

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star
to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us, that
we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord.



This is the time of year when you look back and perhaps wish you'd known a year ago what the next twelve months would look like... and maybe also wish you could know what the year ahead will bring. Wouldn't it be great to be able to prepare for the unexpected...!

2024 was an eventful year, both on the international scale and in our personal lives. Of course some of the big events were known in advance (we knew a year ago that we were about to move to Redditch, and that there were going to be elections in both the US and here in the UK), but others were totally unexpected. Life simply isn't predictable!

However, for those who belong to Jesus, this doesn't have to be as terrifying as it seems. Yes, I'd like to be able to prepare for any major changes in my life; but even if I don't know what's coming up, God does – and he is never surprised or caught unawares (unlike me when I realised we were well into the New Year and I hadn't written this letter yet...).

Maybe you struggle a bit with this whole concept: how does God know the future? It seems impossible – how can anyone know what hasn't yet happened?

The simplest answer to that is that he doesn't know "the future", because nothing is future to him. Not in the Doctor Who sense – although the good Doctor travels back and forth in time, he is still subject to his own timeline. God, on the other hand, doesn't follow any timeline – past, present and future simply doesn't apply to him.

According to science, "time" is a corollary of space and matter – which means that when God created the physical universe, he also created time. This means God is outside of time, just as he is outside the physical universe: not bound by its laws, not subject to its restrictions.

Now I don't claim for a second to be able to understand what this really means. As created beings, we humans are very much bound by the laws of time and subject to the restrictions of the laws of nature. We don't know what will happen tomorrow, we only know a fraction of what happened yesterday, and we're not even fully in control of today.

So it should really be a relief to know that our heavenly Father has full and comprehensive knowledge of everything that is going on everywhere and everywhen: what we call past, present and future, like far and nearby is just different parts of a picture only God can fully comprehend.

God can't be surprised by anything, or find himself unprepared for an unexpected plot twist. "Commit your plans to the Lord" is good biblical advice – not because he will make sure you get your way (he might disagree with your plans!) but because he already knows how it will all turn out.

And we know that whatever happens in between, the end is glorious: we will live forever with Jesus in "a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells". From God's perspective it's already real; for the rest of us, it's something to really look forward to!

Rev David Hellsten Email pastordavid.rbc@gmail.com Tel no 07386902964

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1 January	8 pm	Zoom Prayer led by Simon and Pip Coleman
3 January		Breakfast Club
5 January	11 am	Service led by our Minister
6 January	8pm	Home Group on Zoom – run by Simon and Pip
8 January	2.30pm	Home Group at Mary Bond’s house, run by Mary and Sarah Charmley
8 January	7.30pm	Deacons’ Meeting
9 January	11.00am	Harm Reduction (11.00am-2.00pm)
9 January	2.30pm	Thursday Home Group
9 January	7.30pm	Thursday Home Group
10 January	2.30pm	Thursday afternoon Home Group – this week at Janet Graham’s house and run by Angela and David Hoddle
10 January	7.30pm	Thursday Evening Home Group at the Manse led by David and Annette Hellsten
12 January	11.00am	Baptismal Service. The Service will be led by our Minister, David, and Andrei is being baptised.
13 January	8pm	Monday Home Group on Zoom (see Simon and Pip for details)
14 January		Little Fishes
15 January	2.30pm	Wednesday Home Group
15 January	8pm	Zoom prayer led by Alan Hands
19 January	11.00am	The preacher will be Tom King and the service will include Communion.
19 January		3.16 This is for teenagers and will take place during our morning service
22 January	8.00pm	Church Members’ Meeting
28 January	4.00pm	In person prayer
28 January	8.00pm	In person prayer

Support for our church If you would like to support our church you can use the donation box at the back of the church. For other ways to give please speak to Alan Hands for details. Or use Just Giving by following this link <https://tinyurl.com/4wtwrph7>

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Cookhill Baptist Church presents its
Annual Day Apart Event:
**'Tales from Darkness into
Light....'**



Four Chaplaincy Speakers (provisional):

Reverend Steve Tash: Former chaplain working mainly in mental health chaplaincy. Author of 'Faith in Mind'

Reverend Canon Clare Griffiths: A hospice Chaplain in place at St.Richard's Hospice Worcester for 9 years.

Reverend Bill Smith: Chaplain in place at Salisbury Cathedral.

Reverend Dick Johnson: Development Officer of Faith at Work Chaplains and Chaplain at West Mercia Police.



**Saturday 1st February 2025. 10am for 10.30am start.
Finishes around 4pm.**

**Price: £18 per ticket (limited to 40 places only).
Includes buffet lunch, teas and coffees.**

**Venue: Kings Court Hotel, Kings Coughton, Alcester.
B49 5QQ**

**For tickets, please contact Jackie Morgan using phone or
email by Saturday 25th January. Telephone: 01527 893408.**

cookhillbaptistchurch@gmail.com

It can be hard to pray sometimes, and most of us need all the help we can get! This new series continues. By the Revd Dr Herbert McGonigle, formerly principal of the Nazarene Theological College, Manchester

Prayers of the Bible: Praying in your Discouragements

'Moses said to the Lord, "...I am not able to carry all this people alone, the burden is too heavy for me..." Numbers 11:10-15.

Moses prayed this prayer in a day of dark depression and discouragement. The opening verses of the chapter relate how divine punishment fell on the people of Israel because they complained about almost everything. Moses prayed and the punishment stopped but not the people's complaints. They wanted meat to eat.

For years they had been sustained by manna from heaven, but now they longed for the fish, cucumbers and melons they had eaten in Egypt (vv.5,6). They forget how the Lord had delivered them from Pharaoh's bondage. Now they preferred Egyptian food, and the slavery that went with it, to the goodness of the Lord and His provision for them.

Moses was beside himself with despair. Would these ungrateful people never stop complaining? Then the Lord's anger threatened the people again (v.10). Moses was caught in the middle. On one side of him the people complained, and on the other side God's wrath was about to fall. Moses couldn't go on.

His frustration broke out in petulant questions to the Lord. 'Why are you dealing so severely with me?' 'Why do you lay this burden on me?' 'Did I conceive these people?' 'Why am I a nursing mother to them?' 'Am I responsible for getting them to Egypt?' 'How can I provide meat for so many?' 'Lord, this burden is too great for me.' 'I'd rather die now than go on like this' (see vv.11-15).

Moses was depressed, irritable and resentful. He poured it all out before the Lord. It was a prayer born of frustration and anger. He was angry with his ungrateful congregation, and he was angry with God. Why did the Lord leave it all to him? After all, it was God's plan to bring the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. Moses had only gone along with it because God commanded him. But now it was all too much. Worn out with listening to the people's whining and not sure of what God would do next, Moses had had enough. He blamed the Lord for giving him a burden he couldn't carry, and he wanted to die.

But God answered Moses graciously! He understood the frustration, the petulance, the lack of faith and the rebellious spirit that blamed God for it all. He provided Moses with seventy elders who eased the burden of leadership (vv.16, 17). He sent an east wind that brought quails into the camp and provided meat for them (vv.31, 32). In grace and mercy God 'overlooked' the faults of Moses and sent him help and refreshment.

In our deepest disappointments, God understands. In our frustrations, God is merciful. When we lash out at circumstances and even at God Himself, He does not answer in kind. In our deepest discouragement, His love and grace and understanding are with us still.

Were the four kings

We're the four Kings and we like to rock,
We come from the East and we're heading for the top.
We've heard of a guy who sounds real cool!
And I guess you could say he's nobody's fool.
Everybody calls him the King of the Jews,
And we all want to follow in his shoes.
So load up the camel Mel- What d'ya say?
Let's head for a gig down Bethlehem way.
Don't forget the tent now Balshazar-
Then all we need to do is follow that star, follow that star.

The road is long and the hills are steep
But we musn't give up, we've got a date to keep.
We called in on Herod on the way and he said
Find that honey child for me OK
On we went with the star as our guide
We knew we had the Lord on our side.
We didn't go slow and we couldn't go fast,
But pretty soon that star stuck fast
Right over a stable- we were there at last!

We went on in and we set up the gear
And we rocked and rolled in the hay right there
For this tiny babe, all wrapped in fur
We brought him gifts, gold frankincense and myrrh.
Oh we knew he was special, we knew he was good
So we sang and we danced to the glory of God.

With many thanks to Rosie King



Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible, which will run until the end of 2025.

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 defense. 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.

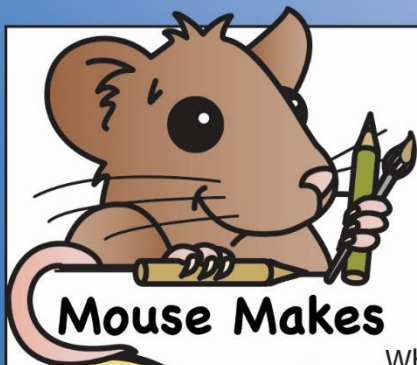
'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (1:8). Just as the Holy Spirit empowered the first Christians in their witness, so He will do the same for us today!

Dear Lord,

We begin a New Year! We all have hopes, expectations, fears and uncertainties, as we move into 2025 – already a quarter of the way through this new century!

We can't know what will happen in the world, in our country, in our lives during this year, but we come before You, thankful that if we put our trust in Jesus and what He achieved on the cross, we need not be afraid; we are safe and secure.

He takes all our hopes and fears and gives us His Peace and His Spirit in return, to sustain and equip us this New Year and always. Thank you, gracious Father. Thank you, Lord of all the years. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Mouse Makes

J E W S
M A R Y
W S O N
O T N A



How many other words can you make from:
EPIPHANY

EPIPHANY is the Greek word for **MANIFEST** which means 'to show'. God shows us who He is through His son Jesus Christ


After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem looking for the child born to be king of the Jews. They had seen his star and had come to worship him. King Herod was troubled so met with the wise men to tell them to let him know when they found him.



When they saw the star rest over where Jesus was they rejoiced and gave him three special gifts. God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod so they went home by another way.

C H I L D K H M Y R R H
F R A N K I N C E N C E
J O Y A N G E L R H
G A E G Y P T P

Herod wanted to destroy Jesus, but God told Joseph to flee to Egypt to be safe.
Where did Jesus finally grow up?


READ
the story of the wise men in *Matthew 2:1-23*



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

E G O D
B O R N
F L E E
L D G E



WISE • MEN • EAST • STAR
REST • BETHLEHEM
VISIT • JESUS • GIFTS
GOLD • FRANKINCENSE • MYRRH
WORSHIP • SON • CHILD
BORN • KING • JEWS • CHRIST
SHEPHERD • JOY • GOD
HEROD • KILL • BOYS • TWO • CRY
ANGEL • DREAM • JOSEPH • MARY
FLEE • EGYPT • LAND • NAZARETH

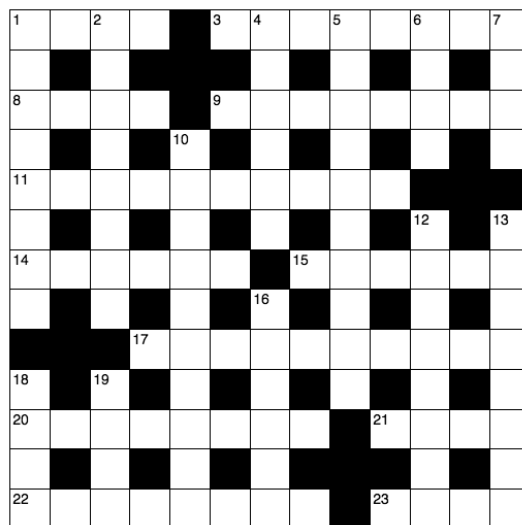
Crossword for January

Across

- 1 'Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a — began to crow' (John 18:27) (4)
- 3 Fetters (Job 33:11) (8)
- 8 Perform on a musical instrument (1 Samuel 16:23) (4)
- 9 Paul describes it as 'the third heaven' (2 Corinthians 12:2–4) (8)
- 11 Loyally (Deuteronomy 11:13) (10)
- 14 Hens? Me? (anag.) (6)
- 15 Not visible (Matthew 6:6) (6)
- 17 Predicted site of the final great battle (Revelation 16:16) (10)
- 20 Jacob's youngest son (Genesis 35:18) (8)
- 21 One of Zophar's eleven sons (1 Chronicles 7:36) (4)
- 22 For example, London, Paris, Rome (8)
- 23 United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (1,1,1,1)

Down

- 1 Favourite church activity: Fellowship round a — — — (3,2,3)
- 2 Divinely bestowed powers or talents (8)
- 4 Pile together (1 Thessalonians 2:16) (4,2)
- 5 Commanded to justify (John 8:13) (10)
- 6 Timothy's grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5) (4)
- 7 Killed (Psalm 78:34) (4)
- 10 One of Graham Kendrick's best-known songs, — — King (3,7)
- 12 Indecency (Mark 7:22) (8)
- 13 Unceasing (Jeremiah 15:18) (8)
- 16 He prophesied 'the abomination that causes desolation' (Matthew 24:15) (6)
- 18 British Board of Film Classification (1,1,1,1)
- 19 Pans (anag.) (4)



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

All in the month of January

It was:

150 years ago, on 14th Jan 1875 that Albert Schweitzer, German theologian, philosopher, physician, musicologist, writer and humanitarian, was born. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952.

100 years ago, on 3rd Jan 1925 that Benito Mussolini declared himself dictator of Italy.

90 years ago, on 8th Jan 1935 that Elvis Presley ('The King') was born. An American rock and roll singer, guitarist and actor, he died in 1977.

80 years ago, on 16th Jan 1945 that Adolf Hitler took up residence in the Führerbunker, a subterranean bunker complex in the garden of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. It became the headquarters of the Nazi regime, and he remained there for the rest of his life. He committed suicide there in April 1945.

Also 80 years ago, on 27th Jan 1945 that the Soviet Red Army liberated Auschwitz Concentration Camp in southern Poland. It was the largest Nazi concentration camp and at least 1.1 million prisoners died there.

Also 75 years ago, on 23rd Jan 1950 that Israel declared Jerusalem was its capital city. Palestine also claims it as its capital.

Also 60 years ago, on 24th Jan 1965 that Winston Churchill died. He was Prime Minister 1940-45 and again in 1955, and one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th century. He was named as 'the greatest Briton of all time.' He won the 1953 Nobel Prize for Literature "for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values."

40 years ago, on 1st Jan 1985 that the first mobile phone call in the UK was made by comedian Ernie Wise. He rang Vodafone's head office in Newbury from St Katherine's Docks in London.

30 years ago, on 1st Jan 1995 that the World Trade Organisation was established.

Also 30 years ago, on 3rd Jan 1995 that the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that the cumulative total reported AIDS cases had passed the one million mark, with cases in 192 countries. (Including unreported cases, the total was estimated to be about 4.5 million.)