

REDDITCH BAPTIST CHURCH – MARCH 2025

Where Jesus Christ is the centre and people matter

'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.'
(Eccl. 1:2)

This is one of those Bible verses that everyone knows and recognises – even though most of us probably remember the KJV version: 'Vanity of vanities!'

Although I have to admit that I like the Easy-to-Read Version:

Everything is so meaningless. The Teacher says that it is all a waste of time!

Sometimes life really does feel like that. Yes, I know we Christians aren't supposed to think like that – what about the joy of the Lord and all that? Surely Ecclesiastes is just the pre-Christian ponderings of some ancient pessimist?

Well, yes – it's true that the gospel is not particularly prominent in Ecclesiastes... but that doesn't mean it doesn't have anything to say to us!

Because despite our cheerful songs, life does sometimes feel meaningless – or, if not exactly meaningless, at least very repetitive and full of seemingly pointless tasks. I remember thinking once, when starting on a new toothbrush, how annoying it is that this new brush will eventually wear out just like the old one. Every week I take the rubbish out, but we keep producing more rubbish... Many aspects of daily life sure do feel like a waste of time!

So how do we battle against this sense of existential futility – the feeling that our existence is pointless?

For one thing, I think Ecclesiastes is right in pointing out that without the gospel, our existence is pretty pointless: we are born, live and die; and despite what we proclaim at Remembrance,

No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them. (Eccl 1:11)

Atheists often agree with this, but then proceed to state that in the face of an indifferent universe, we have to make our own meaning – again, perhaps unwittingly echoing that ancient Teacher:

I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. (Eccl 3:12)

However, Ecclesiastes goes on to declare that it's only God's provisions that make that kind of contented life possible (3:13) – not something I expect to hear from Richard Dawkins anytime soon...

And if we look a bit closer, we find that God *"has also set eternity in the human heart"* (3:11) – a cryptic statement which hints at the fact that we're made for more than the superficial meaningless of life's tedious repetitions...

And once we move to the New Testament, we find a more explicit explanation of what that means: *God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5).*

God is love – his purpose in creating was to increase love – his call to us is to help spread his love in the world. And when we do this, we discover that the best cure for Ecclesiastes' pessimism is Jesus' activism: whatever we do for the Kingdom of God will last forever – no acts of love will ever be forgotten, and serving others in the name of Jesus can never be pointless.

And I imagine even that ancient Eeyore has realised this by now!

David

Dates for your diary:

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--|
| Thurs 6 March | 11am-2pm | Harm Reduction |
| Thurs 6 March | 2.30pm | Thursday Afternoon Home Group |
| Thurs 6 March | 7.30pm | Thursday evening Home Group at the Manse led by David and Annette |
| Friday 7 March | 2.00pm | World Day of Prayer 2025 at Emmanuel Church |
| “ “ “ | 7.30pm | World Day of Prayer 2025 at St Andrew’s Church |
| Sunday 9 March | 11.00am | Visiting Speaker |
| Mon. 10 March | 8.00pm | Zoom Home Group run by Simon and Pip |
| Tues 11 March | | Little Fishes |
| Wed 12 March | 1.30/2.30 | Home Group at Mary Bond’s house and run by Mary and Sarah Charmley |
| Wed 12 March | 8.00pm | Zoom Prayer led by Bill Shaw. Ask Tom for the Zoom details. |
| Thurs 13 March | 11.am-2pm | Harm Reduction |
| Thurs 13 March | 2.30pm | Thursday Afternoon Home Group |
| Thurs 13 March | 7.30pm | Thursday Evening Home group at the Manse led by David and Annette Hellsten |
| Fri 14 th March | 2.00pm | World Day of Prayer at the Ecumenical Centre |
| | 7.30pm | World Day of Prayer at St Andrew’s Church |
| Sun 6 April | | Dedication of Albert Clivet |
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JESUS THE EVIDENCE

There is a historical and rational basis for Jesus being the Son of God.

Wednesday 2nd April at 7.30pm

Redditch Baptist Church

Easemore Road, Redditch

B98 8ER

Jesustheevidence.com

Please let people know about this event.

There will be flyers for you to give to people who may be interested in finding out more about Jesus.



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN REDDITCH

Upcoming Ecumenical Events 2025

Friday 7th March 2.00pm **World Day of Prayer** at the Ecumenical Centre, 7.30pm at St Andrew's Church

Sunday 6th April 2.30pm **The Redditch Together Faith Walk** – walking from St Stephen's church to Forge Mill.

13th April 7.00pm **Palm Sunday** gathering at St Stephens

18th April **Good Friday** Walk of witness 10.00am start at Mt Carmel, finish with refreshments 12 noon at St Stephens

18th April 10-12 noon – **Messy Church** at the Ecumenical Centre time

15th June 3.30pm – Worship Together **1700th Anniversary of the Nicene Creed** at the Ecumenical Centre

Please contact the secretary of Churches Together in Redditch if you have any questions:

Sharon@emmanuelredditch.church

Dag Hammarskjold (1905 – 1961) gave the impression of being an agnostic humanist while he was serving as Secretary-General of the United Nations. So, it was a surprise when after his death in a plane crash, his private papers contained some notes entitled "negotiations with myself – and with God". His prayers have a naked honesty which is deeply moving. This one is from 1961, written the year of his untimely death.

Negotiations with myself – and God

Have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon our efforts,
That we before Thee, in love and in faith,
Righteousness and humility,
May follow Thee,
With self-denial, steadfastness and courage,
And meet Thee in the silence.

Give us a pure heart that we may see Thee,
A humble heart that we may hear Thee,
A heart of love that we may serve Thee,
A heart of faith that we may love Thee,
Thou whom I do not know
But whose I am.

Thou whom I do not comprehend
But who hast dedicated me
To my fate. Thou –

By Dag Hammarskjold -

Cookhill Baptist Church, in association with Baptist Churches in Alvechurch, Harvington, Studley and Redditch invite you to a series of lent studies for 2025 on Tuesday evenings, starting at 7.30pm with the theme:-

STORIES OF LIGHT FROM OUT OF THE DARKNESS ...

Speakers will be sharing their stories *and/or*, in some cases, their testimonies of light that have come out of periods and places of darkness.

- 4 March Shrove Tuesday; enjoy pancakes and watch an episode of The Chosen @ Cookhill Baptist Church, Chapel Lane B49 5L
- 11 March Speaker: Rev. Ian Perry. Priest in charge of St Paul's Cookhill, St Peter's Inkberrow. @ Cookhill Baptist Church, Chapel Lane, B49 5LJ
- 18 March Speaker: Joe Stanscombe. Baptised at Cookhill Baptist Church, 3 years ago @ Cookhill Baptist Church, Chapel Lane, B49 5LJ
- 25 March Speaker: Barry Haigh. Served in Zambia as a missionary for over 40 years. @ Alvechurch Baptist Church, 27 Red Lion Street, Alvechurch. B48 7LG
- 1 April Speaker: Martin Thomas. Mental health team, Droitwich and Chaplain at NHS Trust. @ Studley Baptist Church, New Road B80 7ND
- 8 April Speaker: Rev Andy Green. Interim Anglican Minister & former Lead Chaplain at NHS Trust. @ Harvington Baptist Church, 52 Village Street, Harvington. WR11 8NQ
- 15 April Speaker: Rev Charles Stubbings. Pastor of Cookhill BC and NHS Lead Chaplain. Holy Week Communion, series summary and prayer. @ Redditch Baptist Church, 23 Easemore Road B98 8ER

Isaiah 9:2 "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."

Acts 26:17,18 "I am sending you (Paul) to the Gentiles to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light..."

For further information please telephone (01527) 893408

Email: cokhillbaptistchurch@gmail.com

Or visit website: www.cookhillbaptistchurch.org.uk



A little peace free to the most undeserving - you!

Oh for a bit of peace! It can sometimes be difficult to find, to escape the noise and distractions of every life. Switch off the telly and mobile phone. Stop the dog barking and arrange for the children to go on a sleepover. Then it will be quiet but doing all this can still fail to bring you the peace you need.

If you watch Robson Green's series of TV programmes on BBC 2 you will see the lengths he goes to find a place to relax. He has taken some of his family into the woods and had the help of a trained therapist to enable them to block out the pressures of everyday life; they didn't actually hug a tree, but it came close.

The Buddha was not particularly searching for peace, but spent years searching for enlightenment. He did all sorts of extreme things. He lived the life of a monk and fasted until he had lost so much weight that he could put his hands completely round his waist but none of it worked. He eventually reached his goal sitting under a tree; the tree of enlightenment.

You could follow the Buddha's example and live miles from anyone else, fast, practice meditation or go all the way to Jerusalem on your hands and knees and still not find the peace you seek. The one thing stopping you finding your Nirvana would be yourself. It is not where you are, but rather who and what you are. I wonder what they would have said to each other if Jesus had taken the Buddha to Coffee#1. There is only one place to find real peace and that is through Jesus.

On the Sea of Galilee the disciples sent by Jesus were trying to cross to the other side of the lake. The wind was against them, there was a storm. Try as they might they could not make any progress and then they saw what they thought was a ghost; a figure of someone walking to them on the water. It was Jesus! He had sent them ahead while he spent the night in prayer. The event is reported in more than one Gospel and in one version of the story, Jesus appears to walk past them. Peter makes an abortive attempt to walk to Jesus on the water, but when Jesus finally steps into the boat the storm passes and all is well.

There is another time when the disciples are caught in a storm on the lake, but on that occasion Jesus is with them, asleep in the rear of the boat, but it doesn't stop the disciples panicking. Jesus tells them off and then commands the storm by saying, "Peace, be still" and immediately all is calm.

It is reassuring that even those who spent time with Jesus, who saw the miracles that he did and had seen Jesus calm the storm before, still found it really hard to trust that Jesus would keep them safe. We would most likely have reacted in just the same way and needed reassuring again and again that Jesus was there for them.

We can find peace, real peace, lasting peace in Jesus, peace that passes all understanding. Jesus died on the cross to purchase our forgiveness, so that by faith we can have a clear conscience and have literally nothing to worry about, but we need reassurance and reminding, as our faith is so small. Stop worrying, it will achieve nothing. Find a peace that you cannot buy or earn.

Tom King



PRAYER WATCH

Alvechurch Baptist Church

Moderator: Eddy Rye

Our Christmas services last year had a rather different note to them as we said 'Goodbye' to our Minister, Revd. Fiona Lee and her daughter; her final services were well attended, with 110 people crowding into the church for the evening 'Carols by Candlelight' service – her very last service, after 14 years with us. She became the Minister of Bradninch Baptist Church (Devon) in January and we wish her well in her new pastorate!

We are blessed to have Eddy Rye (Treasurer of HEBA) as our Moderator and he led us in worship on the first Sunday of the New Year; we are very grateful for the skills and experience which he is bringing to this role, especially as we now begin the task of preparing our Church Profile.

Give thanks for:- * 14 years of fruitful ministry and leadership from Fiona; * the commitment shown by a number of our members, Deacons and Trustees as they step up into new roles within the church.

Please pray for:- * the Deacons, the Moderator and the 'Search Team' as they begin to lead the church through the process of finding a new Minister; * a clear leading by the Holy Spirit as we try to identify the individual that God is preparing to come and join us; * the whole church fellowship as we seek to continue our ministry to the local community, as well as to one another.

Hope Church, Worcester

Richard Thomas (Pastor)

We now have builders on site - and finance to do about half the work needed.

We would be very blessed if others could pray for significant provision, so we can continue building into the second half of the year and not have to stop, part completed...

Stourport Baptist Church

Paul Ella

Give thanks for a good number from the local community who attended the Christmas services. Also, for the response to the Carol Service held in the local pub. Pray that contacts made will be built on in future.

Pray for those who are attending Alpha.

Pray for God's leading as Messy Church is planned to commence in February. Pray that all those who have expressed interest in attending will come. Pray that those who have agreed to help will work well together as a team.

Give thanks for God's faithfulness as work on the new toilet facilities progresses.

Pray for those in the congregation who are suffering with various medical issues.



Whose hand is it anyway?

A finger so small grasped his mother's hand
On their first Christmas in a faraway land.
It pointed to shepherds bringing their sheep
And to three kings with gifts so sweet.

A hand that helped Joseph in the carpenters
shop

Covered with dust from bottom to top.

A hand that left his parents' grasp
For God had already given him a task
To speak to the teachers of the law.

They had never heard anyone so young so
learned before.

A hand which the moneylenders in the temple
saw

Destroy their market stalls and more
He swept the money onto the floor.

A hand that raised a little girl from her sleep
An action that made her parents weep.

A hand that scraped up mud from the floor
To heal the blind man who was so poor.
He touched his eyes with his hands so kind
I can see again the blind man cried.

A hand which held a donkey's mane as he
Rode through Jerusalem folk shouting his
name.

Alleluia, alleluia was their cry and
The king of kings they lifted high

Two hands that cleansed his disciples' feet
They were tired and sore from many meet
and greets.

A hand that broke the bread of life and drank
the red red wine
Foretold the tale of how he would give his life
for mine.

Two hands that prayed to his Father divine
To take this cup from me but not my will be
done but thine.

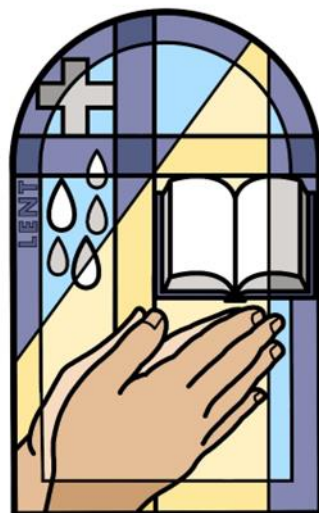
Two hands were pierced by cruel nails
No more the sound of peoples' hails
Just mocking voices in his head

But too late the Saviour of the world was
dead.

Two hands were raised, and Mary saw
It was her Saviour alive once more
In the garden so tidy and neat
She fell down at his holy feet.

Two hands Thomas placed in the Saviour's
side
My Lord, my God he fell down and cried.

Whose hands do you cry makes such a tale?
Why Jesus of course God's only Son
Over death and sin his victory won.



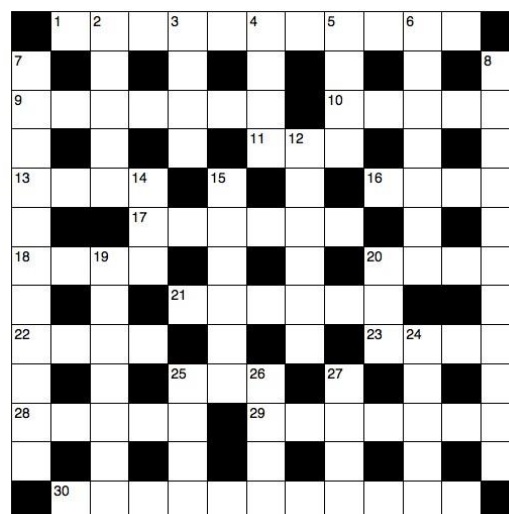
Crossword Clues

Across

- 1 These letters come between Romans and Galatians (11)
 9 'You will not — me to the grave' (Psalm 16:10) (7)
 10 King of Moab to whom the Israelites were subject for 18 years (Judges 3:14) (5)
 11 Town possessing mineral spring (3)
 13 Mede (anag.) (4)
 16 High-fidelity (abbrev.) (4)
 17 He succeeded his father Rehoboam as king of Judah (1 Kings 14:31) (6)
 18 A son of Simeon (Genesis 46:10) (4)
 20 Controversial religious book of the 1970s, The — of God Incarnate (4)
 21 'He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you — — and hear' (Acts 2:33) (3,3)
 22 'You — me together in my mother's womb' (Psalm 139:13) (4)
 23 Edit (anag.) (4)
 25 'Who has believed our message and to whom has the — of the Lord been revealed?' (Isaiah 53:1) (3)
 28 Abraham's brother (Genesis 22:23) (5)
 29 'When Mordecai learned of — that had been — , he tore his clothes' (Esther 4:1) (3,4)
 30 Sympathetic (Proverbs 11:16) (4-7)

Down

- 2 'That was why his parents said, "He is — —; ask him"' (John 9:23) (2,3)
 3 Integrated Services Digital Network (1,1,1,1) 4
 4 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his — of thousands' (1 Samuel 18:7) (4)
 5 Concept (John 8:14) (4)
 6 'Do we, then, — the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law' (Romans 3:31) (7)
 7 Industrious (2 Timothy 2:6) (11)
 8 'I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be — in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you (Ephesians 1:18) (11)
 12 'Out of the same mouth come — and cursing' (James 3:10) (6)
 14 This was how many of the Jewish leaders described Jesus (John 10:20) (3)
 15 Vitality (Job 20:11) (6)
 19 He urged David to kill Saul at Hakilah (1 Samuel 26:8) (7)
 20 'So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul — with the church and taught great numbers of people' (Acts 11:26) (3)
 24 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord — — ' (Deuteronomy 6:4) (2,3)
 25 Parched (Matthew 12:43) (4)
 26 'In the image of God he created him; — and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27) (4)
 27 Disparagement (Psalm 15:3) (4)



Crossword solution

ACROSS: 1, Corinthians. 9, Abandon. 10, Eglon. 11, Spa. 13, Deem. 16, Hi-fi. 17, Abijah. 18, Ohad. 20, Myth. 21, Now see. 22, Knit. 23, Tide. 25, Arm. 28, Nahor. 29, All done. 30, Kind-hearted.

DOWN: 2, Of age. 3, ISDN. 4, Tens. 5, Idea. 6, Nullify. 7, Hardworking. 8, Enlightened. 12, Praise. 14, Mad. 15, Vigour. 19, Abishai. 20, Met. 24, Is one. 25, Arid. 26, Male. 27, Slur.

Mouse Makes

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS
After Jesus was baptised who led him into the wilderness?

Luke 4:1

For how many days was Jesus tempted by the devil?

Luke 4:2

Who did Jesus say you should ONLY worship and serve?

Luke 4:8

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into?

Luke 4:3

Jesus said not to put the Lord your God to the...

Luke 4:12

What happened after the temptation of Jesus?
see Luke 4:14-15

READ
the story in
Luke 4:1-13

JESUS • LED
WILDERNESS
DESERT
TEMPTATIONS
DAYS • DEVIL
HUNGRY • SON
STONE • ROCK
KINGDOMS
WORLD • GLORY
WRITTEN
SCRIPTURE
WORSHIP • ONLY
SERVE • LORD
JERUSALEM
HIGH • TEMPLE
THROW • DOWN
JUMP • ANGELS
HANDS • HOLD
LIFT • FOOT

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

Find the words from the questions too!

GOD IS THERE

When we were born into this place, God was there with love and grace
And as we grew without a care, God was with us, always there.

In our teens, and in-betweens, problems mounting everywhere,
Trying, sighing, laughing, crying, still our God was always there

Even in our married life, maybe children, man and wife,
With our life and love to share, God was with us, always there

Time moves on and we grow older, many worries now to shoulder,
Bending backs and greying hair, trusting God will still be there

Our time on earth one day will end, and to a better place ascend,
We'll leave behind all worldly care, and God, we'll find, will meet us there.

John Seville