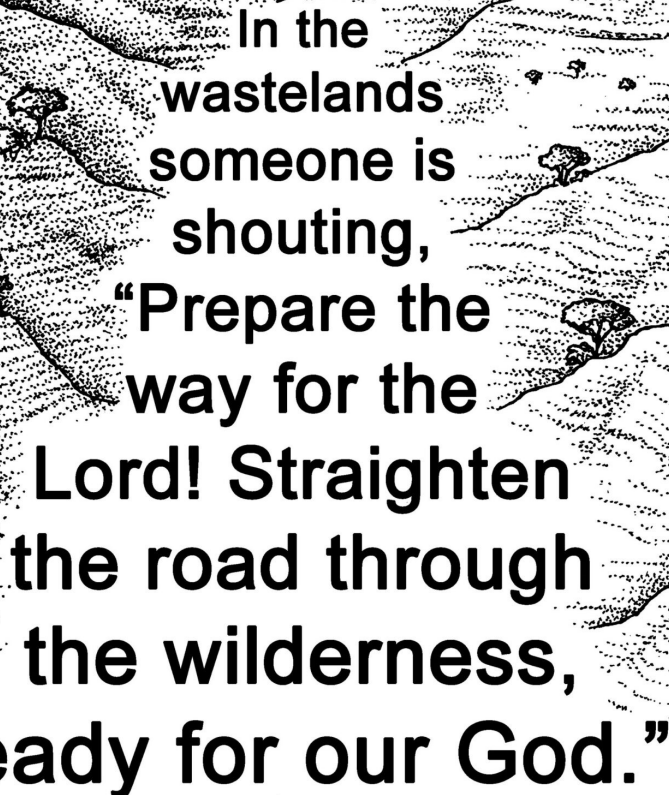




February
2025



In the
wastelands
someone is
shouting,
“Prepare the
way for the
Lord! Straighten
the road through
the wilderness,
ready for our God.”

Is 40:2, Mt 3:3, Mk 1:3 Lk 3:4, Jn 1:23

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Letter from Rev Allison:



Some of us are only too sadly aware that things that are new don't stay new for ever. After all, we were once the 'new baby' but those days may seem a long time ago now. The city we live in is called Newcastle but the castle is looking a bit dated now and is probably not the place that we would run to if we heard of people marching up through Gateshead, ready to take over our city. Instead, we would call the police, head up towards the Scottish border or send the invaders a selection of Ant and Dec's worst jokes to persuade them that the city wasn't worth capturing. It's a bit like that with New Years. When do they stop being New Years? When do you stop wishing someone who you haven't seen since 2024 a happy new year? There are people who I only see once a year at the clergy conference in the summer but we don't wish each other a happy new year when we meet up. I think the cut off time for wishing people a Happy New Year should be 15th January. By then, New Year's Eve will be a fading memory and Christmas even more so. And for many people, their one encounter with church every year will seem well into the past. One of the joys for me as a vicar is seeing church full of people at Christmas, celebrating the birth of the new baby all those years ago, but then one of the frustrations things is not seeing some of those people again until the following Christmas. Because Jesus is not like other things that were once new but eventually become old and stop working properly. And that's not just because he only lived to 33 so, presumably, didn't

have the same problems with eyesight, dodgy knees, etcetera, that most of us suffer from as we grow older. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 13:8 that “**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**”

This is incredible news. It means that the same Jesus who healed so many people, who fed so many people, who calmed the storm – that is the same Jesus who longs to be part of our lives today. And Jesus longs to do similar things for us to the things that he did when he lived on earth. Some people receive physical healing when they are prayed for but all who know Jesus can receive healing for their Spirit and their soul: Jesus can deal with our feelings of guilt, of shame, of being worthless, and replace them with forgiveness, joy and peace. Jesus can meet physical needs but even more he meets our need for purpose, gives us a reason for being and a mission to fulfil. Jesus can still the storm in our lives: knowing him doesn't mean that we will never experience difficulties again – in fact, the exact opposite is true – but it does mean that we never have to face those difficulties alone and can be assured of his loving presence in the middle of them.

You are probably reading this article either at the end of a cold and miserable January or at the start of a cold and miserable February. But there's still something to celebrate: the Jesus who did all those incredible things on earth about 2,000 years ago hasn't grown old or lost interest in us. He longs to do incredible things in our lives today. So I pray that God will bless you this year and that your relationship with him will deepen and develop.

Rev Allison Harding

A report from A Rocha UK Eco Church team:

As we look back over 2024, we are humbled and grateful to God for all He has done this year across the Eco Church community. We want to say a huge thank you to all the churches taking action through Eco Church to care for creation. Join us in reflecting on some of the highlights we are celebrating this year:

There are now **8,000 churches** registered with the Eco Church programme – that's nearly **20% of churches across England and Wales!** We have seen a **huge growth in churches deepening their engagement** with creation care this year. Over half of the churches registered with Eco Church have now achieved an award – that's over **4,100 Eco Church awards**, all markers of churches taking practical action to care for creation.

We also hit some new milestones in 2024 with [1000 churches](#)

Sunday Service Information

9.30am St Michael's

11am St Mary's

6pm (4th Sunday) St Mary's

Thursday 10am The Vicarage

Morning Prayer Service

*The following information can be
applied every month:*

1st Sunday: Communion

2nd Sunday: All Age Family Communion

3rd Sunday: Communion

4th Sunday: Morning Praise (am) & Contemporary
Worship (pm)

5th Sunday: JOINT SERVICE 10am

[getting a silver award](#), and [50 churches reaching gold](#) in the summer. Half a year on, we're now celebrating **65 churches achieving a gold award, 1,300 Silver Eco Churches**, as well as over **2,750 Bronze Eco Churches!**

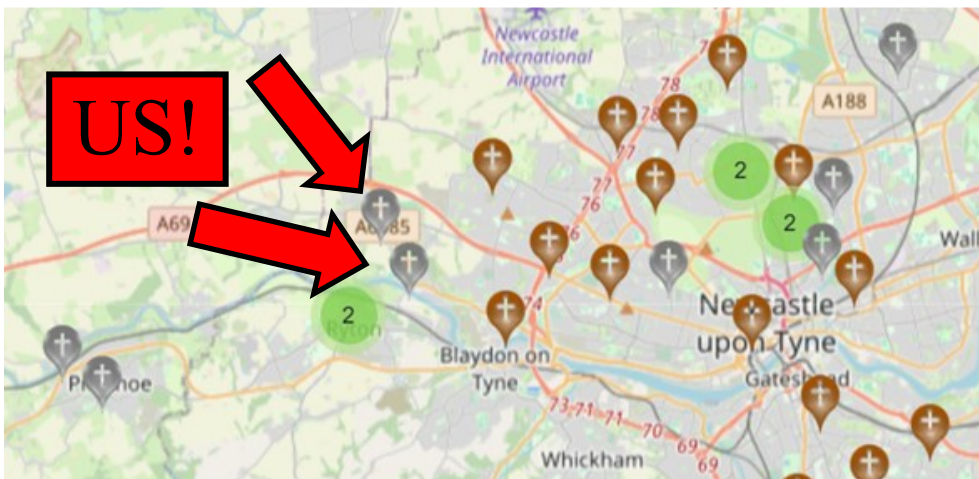
We are so encouraged by the progress of many more churches continuing through the award levels, because of all that the awards represent in practice: churches going deeper on their Eco Church journeys, having even more impact for creation.

We're also encouraged to have **new churches joining us all the time** and starting their journey – and for all the work that is happening regionally and ecumenically as churches support each other to get started and spur each other on.

Another significant milestone this year was the **refresh of the Eco Church survey**, the framework for action at the heart of the programme. We have worked with churches in the Eco Church community, and key organisations, to refresh the survey questions so that by completing the Eco Church survey, churches **efforts will have an even greater impact for climate and nature.**

As we look ahead to 2025, we want to say a **huge thank you** for being part of the Eco Church community, and all you are doing to care for creation. We have some exciting plans for 2025 and look forward with hope and expectation for all that God continues to do through His Church.

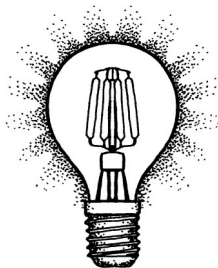
The Eco Church team at A Rocha UK
Helen, Sara, Lissy, Delyth, Polly and Karen.



Eco Top Tips!

February – Get to grips with your bills

1. Get to grips with your energy bills. The information on a typical energy bill can be confusing. But understanding it can go a long way to helping you get to grips with your energy use.
2. Switch your electricity supplier so that you support renewable electricity generation rather than electricity made by burning fossil fuels. You could use the Green Journey price comparison site.
3. More than half the money spent on fuel bills goes towards providing heating and hot water. Installing a room thermostat, a programmer and thermostatic radiator valves and using these controls efficiently could save you around £75 a year.
4. If you already have a full set of heating controls, turning down your room thermostat by just one degree can save around £80 a year. Jumpers are in this year!



National Nest Box Week – 14th to 21st February

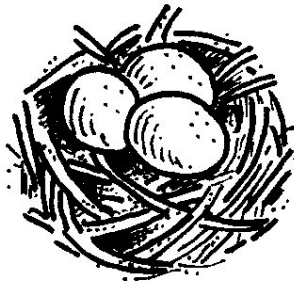
Where can family-minded birds raise their young these days? As our gardens and parklands become smaller and tidier, too many natural nest sites – such as holes in trees, old buildings and unkempt hedgerows – are rapidly disappearing

No wonder that our sparrows, greenfinches and swifts are in precipitous decline, and that one in four of our UK bird species are now under serious threat.

This makes it more important than ever to care for our remaining birds. By feeding, providing water and putting up nest boxes we can give them a safe space to raise their chicks.

The National Nest Box Week initiative encourages bird conservation across the UK, and it's easy to get involved, whether you're a teacher, part of a local wildlife group, or just wanting to boost the bird numbers in your own garden.

Visit: <https://www.countryfile.com/wildlife/birds/national-nest-box-week-how-to-help-birds-in-your-garden>



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destroyed

Jordan

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fight

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victory

Jericho

collapsed

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Israelites

chest

Joshua

safe

God

priests

trumpets

shout

town

walked

rushed

Love in Action!

'Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.' (1 John 3:18).

The writer Gary Chapman describes how love can be expressed in 5 different 'languages': words of encouragement, quality time, gifts, acts of service and touch. Do you have a preferred language of love? As we think about St Valentine during this month, let's consider how God's love language is expressed in the word *agape*. This is exclusively found in the New Testament and is uniquely defined by Jesus: *'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.'* (1 John 3:16). Jesus' giving of His life on the cross provides the model for how we can demonstrate God's love in our relationships with others.

It is self-giving: are we ready to put the other person first, as Jesus did when He died for us in our place. Are we generous with our time, words, money and service, whatever the cost?

It takes the initiative: are we ready to show love to those who don't deserve it or who we find hard to love? Do we have eyes of compassion to see their needs and a heart to love and serve them?

It is intentional: are we ready to get close to those in need around us, irrespective of the time we have or how we feel?

The story is told of Jesus asking a little child, *'how much do you love me?'* The child replied *'lots and lots and lots!'* Then they asked Jesus how much He loved them. Jesus stretched out His arms wide and said *'I love you this much'*, as they nailed Him to a cross.

Canon Paul Hardingham

Prayers for February by

Lord, we thank You for a new year of possibilities and hope. We ask You to guide us in your light. Help us to leave behind what is harmful and embrace what is good. Give us the courage to seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly with You.

Creator God, we pray for a year which will bring new opportunities and a better world for all children. May You inspire leaders and communities to work for peace, sustainability and equality, so that every child may thrive.

Lord, in our Parish we pray for all the children in our lives, may they grow in wisdom, health and joy. Help us, we pray, to guide them with patience and love, showing them the beauty of Your ways.

Loving Lord, as You welcomed children and blessed them, we bring before You all children in this world.

Protect those who live in poverty, conflict or fear.

Comfort those who are lonely or grieving. Help them to know Your love and peace.

Almighty God, bless parents, carers, guardians, teachers and all who work with children. Give them wisdom and compassion and strengthen them for the important roles they play in shaping young lives.

If you would like to join the Annual Magazine Prayer Rota, or even

y The Noah's Ark Team

Heavenly Father, as we entrust this new year to Your care bless us all- children and adults alike. May we grow closer to You, loving and serving one another in the way of Christ. Amen.

Dear Lord,
February can be a trying month, but there are special associations too and we thank you for the hope they bring.

In February we remember how Jesus was taken, as a baby, to the Temple. Simeon took Him in his arms and by the power of the Holy Spirit, recognised Him as the Saviour you had sent as a light, to bring revelation to the whole world. And how this world needs your light and revelation in this new year, 2025.

Lord - as we notice more light in the lengthening days of this month, as we see the promise of the Spring in the bobbing heads of the beautiful snowdrops – help us most of all to recognise Jesus as our Light and to trust in Him as our Lord and Saviour.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of each new day.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

en just do a one off prayer, please get in touch with Helen Dawson.

What's the Big Idea? An Introduction to the Books of the Bible: John

'John's Gospel is like a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is for the beginner in the faith and for the mature Christian.' (Leon Morris).

The Apostle John is usually credited with the authorship of this Gospel, writing in Ephesus at the end of the First Century. His purpose is *'that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.'* (20:31). Throughout he stresses the deity of Christ and presents Jesus as the Son of God.

In the prologue (1:1-14) Jesus is presented as the pre-existent and incarnate Word of God revealed by the Father. It also highlights how He has come as light into the world, so that those who believe in Him will not remain in darkness (cf 12:46).

The heart of John's narrative contains 7 *signs* or miracles, which demonstrate who Jesus is and demonstrating His transforming power over creation and people: turning water into wine (2:1-11); healing the royal official's son (4:46-54); healing the paralytic (5:1-18); feeding the 5000 (6:1-14); walking on the water (6:16-21); healing of the man born blind (9:1-41) and raising Lazarus (11:1-44).

After these signs, the story moves into the upper room discourses followed by the story of His death and resurrection. The whole Gospel is a revelation of the glory of God's only Son, who comes to reveal the Father and then returns in glory to the Father. It can be well summed up in the famous verse: *'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'* (John 3:16).

What's the Big Idea? - an introduction to the Books of the New Testament: Acts

The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke, a physician-friend and fellow-traveller of Paul. It complements his gospel, both being written for Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), in around AD 63, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

While Luke's gospel records what Jesus *began* to do and teach, Acts tells us about what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through the disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit (1:1-3).

Luke's aim is:

To present a history. Christianity has a firm historical foundation. The life and teaching of Jesus Christ are recorded in the Gospels; Acts provides an account of the spread of the Church, as the result of the work of the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

To give a defence. We read speeches to both Jews (eg 4:8–12) and Gentiles (eg 25:8–11), showing us how the Early Church challenged pagan and Jewish thought, the Roman government and Hellenistic culture.

To provide a guide. We see basic gospel principles being applied to specific situations in the context of problems and persecution. These same principles are applicable for us today.

To depict the triumph of Christianity in the face of bitter persecution. The success of the Church carrying the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome and planting local churches demonstrates that it operates under the rule of the exalted Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (1:8).

Just as the Holy Spirit empowered the first Christians in their witness, so He will do the same for us today!

Bethany - Welcome



BETHANY

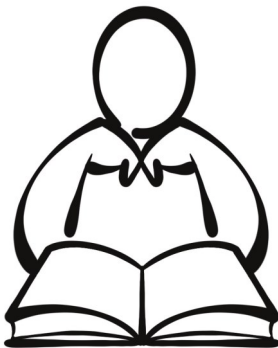
We meet on the third Wednesday of the month in St Mary's, Throckley at 1pm.

We will be observing some restrictions owing to the continuing Covid situation. As previously we will have a time of worship, an activity or quiz and there will be a cuppa with light refreshments.

ALL ARE WELCOME - we look forward to seeing friends old and new.

There is no charge - voluntary donations to cover expenses can be given.

Please contact Margaret Ledger on 0191 2672953 for more info if required



Noah's Ark Playgroup

Wednesday 10-11.30am
(school term time only)

Newburn Parish Hall

£1.50 per family,
Refreshments provided



Reflections from my Bible Reading Notes (Word for today).

I find them so helpful and inspiring and I would like to share some thoughts with you all. The January readings were based on the verse from Ephesians 2 v10 *“He has created us anew... so we can do the good things He has planned for us”* (NLT).

Are we doing as we should? There are 3 kinds of people;

People who don't know what they should do because they lack purpose; they dabble, drift and are unfocused.

People who know what they should do, but don't do it – this could be because they think it will cause them to neglect other responsibilities or they are not prepared to take the time to learn or grow, or are fearful of what this path or way may lead them to.

People who know what they would like to do – and go ahead and do it. They have a strong sense of purpose, and passion and are focused. (Read Ephesians 2.10 again). Spend time with God and He will direct our steps and help us to fulfil the plan he has for us.

A God-given assignment comes with three parts.

Plan; through prayer and reading God's word He will reveal this plan to us step by step. Yet we could say 'What if I make a mistake'. The Bible tells us in Psalm 37 v23-24 *“God directs the steps of the Godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they may stumble, they will not fall for the Lord holds them by the hand”*

Time Frame; God has a personal plan for each one of us. He arranges for things to take place at certain times. We need to keep in step with our Lord and in sync with the beat of the Holy Spirit.

Victory; in spite of Opposition, *“Every Child of God defeats this evil world and we can achieve this victory through faith”* (1 John 5v4 NLT). Be strong in the faith and keep trusting. We may say our circumstances don't look Godly... Remember God is in control of our circumstances.

For more detail about 'Word for Today' UCB events and Pray line go to UCB.co.uk.

Mary Weatherall

Reflecting Faith: Church Buildings

We have been thinking about different aspects of church buildings. But what about ‘the whole thing’? - the impression you have when you first see a church building?

Most of us have visited many church buildings, either to worship or as a tourist: to enjoy the splendour, the colours, the style and the architecture, with or without necessarily a time of prayer or worship.

There are some amazingly staggering designs around the world – one only has to think of the complex and intricate stone carving of Gaudi’s catholic basilica in Barcelona, Spain (due to be completed next year!) and then compare that to the sleekness of the Lutheran (Church of Iceland) parish church in Reykjavík, Iceland.

How about the grandeur of St Peter’s in Rome, full of baroque gold and rich colours? Or what about St Basil’s Cathedral in Red Square, Moscow – now a museum but topped with amazingly coloured onion domes?

Just looking at the outside of a building tells you a lot about what it is likely to be like inside, the purpose of the building and the style of worship to expect there.

It’s not just about the condition of the fabric, or the tidiness of the grounds but rather the architecture itself.

When we see a contemporary modern building, we will expect the worship to match it: whether that is Protestant, Catholic or any other denomination.

This month

If you were designing a brand-new church building today, what would you put into it and therefore what would the exterior look like? What would you want on the outside, to express your faith? Would you include any specific Christian symbols, or be more all-encompassing?

Rev Dr Jo White

That Big Freeze of 1955

Seventy years ago, from early February 1955 and well into March, a Big Freeze took place in Britain. Deep snow and freezing temperatures caused havoc, with many places cut off. The RAF dropped food and medical supplies to affected areas, while thousands of sheep died from exposure.

Although the winters of 1947 and 1963 have attracted more publicity, 1955 saw severe weather in most parts of Britain, as well as in other parts of Europe and North America.

Snow fell in many areas of the UK from 11th February onwards, with night frosts gradually worsening and blizzards developing over the north of Scotland, where the RAF scrambled to do several rescues: in Caithness the response by emergency services was known as Operation Snowdrop. An exhausting search for a postman from Thurso, who went missing in the deep snow, eventually led to his being found at a remote farm where he had sought refuge.

Several snowploughs were stranded, and the heavy snow spread gradually south, reaching as far as the Scillies and the Channel Islands. In North Norfolk there were 10ft drifts on the coast road, and Lancashire had its worst storm for 14 years. Devon, Cornwall and the Peak District had similar experiences.

More than 70 roads in Britain were blocked by snow, according to the Automobile Association, and hundreds of vehicles were abandoned in snowdrifts. Many parts of the country were cut off from essential supplies, and rail travel was disrupted. Church attendance was also hit, of course.

Temperatures in some places fell below 28F (-3C) – the lowest for 30 years, and February's record UK minimum was set. That year also experienced the last May snowfall of the century, but despite all that, there was plenty of sunshine, and as a total contrast, there was a drought and a heatwave the following summer.

Tim Lenton

Poet's Corner

MOTHER'S FADS

I'm exhausted, my whole body is aching, and my feet are sore,
I don't know if I've been to ten shops or many, many more.
I just cannot wait to get home to my own place,
Because I've really had enough of this latest wild goose chase.
Mother has sent me shopping again,
And what monumental assignments she sets,
I daren't go back with nothing,
Because whatever mother wants, mother always gets.

The latest fad is frozen vol-au-vent cases,
The ones you bake and fill yourself,
I've been to every supermarket, exhausted every internet store,
To no avail, someone please help!
I suggested puff pastry to roll and cut your own,
Mother said, "Oh no, I can't be bothered to do that",
Another of my ideas that falls extremely flat.
I've even asked a very good friend to assist me in looking,
Heaven only knows how that will turn out,
Sue is hopeless at cooking!

The time before that it was wooden coat hangers,
They must be moon shaped and without nicks at each end,
And of course, they have to be the right price,
For there's only a certain amount mother will spend.
And what about the foil pie dishes that have to be the size of a tea
plate,
The ones I bought her were half an inch bigger,
She said, "Sorry no good" and she gave them my daughter Kate.

Mother says,
"Green household soap is out of production",
"We better get some now, before they run out at the store",
"The shops no longer stock broth mix or pudding rice,
Cause the young uns don't cook anymore".
"There's a worldwide shortage of flour, we better get a couple of
bags in",
The large pack from Costso was "far too much" she said.

I should know I can never win.

“There are no charity Christmas cards, Sainsburys are useless”,
So, I travelled to Morrisons supermarket, and the journey wasn’t
fruitless,
Mother said, “Those cards are no good because they only have
one design”,
“But it’s ok Sainsburys have got them after all, sorry for your wast-
ed time!”

“Can you take me to Boyes please, I am needing more wool”,
“Oh, for Pete’s sake mother, your knitting bag is full!”
Then of course there’s obscure items like the extra-long crochet
hooks,
Not to mention unavailable DVDs, and the Lord Lucan books.

“Can you call Kate please my tv’s died a death”,
“I’m not a middleman mother”, I say under my breath.
“Kate has told you to stop pressing the wrong button on the re-
mote,
And whatever happened to the instructions Lewis painstakingly
wrote?”

If you need anything mother, just pick up the phone,
Your personal shopper is always at hand, I say with a quiet groan.
I can trudge around for hours searching for your finicky shopping,
I’ll easily fit this round my full-time job, my cooking, cleaning and
washing.

Catherine Lesley Gowans 18/12/2024

A Book of Joy

Who knows what glee a book contains?
What joys we’ll find as it explains
New facts to fill our hungry brains;
Or tells a lively tale?
The myst’ries that we will find
As we read books of ev’ry kind

Enlarge the borders of your mind?
A book will never fail!

The joy of words, which, crafted well
Can cast on us a magic spell
Marks upon a page which tell
Of worlds beyond our own!
Words which paint in vivid light
Rainbows in the dead of night
Which make our dull lives shine so bright!
The wonders we are shown!

So, find a library nearby
And help your child to find out why
The world is round, or why the sky
Is such a wondrous blue?
Or read a story, out aloud
Of lands beyond the madding crowd.
Try reading – it will make you proud
Of what a book can do!

By Nigel Beeton



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Rev Allison Harding (Vicar)

Please contact Allison to arrange Baptism, Confirmation or Marriage. If you know of people who are ill or are in hospital please let us know.

The deadline for any inclusions for the magazine is

Two Sundays before the last Sunday of the month

Please either email or hand to Helen Dawson.
helenrdawson@yahoo.co.uk

If you have any questions or opinions about the magazine content and style, or would like to write an article please get in touch.

All feedback welcome.

If you know of anyone who would like to receive a magazine (only £5.00 per annum) please get in touch and we will add their name to the distribution list.