand” (Ezekiel 40:3) (3,2)
- 20 “Today, if you hear his — , do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion” (Hebrews 3:15) (5)
- 21 The Jericho prostitute who hid two Israelite spies on the roof of her house (Hebrews 11:31) (5)
- 22 “And now these three remain: faith, — and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13) (4)
- 23 “God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end” (Daniel 5:26) (4)

## JANUARY CROSSWORD ANSWERS

**ACROSS**    8 Bottomless pit   9 Ice   10 Decalogue   11 Limbo   13 Seconds  
 16 Crimson   19 Eager   22 Abhorrent   24 Lap   25 Alpha and Omega

**DOWN**    1 Abdiel   2 Stream   3 Wondrous   4 Flocks   5 USCL   6 A pagan  
 7 Athens   12 IOR   14 Creation   15 Dye   16 Cravat   17 In hope   18 Need no  
 20 Galley   21 Repeat   23 Read

Marriage requires falling in love many times – always with the same person  
*Anon*

# **IN HONOUR OF ST VALENTINE**

**Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of love in all its forms — family, friends, partners and pets — and for Your divine love that sustains us.**



**Guide us to be instruments of Your love, showing kindness, forgiveness, and selfless care, especially to those who are lonely or hurting. Amen**