

St Helen's Magazine

January 2023

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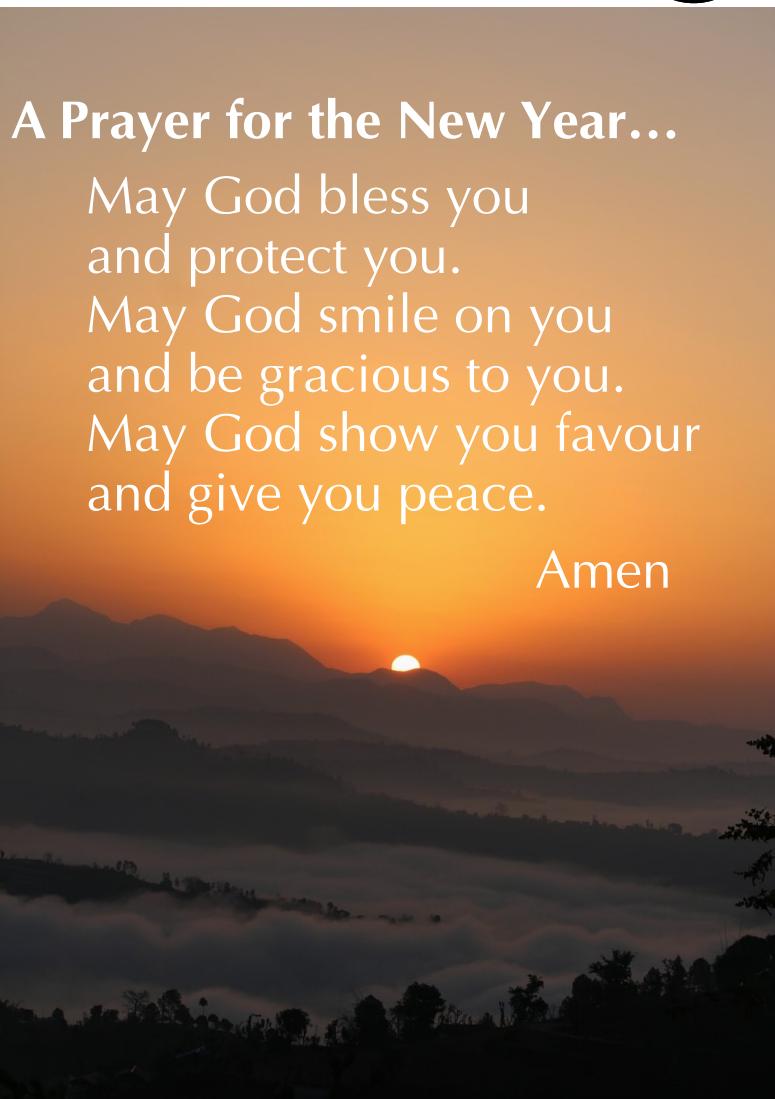
A Prayer for the New Year...

May God bless you
and protect you.

May God smile on you
and be gracious to you.

May God show you favour
and give you peace.

Amen



St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch



Loving God, loving others, loving the world

Parish Directory

(The dialling code for these numbers is 01530 except where stated)

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◆Opening times Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 10.00am - 1.00pm

◆ Facebook: St Helen's Ashby de la Zouch

◆ Instagram:

◆ Twitter: [@sthelensashby](https://twitter.com/sthelensashby)

◆ Website: www.sthelensashby.net

Giving

You can make donations to the work of St Helen's via our website - <https://www.sthelensashby.net/Groups/327469/Giving.aspx>

Editor Writes ...



My favourite news story of 2022 was from October, about the artwork by Piet Mondrian which was discovered to have been hung upside down ... since 1945. It seems to have come as quite a surprise to the gallery. Imagine being the curator when she had to announce, at the press conference intended to launch an exciting new exhibition of Mondrian's work, that one of the highlights of the show, a piece called New York City 1 (1941), has been displayed upside down since it was first seen in public. We haven't had an upside down painting, but we have had some surprises over Christmas, one involving Christmas cake and the other involving donkeys - Catch up with our photo album on page 23.

Or perhaps my favourite news article was the one from the beginning of the year, telling of a parish in Canterbury which was celebrating the success of an Evensong service whose congregation had jumped from just one person to more than 70. Food was involved. AYFC were successfully serving up food over Christmas - see page 5. And Ashby Foodbank have thanked us for helping them provide for their busiest December ever (page 15.)

But I think my absolute best news highlight of all might have to be the story of 'marathon man', Gary McKee, the runner who ran 365 marathons on the 365 days of 2022. As well as running a marathon every day of the year, he continued with his employment, often running his marathon before starting work each day! Now that is taking persistence and endurance to a whole new level. Pat Stafford brings us a story about another impressively tenacious individual on page 10.

Mr McKee's aim when he began his daily marathon last January was to not only complete the challenge, but also to raise funds for charity. This was successful too, with over £1million being given to Macmillan and to Cumbrian Hospice At Home. A rather more miserly gentleman appears in Wendy Freer's article on page 16.

After crossing the final finishing line the marathon man is reported to have said, "It's job done." Reverend Margaret tells us about taking on a new job over the page.

Jill Chapman



Revd Margaret Writes ...

It is two years ago, Christmas 2020, that Mary asked if I might consider joining her at St. Helen's and the Flagstaff Family. She knew that both Stewart and John Dawson were moving on and hence she was looking for some help with her parishes and I was retired and "floating" and not attached to any parish in particular. Mary, Allan and I gave this some thought and prayer over the Christmas period to see if this call to Ashby was what God really wanted.



There was lots to consider. It would be the first time that I had had a ministry in a different Diocese because I had spent the whole of my life in Derby Diocese and you are Leicester. It would be the first time that I had a ministry in a Team/Benefice in which I did not live and never had lived. It would be the first formal ministry that I had had in a substantial town rather than large villages. I did know that I would need Permission to Officiate from the Bishop of Leicester and other bits and bobs (and I wondered if I might need a passport to hop over border from Derby to Leicester!)

The services were still on line and in January 2021 Mary led one in which she used a hymn from "Laudate"

*"You shall cross the barren desert,
but you shall not die of thirst,
you shall wander far in safety
though you do not know the way.
You shall speak your words in foreign lands
and they will understand
You shall see the face of God and Live.
Be not afraid, I go before you always,
Come follow me, and I will give you rest."*

It was these words which I took to heart and, after prayerfully hearing them, I told Mary that Allan and I would join her. When I look at those words now I do wonder about the last few words "*and I will give you rest*" because with Mary moving on, *rest* it has not been nor likely to be so for the foreseeable future!

So, two years in which Covid regulations have come, changed and gone. Two years during which Mary moved on and the Wardens and PCC had to take up much more responsibility. Two years in which I moved from just backing up Mary to taking more initiative and a little responsibility again.

I wonder whether the words of a hymn have changed your life. If so perhaps you would share them with us.

They have had a huge effect in mine on various occasions not just this last move.

So, thanks for all that has been and for putting up with us. We look forward to continuing to serve the Lord with you at St. Helen's and the Flagstaff Family of Churches as together we bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of Ashby in 2023.

With our best wishes for 2023.

Revd Margaret and Allan

Christmas Crackerteria Thank You

Thank you from the staff of Crackerteria (pictured) and from Youth For Christ in Moldova - for your prayers and patronage. A very healthily sized team of Ashby young people waited on tables, chatted with customers and toured Ashby inviting people to join us. They very much enjoyed your company.



of their building and prepared all of the hot food.

Moldova Youth For Christ provides for the basic needs of young people in Moldova - food and shelter - as well as education and pastoral care to interrupt the cycle of poverty that leads to young people being trafficked and exploited in other ways. Your support is delightfully efficient - the price of a cup of tea wonderfully multiplies as it is translated into loving action by Moldova Youth For Christ. A few UK pounds support a lot of care.



**Ashby
YOUTH
FOR CHRIST**

**Thanks
Veron**

January Gardening Tips

Welcome to 2023!

It is a difficult time for all but I hope the gardening tips keep you grounded. Let's start with a quick' "Dos and Don'ts", of composting.

All materials that were once, "Living", will compost, but there are plenty of items that are best avoided. You should use equal quantities by volume of, "Green and Brown", materials for the best results.

Any raw or cooked meat and fish, all dairy products and cooked food must be avoided as should coal fire ash, cat and dog litter as well disposable nappies.

Examples of green (nitrogen rich) items include grass cuttings, uncooked fruit and vegetable peelings, young weeds as well as horse, cow and poultry manure.

Examples of brown (carbon rich) items include waste paper, soft cardboard such as egg boxes, toilet and kitchen roll tubes. Also, woody prunings, straw and old bedding materials such as hay, shredded paper and wood shavings from vegetarian pets like rabbits and guinea pigs.



Other compostable items include egg shells, wool and cotton fibres as well as wood ash in moderation.

Ideally, the use of a rotatable composter is recommended as you can convert waste to finish home compost in a matter of months. The key factors that influence this are outdoor temperature, balanced green to brown ratio and time of year.

A rotatable composter makes life easier because you can turn and aerate the composting moisture quickly as opposed to turning by hand with a fork. January is the start of the gardening year and a time for fresh ideas, grand

plans and renewed energy for the next twelve months ahead.

Getting ready for the year ahead is exciting and standard routine jobs include chitting first early potatoes, planting sweet pea seeds, as well as planting bare rooted roses.

Tasks to do in the flower garden include pruning Honeysuckle, Wisteria, Rhododendrons and Rose bushes whilst dormant. Cut back ornamental grasses and tidy up perennials. Finally, remove any faded pansy flowers to stop them setting seed.

The vegetable garden will be quiet but keep harvesting leeks and parsnips as well as removing yellowing leaves from Winter Brassicas. Also start thinking about preparing the soil for the coming year.

Prune fruit trees and plants such as apples, pears, currants and gooseberries. But leave stone fruit trees such as plums, cherries and apricots until the summer.

Finally, start planning what you want to do in the garden in 2023. Now is the time to order seeds and plants. Ideally why not visit our local garden centres as they struggle for business at this time of the year. Also, make sure you continue to look after our wildlife.

Happy New Year to One and All!

Alan Cross

Loughborough City of Sanctuary says, 'Thank You!'

... for the brilliant collection of hats, scarves and gloves which you have so kindly donated! Some of the asylum seekers have seen snow for the first time recently and are very glad indeed of those extra layers! The Superdrug vouchers are also gladly received.

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

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facebook.com/sthelensheritage



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www.sthelensashby.net





St Helen's Community Heritage Centre
4 Church Yard, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leics, LE65 1AA

HERITAGE TALKS 2022 – 23

Mike Hawkes

Tuesday 24th January at 7.30pm

GRAFFITI IN MEDIEVAL CHURCHES - IS THE WRITING ON THE WALL?

Mike studied archaeology at the University of Leicester. He is Archaeological Advisor to the Dioceses of Leicester and of Southwell and Nottingham. He also works as a freelance archaeological illustrator and is involved with a project looking at early medieval parish formation in the Kingdom of Mercia.

**£3 including light refreshments
Tickets on the door**



**Facebook: St Helen's Ashby de la Zouch
Website: www.sthelensashby.net
Email: sthelensashby@gmail.com**



The flight into England

Now that asylum seekers are housed in two hotels in Loughborough, various church and community groups are seeking ways to support them. One of our projects is to provide structured opportunities for English conversation, in order to extend friendship, widen their understand of the British way of life and of course, to improve their spoken English.

My group are all Arabic speakers but their first languages are different - Basim for example, is from Chad - and his friend Yahir is from Sudan. They speak different first languages but in both their countries of origin, Arabic is the language of education, business and commerce.

It was clear from our early conversations that through this common language, they had formed a strong friendship, so I asked whether they had first met when they arrived in Loughborough.

But it seems their friendship was forged in much more dramatic fashion, during a life-threatening moment on a small boat coming over to the UK from Dunkirk.

Basim told me he can't swim, so when the boat started letting in water, he was terrified. The leak was close to where Yahir was sitting, so he and Basim developed an impromptu system with Yahir pushing the water backwards towards Basim, who was then able to scoop it over the side, using just his bare hands. To their enormous relief, they reached shallow water before the boat sank.

Basim hails from the Republic of Chad - a landlocked country in north-central Africa which has been in a state of almost constant instability and protracted conflict since achieving independence in 1960. It experiences recurrent attempted coups and major political violence. Ethnic and religious rivalries, as well as socio-economic crisis, further intensify the ongoing political grievances - and in addition, Chad is surrounded by conflicts from neighbouring countries which further exacerbate the internal crises.



I don't know anything of Basim's personal story, political involvement or particular vulnerability but I do know he leaves a wife and two daughters in Chad whom he misses terribly.

Yahir is from Sudan, a country in which, after three decades of life under a repressive administration, followed by months of rule by a vicious paramilitary force - a violent military crackdown on a pro-democracy protest left more than 100 people dead. Since then (despite attempts by the US to broker some sort of peaceful resolution) demonstrations, met by violent suppression, have continued, with killings and rapes reported in the capital Karthoum and 13 other cities across the country.

Young men from certain regions of Sudan are regularly subject to persistent and systemic persecution, including attack, arrest and surveillance. Particularly so if they are from ethnic groups associated with the opposition and with the rebellion against the dictatorship of former President Bashir.

Again, I know nothing of Yahir's personal story, but this is the background to his decision to flee his homeland, leaving family and loved ones behind - and embark on that perilous journey to the UK.

I cannot begin to imagine the desperation that had driven these two men to undertake such journeys, but in much less dramatic ways, their determination has been called upon since their arrival in Loughborough too. Some of those in the Loughborough Town of Sanctuary group had enquired at the local college on behalf of all the asylum seekers as to whether there were any English courses available to them. But we had reached what we thought was a 'dead end'. Funding, we were told, is determined by the assurance that the candidates can complete the course - and even the Home Office can't tell us how long they will be in Loughborough. We shrugged our shoulders and wished it were different.

But Basim, in particular, wasn't giving up that easily. He was desperate to improve his very basic English and had discovered that Loughboough Town of Sanctuary volunteers wait daily outside the Immigration Enforcement Centre to meet and greet those (from cities across the East Midlands) who are required to report there each week. Basim hasn't reached that stage of the system yet - but now he had found volunteers willing to befriend him and chat to him - in English! We gave him some stationery and signed him up at the library - and from then on, he appeared every morning with new vocabulary recorded in his notebook - which he wanted to hear, understand and practise.

Meanwhile, he kept asking repeatedly at the college and of the SERCO rep at his hotel, whether anything had changed regarding English tuition. It wasn't long before Basim appeared triumphantly one day at the Immigration Centre with a college lanyard and a name card! It seems that a 'discretionary fund' had been unearthed at the college and Basim and some

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Pop in and see us at

1 Bath Street Corner, Ashby de la Zouch, LE65 2FH

of his colleagues had been signed up for courses in both English and Maths!

Now, he, Yahir and other fellow students also come straight from college once a week, to our LToS afternoons of 'English conversation' at the John Storer House Community Centre - and Basim has now signed up to volunteer at the Foodbank, where, no doubt there will be plenty more opportunities for those valuable English conversations!

I guess that such determination, resilience and persistence has been fundamentally important factors in their safe arrival in the UK - and likewise that of the other asylum seekers housed in Loughborough from Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, Ethiopia, Iraq and Iran.

I don't know how long they will be with us; the Home Office may well move them at very short notice to other accommodation.

I don't know the details of their stories, their perilous journeys or their personal reasons for fleeing to the UK.

I don't know what the eventual outcome will be of their asylum applications.

But one thing is for sure :

I will now read the story of the 'Flight to Egypt' from a whole new perspective!

I will imagine the fears Mary and Joseph must have harboured as they began that journey - and how heart-breaking it must have been to leave friends and family behind, in such dangerous situations.

I will think about the lengths they must have gone to, as they set out, to avoid arrest by the repressive regime under which they were living.

I will wonder who helped them on their way and who perhaps exploited their need for help, for their own profit and advancement.

I will ask myself whether they were welcomed or resented by the Egyptian community in which they settled and what barriers they encountered as they struggled to support themselves in a strange land.

As the child Jesus grows up in back in Nazareth, I will hear Mary and Joseph telling him what it was like to live as a refugee ...

and I will see Jesus' deep love and concern for the 'outsider' in a whole new light.



Our Worship on Sundays in January

Week	8.30am	10.30am	pm
1 1 st Jan		Breedon Team Service - Holy Communion	
2 8 th Jan		St Helen's All-Age Worship	6.00pm St Helen's * Evensong
3 15 th Jan		St Helen's * Holy Communion	12.30pm St Helen's Baptisms
4 22 nd Jan		St Helen's * Morning Prayer or Holy Communion	
5 29 th Jan		Worthington Team Service - Holy Communion	



* - denotes services at St Helen's which are streamed live to Facebook, on the Flagstaff Family of Churches Facebook page, and later on the website - www.sthelensashby.net

Our usual pattern for services:

- Sundays
 - First Sunday of the month -
 - 8.30am Holy Communion
 - 3.30pm All-Age
 - 6pm Choral Evensong
 - Second & Fourth Sundays of the month -
 - 10.30am Holy Communion
 - Third Sunday of the month -
 - 10.30am Service of the Word
- Wednesdays - Holy Communion - 10.30am
 - First Wednesday of the month - Holy Communion - in church
 - Second Wednesday of the month - Holy Communion - at Prior Park Community Centre
 - Third Wednesday of the month - Service of the Word - in church
- Saturdays - Parish Prayers - 9.30am in church (Hastings chapel)

Regular activities:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Monday mornings, term time | – Little Fishes 9.30 - 11.30am |
| Mondays | – Monday Group - 8pm |
| First Tuesday of the month | – MU2 meeting 7.30pm - 9pm |
| Third Tuesday of the month | – MU meeting 10.30am - 12 noon |
| Third Tuesday of the month | – PCC meeting 7 - 9.30pm |
| Fourth Tuesday of the month
(October to March only) | – Heritage lectures 7pm - 9.30pm |
| First Wednesday of the month | – ‘We’re In Stitches’ Knit & natter 2 - 4pm |
| Thursdays | – Choir practice 6.30-8.30 |

January Diary

Wednesday 4 th	2 - 4pm	‘We’re in Stitches’ knit & natter group
Monday 9 th	9.30am	Little Fishes - first day of new term
Monday 9 th	8pm	Monday Group recommences
Tuesdays 10 th	2.30 - 4pm	Friends, Fellowship & Faith
Wednesday 11 th	10.30am	Communion at Prior Park
Monday 16 th	10am	Mission & Ministry Team meeting
Monday 16 th	12 noon	EAT - Events & Activities Team meeting
Tuesday 17 th	10.30am	Mother’s Union
Wednesday 18 th	7.30pm	Street Pastors Members’ Meeting
Thursday 19 th	5pm	Priest Room Gang
Tuesday 24 th	2.30 - 4pm	Friends, Fellowship & Faith
Tuesday 24 th	7pm	PCC tbc
Tuesday 24 th	7.30pm	Heritage Talk - Graffiti
Saturday 28 th	7pm	Burn’s Night

Ashby Foodbank

A massive thank you to everyone for your support from all of us at Ashby Foodbank.

We have had the busiest December, so really appreciate all of the donations both food and financial.



January Shopping List

- Longlife milk- semi or full fat
- Custard - tinned or packet
- Instant mash
- Long life fruit juice
- Instant noodles/ cuppa soup/ mugshots
- Tinned vegetables
- Coffee
- Tea
- Toilet rolls
- Deodorant preferably neutral

The Mansion House and the Thornley Family

Browsing through W Scott's "The Story of Ashby-de-la-Zouch", published in 1907, I came across Mrs Thornley and her son Robert, a mildly eccentric pair, who I thought would make interesting reading this month.

Mrs Thornley lived in the Mansion House which stands on Kilwardby Street opposite the entrance to Trinity Close. Her late husband, Robert Thornley, is said to have been a draper at 61 Market Street (where The Tool Box now stands). He died in 1812 at the age of 71 and his grave stone can be seen in St Helen's Churchyard.

Mrs Thornley used to be carried to church and evening parties in a sedan chair. In 1840, wheels were attached to the chair and for many years, frail and delicate ladies used it to travel to meetings of their friends. On one occasion, a gentleman "of some weight" decided to take a ride, but when he sat down, the bottom fell out. This didn't deter him or the chair, however, as it was said that he merely tucked up his legs to avoid "walking and riding at the same time"!

Mrs Thornley had a son by her first husband, also called Robert and born in about 1771. He can be found in the Mansion House in the 1841 census at the age of 70 where he is described as being of independent means. He did, in fact, own cottages in Hill Street and land at Hill Top. It was said that he would go himself on Sundays to collect the rent in Hill Street, and if the money wasn't paid immediately, he would shout and swear very loudly.

Despite his wealth, he was said to have been very miserly. On Monday mornings he would go out to buy stale rolls at reduced prices. He would also go into town and buy two pennyworth of liver and carry it home on a skewer where he would cook it himself for his dinner. He would also buy a half pennyworth of "lights" for Bill the cat. His usual supper was a pint of ale and two pennyworth of bread and cheese at The George. He employed a gardener and "bath-chairman" and would often chase him round the garden armed with a stick or poker. If he failed to catch him, he would hurl the stick or poker at the poor man and if it didn't hit him, he would order the gardener to pick it up and return it to him.

Thornley also owned a piece of land known as "The Shrubbery", part of which is now occupied by Holy Trinity Church. On this land, Hill House, which still stands in Trinity Close, was occupied by a Dr Thomas Cantrell. A dispute arose between the two men and Thornley declared that he would "lay his field as bare as a robin." Thornley carried his threat and had all the trees felled. It was done, he said "to take down Mrs Cantrell's pride by exposing her back premises." It seems that he was right about the pride of this lady. It was said that on her deathbed, her greatest worry was that she



would have to mix with poor people in the afterlife. "Let us hope," she declared, "there will be curtains between us and them".

Thornley's miserliness and eccentricity was also reflected in his mode of dress which was said to have been very shabby. On one occasion, he had gone to Diseworth to buy some property at an auction, and was refused entry until an Ashby solicitor identified him and he not only entered the sale room, but purchased the property in question. It is said that after the Marquis of Hastings, he was one of the biggest landowners in Ashby.

Apparently, as well as being a miser with a bad temper, he was also a misogynist. He never married, and in 1841 he was living in the Mansion House with just one female servant. He died the following year. After his death, the property at Hill Top was sold and built on and most of his cottages in Hill Street have since been demolished.

Wendy Freer

Picture caption:

A rococo sedan chair arrives at a garden party. 19th-century oil painting by G. Borgelli (S. Borgelli) - Private collection, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8432213>

The Night After Christmas by Pat Stafford

'T is the night after Christmas
And no-one is here
Except for the two of us
Needing some cheer

No visitors' greetings
Resound through the hall
They've dashed away, dashed away,
Dashed away all.

The house is all tidy and
Horribly clean
The turkey is stewing
And Santa has been.

The crib figures sit
looking sad and forlorn
The donkey is resting,
The baby's been born.

No children are shouting
With joy and delight

That it's time to solve riddles
And then say 'goodnight'

PS4 is neglected -
Such fun has been had
But now it's abandoned,
Rejected and sad.

Now no-one asserts
that 'Monopoly rocks'
And Topix and Cluedo
Are back in their box.

So thanks to you all
For the family fun
The jokes and the cuddles
The games lost and won

It doesn't seem long
Since the party began -
So here's to the next time
We gather the clan!!

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for the
right
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OUR GLOBAL CAMPAIGNING WORK MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

The Mothers' Union has a history of speaking out on important issues affecting women worldwide such as gender violence and inequality and oppression. 2021 was no exception with a number of new initiatives rising to prominence:

Standing Against Domestic Abuse

Members were encouraged to write to their MPs and Dioceses to their Bishops to emphasise the Mothers' Union support for the Domestic Abuse Bill.

An estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16-74 years in the UK experienced domestic abuse in the year to March 2020 (1.6 million women and 757,000 men) according to government figures.

The Bill emphasised that domestic abuse is not just physical violence but can also be emotional, controlling, coercive or economic and set out to protect and support victims and their families, transform the justice process, effectively deal with perpetrators and improve responses across all agencies to domestic abuse. For the first time, children were recognised as survivors

Our template letter was downloaded over 600 times from our website and MU and other agencies obviously had an impact with the landmark bill passing into legislation on 29th April 2021. Our thanks go to Victoria Atkins, Minister for Safeguarding for driving through the bill.

Our work is continuing to ensure that resource is provided to implement the Bill, especially services in the community and ensuring protections are extended to all victims, regardless of their immigration status. We are also calling with others for our government to ratify the Istanbul Convention in June 2022 which sets out standards for countering violence against women worldwide.

**An estimated
2.3 million
adults aged 16-74
years in the UK
experienced
domestic abuse
in the year to
March 2020**



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The Ukrainian Postal Service's Poignant Christmas Stamp

In October 2022 the Ukrainian postal service, Ukrposhta, launched a competition, inviting illustrators, artists and designers to offer their vision of the postage stamp "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!"

Ukrposhta always issues a Christmas stamp, but when announcing the competition, CEO Igor Smelyansky said, "This year it is extremely important to keep in touch with relatives, with those who are far away, with those who are at the front ... After all, during the Christmas and New Year holidays, we especially want to feel connected with our loved ones and believe in

miracles,"



The result of the competition was decided by public vote, with online voting taking place on the official pages of Ukrposhta on Facebook and Instagram, and via the Telegram app of the CEO of Ukrposhta. More than

15.5 thousand Ukrainians voted for the winning picture.

The winning stamp was designed by a high school student, Valeria Mikhailova. At the beginning of the full-scale war Valeria was forced to leave her home in the city of Mykolaiv, which was on the front line and constantly under Russian bombardment, and now lives abroad. She explained, "This illustration reflects the difficulties that separation from family and loved ones brings. The war divided many families."

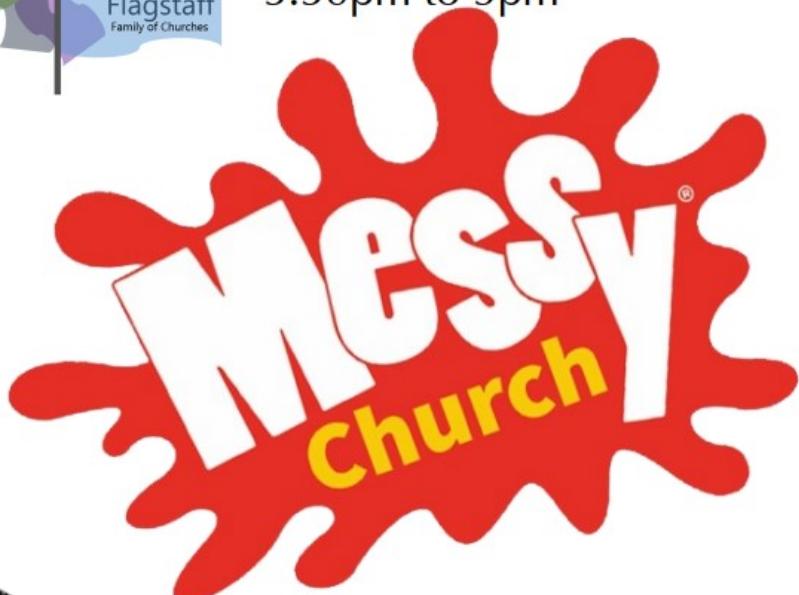
According to international organizations, since the beginning of the war almost half of Ukrainians had to be temporarily separated from their relatives and friends.

Jill Chapman



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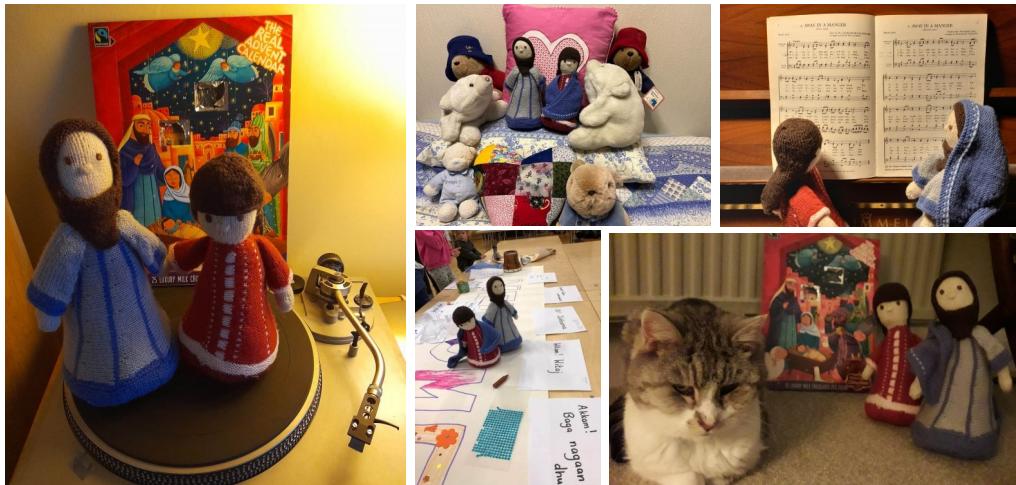
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From the Albums

During December, our Posada progressed ...



... real donkeys were part of our crib service ... some PRGers were in the Ashby Santa Fun Run ...



... & Messy Churchers took part in St Mary's Church's 'Instant Nativity' ...



where one of the kings gifted Baby Jesus the Christmas Cake made at Messy Church.

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Quotes for the Month

'[The census result] throws down a challenge to us not only to trust that God will build his kingdom on Earth but also to play our part in making Christ known'
Archbishop of York's response to the England and Wales Census 2021 published Nov 29th

'Psalm 148 is basically like the world's weirdest line-up for a praise band.'
Nadia Bolz-Weber, Praising Like a Holstein, The Corners, @substack.com, December 2nd

'It's beginning to look a lot like The Second Sunday of Advent! You brood of Vipers!'
Fr Paul, Twitter, December 4th

'The census would show a more religious nation if the question were
"Do you think dead people are now stars wiv de angels in heaven?"'
The Beaker Folk of Husborne Crawley, Facebook, December 7th

'I read my Bible every night. For me, it's really important to have the presence of God in me all the time and it gives me more confidence to know that God's plan is perfect, so I can go on the pitch & know God has my back.'

England footballer Bukayo Saka, press conference, December 5th

'For me Christmas is every day of the year.'
Sir Cliff Richards, What Christmas Means to Me, Canon J. John Facebook page, Dec 13th

'We cannot know what the transcendent is in itself, but our concrete lives are enriched when we remember we are expressions of a transcendent depth we cannot fathom, we are parts of a transcendent breadth we cannot compass, and we are addressed by transcendent patterns more intimate than we can fully comprehend.'

Jim Rigby, The Devastating Price Tag Of Christianity's Bachelor God, Kissing Fish, Dec 13

'Forgive me, Father, for I am in the mood to sin': how the 'hot priest calendar' became a publishing hit.'

Morwenna Ferrier, The Guardian, December 16th

'The season of advent ... Is it a journey of preparation to worship and welcome the Christ child, or does it feel like the final pressurised phase of your biggest project of the year?'

Andy Bagwell, Executive Director, UCAN, December newsletter, December 15th

'Merry Christmas to my Christian friends. Happy Hanukkah to my Jewish friends. And to my atheist friends, good luck.'

Canon J John, Facebook, December 18th

'The baby himself began life on earth as he would end it, wrapped in binding cloths as if suggestive of the restraints he accepted in visiting this dark planet.'

Philip Yancey's blog, The Sword of Christmas, December 19th

'Fury as church changes lyrics of God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen to be more 'inclusive''

Mail on Line, December 21st

'I think what Christmas does ... it tells us the importance of ritual. Ritual helps us to step outside of our own little bubble and connect with something we have received, inherited and that we hope to pass on.'

Cardinal Vincent Nichols interviewed on Times Radio, December 21st

'What has a shepherd got to do with Christmas?'

Esme Young, BBC 1's Sewing Bee Christmas Special, December 22nd

'Christmas lights the world - even in places that miss its underlying message.'

Philip Yancey, Facebook, December 22nd

'I'm grateful to @RishiSunak & the entire British people! We feel your support ... Light always prevails over darkness. Thus together, we will defeat evil and restore peace in Ukraine, Europe, and the world. Merry Christmas, friends!'

President Volodymyr Zelensky, Twitter, December 23rd

"Nothing beats kindness," said the horse. "It sits quietly beyond all things."

Charlie Mackesy, The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse, BBC 1, December 24th

'A pipe organ doesn't preach at you, it sings at you. It's from one soul to another.'

Martin Renshaw, Organ Stops: Saving the King of Instruments, BBC 1, December 24th

'Christmas is a particularly poignant time for all of us who have lost loved ones.'

HRH King Charles, The King's Speech, December 25th

'The nativity is messy. The infant is born into mess. My life is messy. Your life is messy ... Being human is messy. But being human is what the nativity is all about.'

Rambling Rector Retired blog, Felix dies nativitatis, December 25th

'Jesus said: 'He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.' The Church of England says: 'He/She that is not for me is welcome to be completely indifferent to me; and he/she that that doesn't want to work with me can just phone when you need a christening, a wedding, a funeral, or a that bit of the Christmas you knew as a child.'

Adrian Hilton, The Spectator on line, December 25th

'My time at a girls' school may have saved my life'

Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, interviewed for The Telegraph, December 26th

'Benedict XVI may be our least understood pope. He was a revolutionary, but in a way that's hard to pull off and easy to miss.'

Rev. Prof. John Wauck, Benedict the 'other Pope' dies at 95, Religion News Service, Dec 31st

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