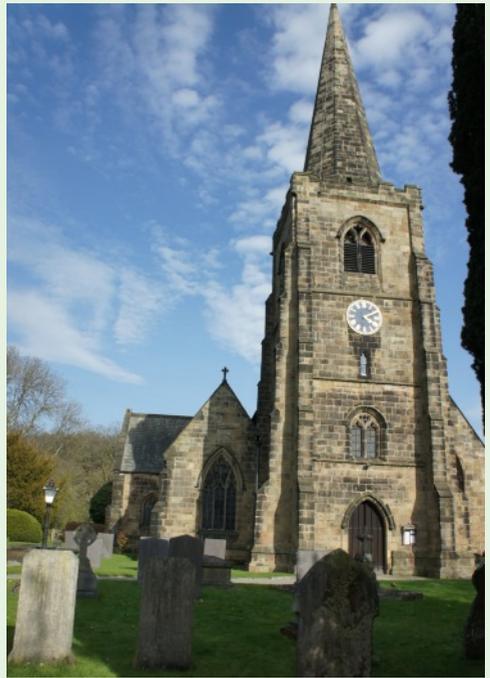




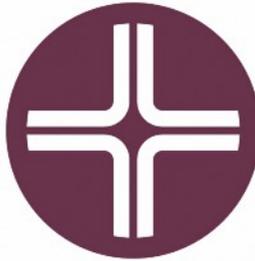
St Alkmund's Duffield Parish Magazine

November 2020



Lest we forget Act of Remembrance at the war memorial, November 2018

CHURCH OFFICIALS, ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS



Vicar: **Revd Dr James Hughes**

The Vicarage, Vicarage Lane, Duffield. Telephone 841867

Trainee Minister: **James Rollin**

Telephone: 07485 027171

Reader:

Richard Lindop

Telephone 840282

Churchwarden:

Paul Linford

Telephone 01773 821853

CHURCH SECRETARIES: *Emma Rollin & Diane Whiteside*07961 891168
HON. SECRETARY P.C.C.: *Marion Taulbut* 840677
HON. TREASURER P.C.C.: *Nick Peacock*..... 840935
HON. PARISH MAGAZINE EDITOR: *Jeffrey Taplin*..... 842665
YOUTH & CHILDREN'S WORKER: *Helen Hawley*..... 840536
MUSIC & WORSHIP GROUP LEADER: *Fiona Lindop*..... 840282
TOWER SECRETARY: *Luke Heaton*..... 841054
PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS: *Paul and Gill Linford*.....07486 560657

* * * * *

St Alkmund's Church Office, Church Drive, Duffield, Belper DE56 4BA. 07961 891168

e: office@stalkmundsduffield.co.uk www.stalkmundsduffield.co.uk

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Duffield Parish Magazine e: duffieldparishmag@gmail.com

The Vicar's Letter

JAMES HUGHES



Dear Friends,

Over the last few weeks, our lives have been dominated by Covid-19, and by the various rules and regulations around it. We have talked about tiers, and rules of six, and firebreaks. And none of this has been universally popular—a far cry from clapping the NHS back in April and May. After all, we may feel that government is having to square the circle—restrict the virus, boost the economy, and keep everybody happy at the same time. A seemingly impossible task.

And that has caused me to reflect on something which I think is always true about rules, and about laws, but which we don't often think of: that a good rule, or a good law, is not there to restrict us, but is there to help everybody live as good and fulfilled a life as possible. We might not think the current rules do that perfectly, but we recognise that desire, that goal.

And it perhaps won't surprise you to know that that reflection has caused me to reflect on the purpose of God's law, or God's word, or God's rules, and what they are designed to do. For example, in Psalm 19, the Psalmist says this about God's law:

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the

precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. (Psalm 19 verses 7 to 9, ESV)

In six phrases the Psalmist makes essentially the same point again and again: God's law, or rules, or testimony, or commandment—all essentially the same thing—is good, and life-giving, and life-affirming. Governments can't write perfect laws to enable everybody to live as good and fulfilled a life as possible; but God can, and does, and has. Which causes the Psalmist to say:

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. (Psalm 19 verse 10, ESV)

Now that is a strange idea—delighting in the law! And yet the Psalmist does, recognizing that God's law, what God says to us about how to live, is the most precious thing—more precious than the most valuable possession, or the tastiest food. That is not how we naturally think—but I hope we can at least see in principle that this is what good law, good rules are for. And then of course, I would invite you to explore further what that means with us week by week, whether in person or online.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Blessings,



Autumn News from All Saints' Chapel

There was joy in the eyes of the 8 o'clocksters as they arrived, masked and distancing, at All Saints' Chapel for the first service of Holy Communion for seven months. Gwendrahn and I had received a wonderfully positive response as we rang round the possible people: we cautiously anticipated eight or nine, but 18 people hoped to come, and I grew anxious about space—how would we adhere to the Covid-19 rules of separation? But we carefully positioned isolated seats and planned not to turn anybody away. But on Sunday morning there were 13 present. It was sad that a few were unwell, and others absent because of the growing fears of the impending 'second wave' of the virus.

The chapel did not look its best: hand-sanitiser on a stand in the porch, bold warning notices on the doors, garish, striped tape across the aisle floor cordoning off alternate pews and there could be no altar flowers. But it was warm (in spite of a heating hiccup between Thursday and Friday, admirably sorted by Michael, the parish warden, and no blame apportioned!)

James explained to us that the service must be shortened; his address taught us from St Mark's Gospel. He, the vicar, alone drank wine from the chalice but brought the bread to each of us in our pews. I think everyone felt strengthened by the prayers and the sacrament that most regular communicants had been missing for so long.

For me, part of the pleasure that morning was, as usual in All Saints' Chapel, the sense of communal fellowship among this congregation—the ages must range from early 40s to 90s (rather more in the higher group) but the young ones have said how much they've missed being together. It was sad that our more vulnerable friends could not join with us and we hope to be able to be with them again before long.

Jane, the new Parish Clerk, has been most helpful in planning the re-opening of the chapel, as well as Michael who is well known to many of us. As I write, there is hope that we can have another service on 1st November, followed by one on every first Sunday in each month, but of course everything remains uncertain and will have to be confirmed.

Many of our friends who are not in tune with aspects of modern life such as Zoom and YouTube have been enjoying services on the radio each Sunday. Although illness and vulnerability have made even limited social mixing difficult for some, as a group we have kept in touch with one another by telephone (good old landline preferred), passing news around to keep spirits up as we pray for a smooth recovery from the present problems.

Elizabeth Jackaman



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The Anniversary of the Floods of November 2019

On Friday 8th November 2019, just ahead of last year's Remembrance Sunday, both St Alkmund's church and the church hall were very badly affected by flooding (to the extent that we are only just now finishing the process of bringing the hall back into use, a year later). The following images take a pictorial look back at the extent of the flooding, twelve months on.

Last year's floods were of course a very difficult time for all concerned, but we are very grateful as a church for all the support we received from the wider community in the immediate aftermath of the flooding. Particular thanks go to William Gilbert Endowed Primary School, who kindly let us have use of

their school hall for our morning services, including for the Remembrance Sunday service on 10th November 2019 (grateful thanks are also due to the Parish Council and local uniformed organisations, who reorganised the Act of Remembrance to be held at the Weston Centre), until we were able to return to meeting in church just in time for the Christmas services in December 2019.

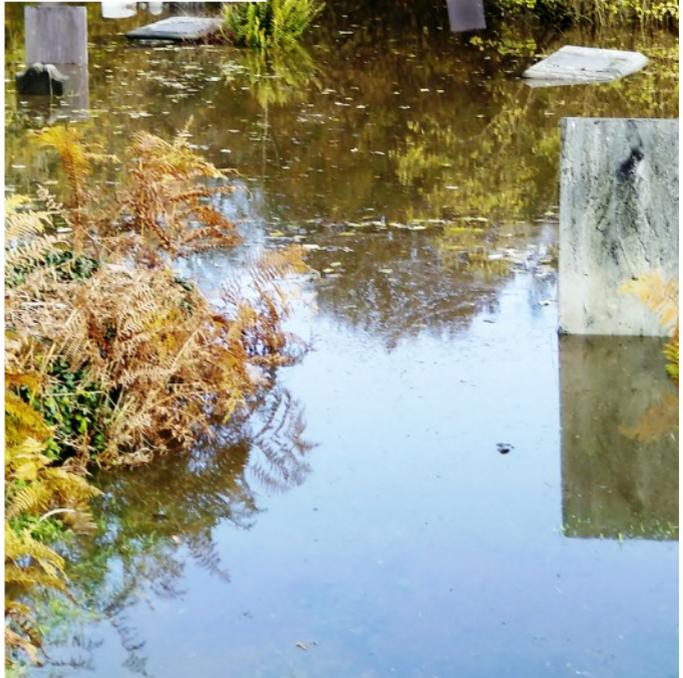
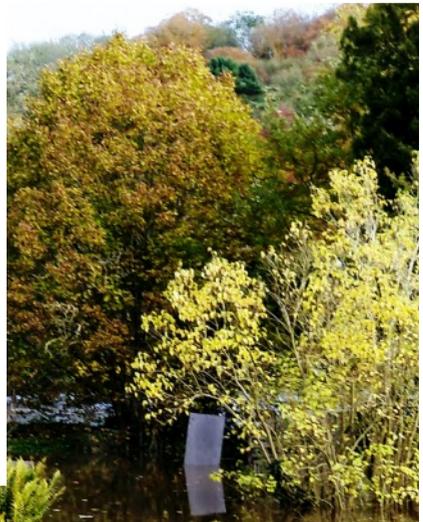
And of course we give thanks to the Lord who sustains us through all things. In the words of Psalm 93, verses 1-4, which we have inscribed on a plaque outside the church hall to mark the extent of 2019's flooding:

"The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty!"

James Rollin



Pictures of November 2019 flooding →





'Monday to Friday Living'

ONNIG TAMIZIAN *reflects on his strong Christian upbringing growing up in Cyprus, how his understanding of the Bible has significantly grown and developed during his time at St Alkmund's, and on his work in the medical profession as a Consultant Obstetrician Gynaecologist.*



I was born and brought up in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, and although most people equate that with being Greek, I am actually Armenian. There is a small (2,000-strong) community of Armenian people in Cyprus, and in fact the Armenians were the first to adopt Christianity as a state religion in AD 301!

My parents always brought up both my brother (who is a year younger than me and Godfather to my two daughters) and I with Christian and 'God Fearing' values, and I also received a very strong Christian influence from the Armenian Primary and Secondary schools I attended in Cyprus. By 'default', the schools of the Armenian community have always run hand-in-hand with the Armenian Church and the school/church is always adjacent — my school shared its site with the Armenian Church.

At the end of classes at 12 noon on Saturdays, there was then Sunday school as part of the school day! Religious lessons were taught by the local Priest — the Christian input was simply a 'way of life'. We also ALL had communion twice a year, so even as primary school children, you went into school after an overnight fast the day before Christmas and Easter holidays were about to start, had group Confession followed by communion, and then you went back to your classroom and had your packed breakfast and some treats!

I give this background because I don't have a specific 'Road to Damascus' moment of conversion I can point to. Rather, as I've said, there was a steady and constant Christian influence throughout my childhood; in addition to the strong Christian ethos I received at school, I also remember as a child my mother regularly reading the Bible to us and, as primary school children, we often would be chosen to do readings at Christmas and Easter by the local Priest (who was a good friend of my father's and would come to our house to have a glass of whisky with my father and practice our readings...). I also recall at Easter having our feet washed and anointed with margarine at the Maundy Thursday service.

Sadly, my father died a few months after my 13th birthday and subsequently my mother brought us both up single-handedly. Characteristically, as a respectable parishioner of good standing and as someone well-respected in the business community, my father had served on the committee in charge of building the new Armenian Church in Nicosia (following loss of the original Armenian Church, which after the 1974 Turkish invasion and division of the Island was left in the occupied part of Nicosia); unfortunately he never made it to the inauguration of the new church, though

his funeral was one of the first in the new building!

Although after my father's passing my mum and my brother and I never had much to spare, we never wanted for anything and at the appropriate times the Lord provided! And indeed, despite not having the financial resources, with the help of a London-based uncle and also through academic scholarships, my brother (who still lives in Cyprus) and I both managed to study in the UK.

I studied medicine in Nottingham, subsequently completing my Specialist Training and Research Fellow posts in Nottingham and Derby. It had originally been my intention to return to Cyprus after my studies—but as the saying goes, life then takes you in a different direction....

I met my wife Catherine when I was a Registrar in Derby and subsequently appointed her as my research midwife when I was a Clinical Research Fellow in Derby (no conflict of interest, as we were not dating at the time!). Catherine and I got married in Ripley in 2003 and our eldest daughter Isabella arrived in July 2005, just after I took up the post of Consultant Obstetrician Gynaecologist in Derby in May 2005.

Unfortunately the deteriorating health of my mother dominated the next 12 months and she passed away a few days after Isabella's first birthday (Isabella's middle name is Alice, after my mother). Our youngest daughter Ani then arrived in January 2008. Both of the girls have been christened in the Armenian Church in Nicosia by the Armenian Archbishop of Cyprus and our extended family flew out from the UK for both of their christenings!

My association with St Alkmund's

probably started around 13 years ago, when Mark Pickles was then the Vicar. We were made to feel very welcome, although I was initially very conscious that St Alkmund's was a very different style of church compared to Armenian and Greek churches—where services have a set 'liturgy', often in classical language—that I'd previously been used to. However, whilst such a traditional style of service can be very awe-inspiring, I soon realised that the verse-by-verse interpretation of Bible passages that takes place at St Alkmund's was much more useful!

I certainly feel that this has hugely helped me to understand much more of the Bible (which I have always read and read daily) and I now have a much better insight, including into the Old Testament in particular, and also the many connections between the Old and New Testaments. One of the main—and most important—'concepts' that I have also come to learn is that of God's Grace, as opposed to our own works, leading us to salvation. Whilst attending St Alkmund's, I have also had the opportunity to get involved in the life of the church through helping out at 'Impact', our Youth Group for school years 7–9.

By virtue of my profession, I come across individuals from all walks of life and at different and challenging times of their life, and it is a great privilege to be able to look after people in my line of work, including many in my immediate community around me. I always try to be guided by the principles of Christian life in my work and I have no hesitation to admit that at difficult times, I frequently ask God for help and advice (at least mentally!).

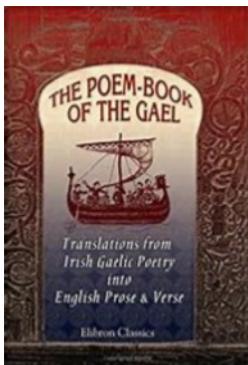


Be Thou My Vision

Through taking many assemblies based on acrostic poetry at Ravensdale Junior School, Mickleover, some years ago I was also asked to attend nearby Murray Park Community School for the annual National Poetry Day (NPD) celebrations. The theme for this year's NPD (the 26th such event; held on October 1st) was 'vision'.

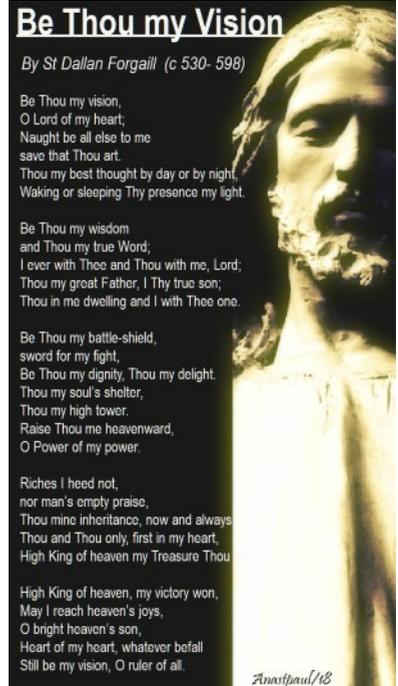
I had planned my programme, but this year was unable to execute my intentions. Had I been able to do so, a definite inclusion would have been the traditional Christian and popular hymn 'Be Thou My Vision', because the words are based on a Middle Irish poem 'Rop tú mo Baile', attributed to the sixth-century Irish Christian poet and monk St. Dallan Forgaill.

He apparently wrote it to remember and honour the Christian faith of Bishop St. Patrick, a fifth century Irish missionary, borrowing ideas from another medieval poem, 'St. Patrick's Breastplate'. The original poem can be found in two Irish manuscripts in the library of the Royal Irish Academy. In the early twentieth century, university student Mary Elizabeth Byrne translated the poem into English, Eleanor Hull versified the text and it was published in her *The Poem-Book of the Gael* in 1912.



Since 1919, it has been commonly sung to an Irish folk tune, noted as 'Slane' (composer unknown) in church hymnals. The language of the hymn is drawn from traditional Irish culture and 'heroic' imagery is employed to describe God. This was very typical of medieval Irish poetry, which cast God as the 'chieftain' or 'High King' who provided protection to his people or clan.

The powerful lyrics of 'Be Thou My Vision' provide a clear message that the Lord is our light and our strength. He watches over us and stands by our side. Laudation then to St. Dallan Forgaill who, in addition to providing the basis for a much-loved hymn and prayer, offers an opportunity to discover, share and enjoy poetry.



Paul Wiggins

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

The poet Laurence Binyon is best remembered for just four lines of poetry; 36 words to be exact. Part of a longer poem entitled, *For the Fallen* and written in response to the huge numbers of casualties experienced by the British Expeditionary Force in 1914, the familiar and poignant words are read out during Remembrance Day services all over the world as a lasting remembrance of the fallen.

'They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.'

Quite recently, the grave of a previously unknown army chaplain was discovered and rededicated at a British Cemetery in France, over 100 years after he was killed in the Great War.



Captain Alan Cecil Judd served as padre to a local regiment, the 2/5th Battalion

Notts & Derbys Sherwood Foresters and died during action on 21st March 1918. Revd Judd was awarded the Military Cross posthumously in April 1918. The citation in the *London Gazette* read:

'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in attending the wounded under shell fire. He searched shell holes for wounded, assisted them to the dressing station, and in one case carried a man on his back. His cheerfulness had a splendid effect in the front line trenches, which he continually visited.'



The rededication service for Reverend (Captain) Alan Cecil Judd MC took place at the Ravine British Cemetery, Villers-Plouich, France, and was attended by more than 20 of his extended family from as far afield as South Africa and included Harry Judd, drummer in the pop groups McFly and McBusted.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Mike Severn



Reflections on

This November we are not able to remember those who have fallen in war in the way we would like. We certainly can't have everybody gathering by hundreds around the war memorial, and we are not able to hold the normal parade.

Last year it was flooding, this year pestilence—hopefully next year we will be able to gather again to give thanks for those who have died for their country.

As we can't meet, let me share with you some reflections on some of the material we would normally say together at the war memorial.

Before the two-minutes silence we say these words:

*They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old;
age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning,
we will remember them.*

We will remember them.

We highlight the reality of war: those who died in their prime in war will not grow old. But as we affirm here, we will not forget them; their memory will live on. Here is one of the ideas that is at the heart of our Remembrance: calling to mind those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for others. It's why we read the names of the fallen every year.

And as we remember, of course our remembrance is active: there is a commitment we make, that we will seek to actively remember by bringing about peace. Think about this call to commitment we might use in the Remembrance service:



Remembrance



*Let us pledge ourselves anew to the service of God
and our fellow men and women:
that we may help, encourage and comfort others,
and support those working for the relief of the needy
and for the peace and welfare of the nations.*

All well and good. And yet we are conscious that with every passing year, more names are added to the list of those who have died serving their country in war across the globe: the war to end all wars didn't. Which is why the prayer for Remembrance Sunday asks God to intervene:

*Almighty Father,
whose will is to restore all things
in your beloved Son, the King of all:
govern the hearts and minds of those in authority,
and bring the families of the nations,
divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin,
to be subject to his just and gentle rule;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.***

Our collective human failure to end war and to preserve peace calls us to recognise our sin, our rebellion against God, and to ask God to help us. Specifically, to ask God that he might make us subject to the true ruler who can bring peace, Jesus Christ.

This Remembrance Sunday, even as we cannot gather, do make use of the resources here to reflect and to remember and to give thanks for those who died for us, and to reflect on what it might mean for us to recognise Jesus Christ as our King, and to truly have peace.

James Hughes



Youth and Children

Over the past few weeks we have relaunched our children's work at St Alkmund's and St Paul's and it has been an absolute delight to welcome our children back!

The children are invited to join their families for the first part of the service, then after the children's song, are escorted to Sunday Club (St Alk's am) or Explorers (St Paul's pm) in our church halls.

As a leadership team, we have worked hard to create a safe space for our children to learn. I would personally like to thank a team of volunteers who came down to St Alkmund's hall on Saturday 3rd October to help clean and make ready the site.

Of course, Sunday Club and Explorers feels a little different to what we are used to. We now sit at desks two metres apart and must maintain safe social distancing at all times. However, it is not without its perks. To limit the amount of resource sharing each child now has their very own stationery pack—complete with stickers, felt tips, colouring pencils, pens, playdough, and a notebook. It's such a small thing really, but it was lovely to watch the children gleefully open their packs and discover what was inside; I mean, who doesn't like a fresh pot of unopened playdough and bright colourful pens!?



This term we are learning about the first Christians from the book of Acts, and the story of Jacob in the book of Genesis. There really is nothing like opening the Bible with children and discovering God's amazing plan for his people that was set in motion thousands of years ago.



Our children's work is led by a wonderful team of adults who have such hearts for children and the gospel. They are salt of the earth and it is my joy to work alongside them each week. We are also thrilled to have a couple of teenagers on the team who bring such a spark of enthusiasm and a can-do attitude to the sessions. My prayer is that our children's work may long continue, and that even in these uncertain times, children will enjoy learning about Jesus and the unwavering truth of God's great love for them.

Helen Hawley



Children's Craft Activities:

Poppy Biscuits



What you will need:

- A paper plate
- A biscuit
- A bottle-top cutter
- A rolling pin
- Some red icing
- A chocolate button or a piece of liquorice
- A drop of icing sugar
- A sandwich bag

Instructions

1. Roll out your red icing and cut two circles out using the bottle-top cutter
 2. “glue” the two circles in a poppy shape (one above the other slightly overlapping) with a drop of icing sugar
 3. “glue” a chocolate button or piece of liquorice into the middle
 4. Place on a paper plate and put in a sandwich bag to take home and enjoy!
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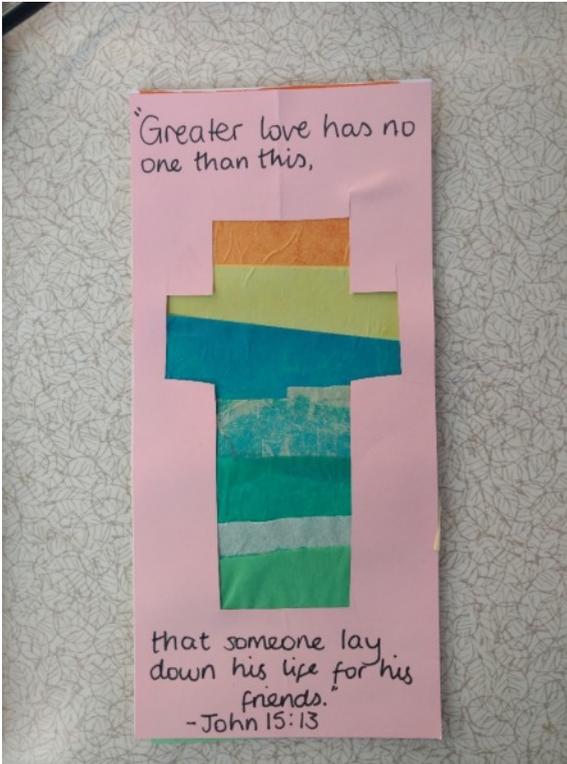
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Cross Bookmarks



What you need:

- One piece of white card for the back of your bookmark
- One piece of coloured card for the front of your bookmark
- Several strips of tissue paper
- Glue stick
- Pen
- Template

Instructions

1. Fold your coloured piece of paper in half longways
2. Draw around the cross template with long edge on the fold of the card
3. Cut out and open up to have a cross in the middle of your coloured card
4. Put glue all over white card
5. Place strips of tissue paper across middle of white card
6. Stick coloured card over the top to reveal a pretty cross!
7. Write Bible passage on the front or back of your bookmark

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Two-Minute New Testament—2 Thessalonians



From time to time, and perhaps quite a lot of the time, we think about what the future will hold. What life will look like in years to come for ourselves, for our families, for our nation and our world. We no doubt have hopes, but also fear and anxieties. And how we think about the future will impact how we approach the present.

In his second letter to the Thessalonians, written soon after the first letter, Paul returns to a theme from his first letter which is about just that: what does the future hold? Paul writes to reassure them in challenging times. So, in chapter 1, we read about Jesus' return, how that will bring judgement on those who oppose Christ, and relief and glorification for Jesus' followers.

Then in chapter 2, he addresses some issues that have arisen over whether Jesus has already returned or not. These first twelve verses of chapter 2 are hard to work out, because although the Thessalonians clearly knew what Paul was talking about, we sometimes have trouble working it out. However, the basic message of the passage is clear: Jesus has not yet returned, but when he does, he will defeat lawlessness and Satan, and all who are opposed to God and God's people. And so is the application in the last few verse of chapter 2: stand firm in what you have been taught, because God is in charge, and Jesus is coming back.

And so, having reassured them about the future, Paul now turns to address the present. He begins chapter 3 by asking for their prayers for him. Paul may be an apostle, the kind of person that gets called 'Saint Paul' and put on a pedestal, but he knew he was a man who needed God's deliverance and protection. And he is confident of it because God is faithful.

Then Paul turns to an issue in the church at Thessalonica: idleness. What seems to have happened is that, because some people were expecting Jesus to come back really soon, or even thinking that he had already come back in some way, they had stopped working. So, Paul tells them to imitate his example, knowing how he worked when he was among them. He tells them that those who are not willing to work, should not eat, that is they should not be fed by the church in the same way that the church fed widows and orphans. The principle here is that those in need should be cared for, but those who can work, and for whom work is available, should work to earn their living, until Jesus returns.

So here is a letter all about the future, but also all about how we live in the present, because how we approach the future impacts how we approach the present. Paul encourages us to rightly understand the future, that we might live today in the light of Jesus' return, knowing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who died, rose again, and is coming back.

James Hughes

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“Which Way to Go” or “Where does your heart lead?”

Hi there, it's Luke again! Last month's first effort seemed to go quite well. So this time, I thought I'd let you into another taste of vicarage life; you *had* worked out what my dad does, hadn't you?

I've just started in the sixth form at school, so we've been asked to start thinking about “what we want to do with our lives”. It sounds easy enough: write down a list of ideas, whittle it down a bit, find out how to do it, and there you are, job done! Except it doesn't work like that; I'll explain.

After the “Hi, Jean” spat, it was nice to have a good laugh with Dad, and things were back to normal. So, a few days later, I brought the subject up over the breakfast table.

“We've been asked to think what we want to do with our lives; so any ideas?”

Mum and Dad looked at each other: I realised that they had already been working on this. And, to judge by their looks, I don't think that they had the same plans. Actually, I think I already knew that; we'll come back to that in a minute. Then my sister Katie piped up.

“Luke's going to be a model!” she declared. “After all, like, all my friends fancy him!”

This was news to me, and I found myself blushing, much to my own embarrassment.



Mum joined in the general laughter. “Yes, perhaps they do, but I don't think that is very likely?”

“Mother,” I declared in mock indignation, “Am I not worthy? How could you possibly doubt my ambition: Reality TV here I come!”

“I don't doubt it at all dear, but it wasn't quite what we had in mind, nor you I suspect?”

Dad raised an eyebrow: “Actually, I don't think that ‘we’ had anything in mind, but you and I both have our wishes. Perhaps Luke might want to put his case forward: Rock star? TV personality? Writer? What's your fancy?”

“Something that will please you,” I said. “But not necessarily in the short term!”

Dad said to me later, “I think this deserves more than a breakfast chat. Let's take coffee into my study this evening.”

The speed surprised me; and then I realised, Mum and Dad were of very different opinions. This was going to be tricky!

— ooo OOO ooo —

ONCE we had settled into the study, Dad switched into “friend and counsellor” mode. I had seen this before of course. I knew what it meant. Dad was going to separate his personal preferences, perhaps even his ambitions for me in order to give me the best advice he could.

“OK, Dad,” I grinned, “let me have both barrels.”

He smiled, and then rubbed his chin in thought.

“Luke, you are a gifted young man, and you have a right to make the most of your skills, and to expect to be helped along the way— at least for a while. But there are many things to consider. Your personal preferences,

family expectation (of course!), serving your community, perhaps your country.

“You probably have some years of study to come, which are very precious. But notwithstanding the triumphs and tragedies, successes and disappointments that will mould you over the next few years, you have a Christian duty to serve your Lord Jesus in the best way you can. Follow him, and find out in which way you feel He is leading you.”

“Do you want me to be a vicar, then?”

“I did not say that, not at all. Full time ministry is not the only form of Christian service. Indeed, not many Christians are called to devote their whole lives to ‘Full time Christian Work.’ But we are meant to devote our whole lives to serving Christ and doing God’s will for our lives, wherever life takes us.

“You know the verse from Jeremiah 29 verse 11. ‘For you know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

“Wow, that was a lot to take in! Can you break it down into something more palatable!”

Dad smiled, “Of course, but I wanted to start on the right footing. What do you think you’re good at?”

I was ready for that one: “Well, I’m a reasonable all-rounder at school; OK at most things without being a star. I take part in lots of things—sports, acting, school council. I like making things. I enjoy the music band, and I like singing at church.”

“Do you know what other people say about you?”

“Do I really want to know?”

“Yes, you do. What do you think they say...?”

“It rather depends on who ‘they’ are, but I’ll give it a try.

“If you ask my friends they’ll say, ‘A bit of a swot’, ‘a good laugh, but a bit serious at

times’, ‘can keep a secret’, ‘probably do something nerdy or deep at Uni’.

“If you ask the teachers they’ll say, ‘a good student, a reasonably conscientious student—but could work harder’, ‘prone to



occasional gaffs.’” Dad laughed: I forgot my lines in a school play last year!

“If you ask the people at church, they’ll say, ‘willing to muck in, contributes at youth group’, ‘A loyal member of the church band—er, with the occasional mishap!’” Dad laughed again.

“If you ask some people in the village, or the sports clubs, I think I leave a reasonable impression, and I’m not one for causing disturbances; yet.” Dad looked at me in mock alarm; I *think* he thought that I was kidding!

“If I asked Mum, she’d say ...” I left that one hanging. I didn’t want to cause a full scale domestic! “And we know what Katie thinks. I’m not sure about you, Dad. If I had to guess, I think you think that you ought to want me to be a vicar; but I’m not convinced that you really think that at all! Does your experience colour your opinion?”

— ooo OOO ooo —

DAD did look genuinely surprised.

“I am astonished. Firstly by your self-awareness: unusual in someone so young. You really have thought this through, haven’t you?”

“But, secondly, by the things you have missed out. Like the time you spend sitting →

with Grandad, even though his dementia is troubling him.” I opened my mouth to speak, but Dad put his hand up to show that he wanted me to listen.

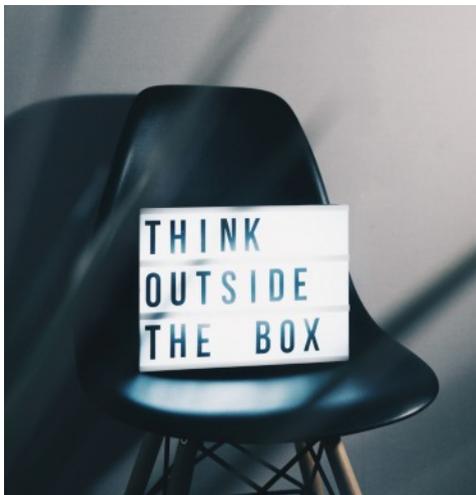
“The way you make sure no-one gets left out at discos—the timid girls—and dragging the timid boys onto the dancefloor! The way you chose more challenging subjects at school, instead of the ones you found easy. The way you take my side when there is an argument about church, but will pass the message on to me in a tactful way.”

— ooo OOO ooo —

THAT was a lot to think about, but we hadn’t got to the hardest part.

“So, Dad, what do you and Mum think? I can see that you don’t agree, because I can see the tension! I don’t want to be the cause of a major marriage bust-up, but I’m not sure how I avoid it? Perhaps I should choose something different from what either of you have planned for me!”

“Bingo, you’ve got it in one. It is your life to live, in the best way that you can live it for Jesus. Spend some time finding out what jobs really involve. Do you want to fulfil artistic dreams, or work helping and caring for people? Do you want to lead or follow?”



Inside or Outside? Comfortable or challenging? Do you want to make things, design things, engineer things?

“And above all, don’t forget that this choice isn’t for life. When you start asking, you’ll find that many of our friends have changed careers. Some followed their dreams, but it didn’t work out. For others it did, but time and circumstances changed. Some have been challenged by illness—theirs or their loved ones. Some pootled along in quiet jobs, and then transformed into something completely different in middle-age.

“It’s your life, my son. Live it well!”

I don’t really know how Dad could have done it any better. Do you?

— ooo OOO ooo —

WE went back downstairs, and Dad went into a quick huddle with Mum and Katie.

“We’ve come up with a plan,” Katie announced. “We’re all going to suggest one thing you should be, in reverse order!”

“A father,” said Dad. “A husband,” said Mum. “A boyfriend,” said Katie. “I have a suitable candidate!”

I paused and gathered my thoughts. “And so have I,” I said. “Katie, I think we have someone to discuss.”

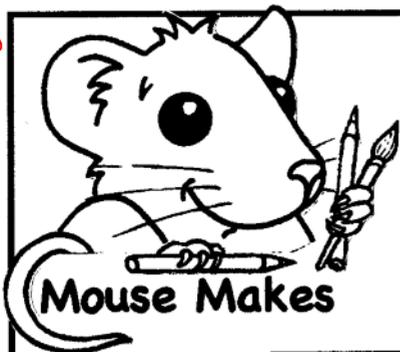
— ooo OOO ooo —

Andrew Jackson October 2020.

This story follows on from last month. The people and events in this story are a work of fiction.

Again, some of the anecdotes are personal. The Bible verse is taken from Jeremiah 29, v11. Sorry again about the cultural appropriation involved in the creation of this story. Some of Luke’s opinions are mine; others perhaps wish fulfilment! My thanks to my wife Jane for much valuable editing and advice.

— ooo OOO ooo —



Mouse Makes

ADVENT comes from the Latin 'AD VENTO' which means 'ARRIVAL'

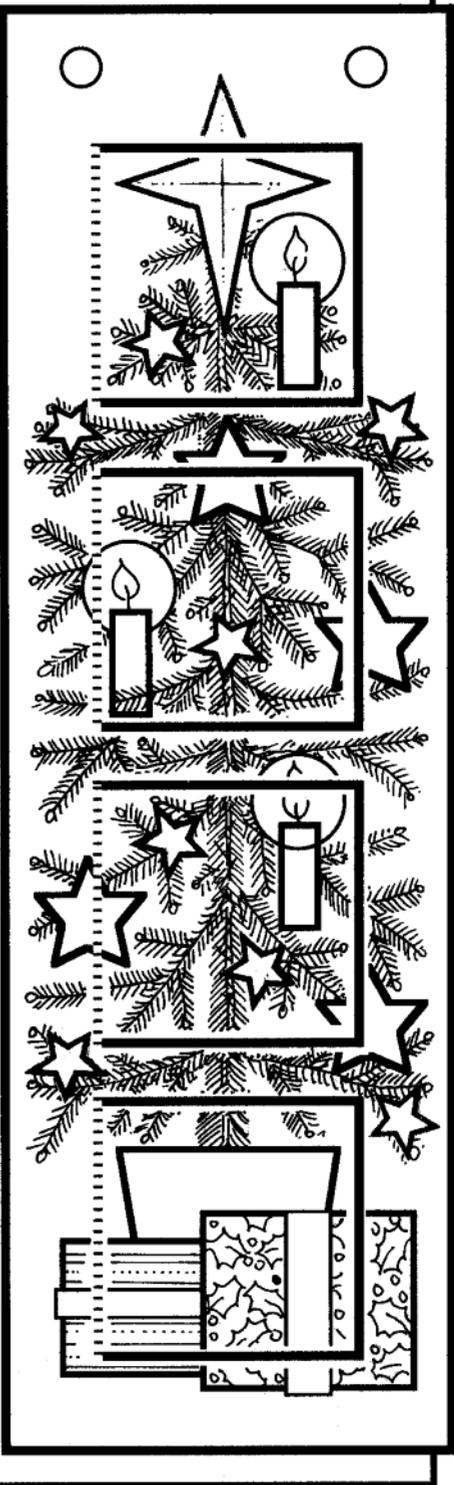
In advent we celebrate Jesus' birth and look forward to the time when Jesus will come again.



Make this Advent calendar to count down the four Sundays before Christmas



1. Cut out the front of the calendar.
2. Ask an adult to cut around the thick lines of each window with a craft knife, then fold them open along the dotted lines.
3. Put glue on the back of the calendar around the edge and stick onto card.
4. Cut out the pictures and glue onto the backing card behind each window.
5. Punch holes in the top and hang.



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