

PRESIDENT'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

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When we come into a new year we often reflect on the past and think about new beginnings although the 31st December and 1st January are only one day following another as happens on any other day. **However, it is often beneficial to us to reflect on where we are and what God has in store for us.**

At the beginning of a new year, one of the passages of scripture we often hear, is where Jesus was presented at the Temple as recorded in Luke 2. While Mary and Joseph were at the Temple, they met two people advanced in years who had had a special revelation, called Simeon and Anna. It was said of Simeon:

'It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ' (Luke 2:26 NIV)

We are not told when he had received the prophecy or how long it had been before he experienced the fulfilment, but we can understand from these words that he had reflected on what God had in store for him and believed God's promise. He went on to say:

'For my eyes have seen your salvation' (Luke 2:30 NIV)

We live in a society that looks for instant fulfilment, one that probably is



more interested in the speed rather than the quality. Simeon possibly waited years or even decades for the blessing he received. He had the patience not to lose heart and doubt God's promise.

This is an example for us as we look for what God has in store for us in 2025. With Simeon we have seen God's salvation in Jesus and there is abundant blessing in store for us. **God does not always give instant fulfilment and we sometimes need to be patient in waiting for God to reveal the next steps in our service** and the blessing He has for us and banish the doubts the evil one will tempt us with.

George Phillips (WRU President)



Day of Ministry 2024

At Bethel Community Church, Bierley

E 2 S
Equip to Serve
(formerly Local Preachers' Fellowship)

In October we had a really inspiring day of interactive workshops exploring different ways of bringing our communities closer to Jesus, led by Cassie Biggin and her team. It really encouraged everyone, hearing families tell of how they had been welcomed into church and found faith.

NOTE

Watch out for details of our **Day of Ministry 2025** which will be circulated to Churches and Circuits!

CERTIFICATES PRESENTED TO LOCAL PREACHERS



HOWARD COPLEY

presented with his certificate at Mexborough church for 56 years as a local preacher.



MRS JOYCE TURNER

from Dorrington with her certificate for 32 years as a local preacher.



MRS JULIA HODSON

at Hampden View Church being presented with her certificate for 31 years as a local preacher.

WRU CONFSSION OF FAITH

(to be continued)

7. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.

A REASON FOR WORSHIP AND TO BE THANKFUL

We see true leadership in action through the parables of The Good Shepherd and The Prodigal Son. God is pictured as strong, gracious and trustworthy, who is proactively seeking to rescue and then celebrate, defend, protect and provide for the lost sheep and wayward son.

Reflecting on the picture of the Shepherd; consider the difference between Jesus and ourselves. The difference between a shepherd and his sheep; in wisdom, knowledge, strength, authority, discipline, bravery and compassion. But at the same time consider how Jesus became man, born into humble surroundings, welcomed by shepherds and made a little lower than the angels.

Reflecting on the picture of the Father; consider how he was firm with the elder sons judgmental, legalism, yet patiently waited for the younger son to return home. How he ran, embraced, welcomed and celebrated him, then clothed, fed, defended and restored the one who had squandered his wealth and reputation.

A REASON TO FOLLOW AND SUBMIT

Consider the difference between the head and all the other body parts, seen and unseen. It is the head that instructs, controls and brings unity to all the other parts. The head is

also aware of the body, aware of pain, tension, pleasure and taste. It's the head that responds in kind, to the body's needs, using at times the rest of the body.

We are given other similar pictures from the Bible of our relationship to God; the capstone to a building, husband to his wife, Father to His son and King to His subjects. In each of these images we appreciate powerful truths of; the love of a husband and father, protection, strength and wisdom of a king and a shepherd; to the true capstone by which the whole building is measured, supported and defined.

WHO HOLDS THE AUTHORITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH?

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church is our subject, and this means that He holds the final authority in all matters. In becoming a Christian, we acknowledge that we have become His subjects and He is our King. We submit to His rule. We believe His word hold final authority in all matters. So as a local Church and as congregation of believers, through the teaching of His word, we submit to His authority and through His Spirit are led in the process of decision making.

The Glory of God is our theme, His Gospel is our message, and His love is our passion, to each other and those beyond the Church.

*Pastor Andy Wilcock
(Hampden View Church)*

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY



WHAT'S ON

Alderman's Green Church



Monica Crump and Audrey White (left to right)

In itself, 1934 was fairly unremarkable, until two little girls named **Monica** and **Audrey**, were born in that year. **In late 2024 those two 'girls' reached a milestone and celebrated their 90th birthdays.**

Looking back, at the time of their birth, King George V was on the throne, followed by the abdication of Edward VIII. The 'girls' lived through World War II, during the reign of King George VI, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister and they saw the start and finish of the entire reign of Queen Elizabeth II. **Monica** and **Audrey** also share their birth-year with glamorous nonagenarian celebrities such as Dame

Judi Dench and Brigitte Bardot – impressive, eh? **However, not as impressive as their faithfulness and love for their Saviour over the years** – the same Saviour who has guided and led them and in whom may we all have absolutely no doubt that He will continue to lead them and us, all the way to our journey's end.

Congratulations to Monica and Audrey – they are our two most senior and highly respected church members. Currently, Monica's membership spans 67 years and Audrey's is at 21 years. Both regularly tune in to the prayer meetings and attend worship each Sunday. **We trust that there may be more years of their example and celebration to enjoy.**

Avril McIntyre

'SAMARITAN'S PURSE SHOE-BOXES'

Along with many other churches and organisations and following a visit from a Church Connect representative, members of the **Alderman's Green church took part, for the first time, in 'Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child'.**

The project was co-ordinated by **Danai Mhlanga**, pictured here with **Mandla**, her 'glamorous assistant'! Danai was very pleased with the response and last November delivered around 25 boxes to the Coventry drop-off centre. The shoe-boxes were each filled with personal care items, school supplies, toys and special items for Christmas delivery to children internationally, who are in most need and who have so little.

We trust that these gifts will be an expression of



God's love as this also comes with an opportunity for these young people to attend locally 'The Greatest Journey' classes. The local church partners have committed to physically, practically and spiritually supporting these children – may we too, continue to pray for this work and maintain a deep faith that many will find Jesus and see what a difference He can make in their lives.

Avril McIntyre

WOMEN OF ACTION



He restores my soul.

Psalms 23:3

Women's Day at Heath End Church

Saturday, 17th of November 2024

What a beautiful time I had at the Women's Day. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I was looking forward to fellowshiping with other women of the Christian faith and being encouraged by the Word of God.

The hospitality team welcomed us with hot drinks and pastries, followed by a welcome goody bag that included a personalised notebook, a pen, a bar of chocolate, a beautiful card and envelope, and a packet of tissues.

After the beautiful welcome, Minister Lisa Macbeth explained the agenda for the day which was very helpful for us to have an idea of what the day would be about. We were then led into a powerful worship session by Dan and Julia Fall which connected us to God and the theme for the day "He restores my soul." I noticed the lead singers intentionally chose songs that linked to the theme which helped us to be deep in worship.

Then we moved on to the teaching. This was my first time listening to Sandra Fall. Sandra's sermon connected deep into our souls. Everyone's eyes were glued to her as she preached. Many of us didn't realise that our soul, spirit and body were interconnected and needed to yield the three to God. Sandra asked three women to illustrate the spirit, soul and body through a short drama that brought the teaching alive.

The sermon helped us to reflect on the things that may have happened to us that have wounded our souls. We were encouraged to do three things:

- Confess
- Repent
- Forgive

Sandra mentioned that forgiveness is an ongoing process with the help of the Holy Spirit where we daily surrender the judgement and hurt to our Lord Jesus Christ. She reminded us that we do not need

to receive an apology from the offender before we forgive but when we choose to forgive, we will experience peace, an instant release of pain, hurt, bitterness and restoration of our soul.

I must not forget to mention the great food that was provided for us. We weren't expecting delicious hot food. Lisa and her team were generous with the food that they served us, including an amazing pudding. The food connected all the women and we were able to encourage one another during lunch. We also exchanged numbers.

I look forward to attending future Women's Day at Heath End Church. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to put this beautiful programme together and thank God for moving powerfully in our midst and restoring our souls.

Funke Ogunoiki (Pastor at The Vine Church Nuneaton)

COLD MONTHS

It's damp and cold outside and I have no intention of getting either damp or cold!

Thoughts turn to better times outdoors, getting my hands dirty with garden soil. Trying to produce something for the dinner table and come September, something for the Harvest Table. I always aim to grow something that will catch the eye at

Harvest. Perfect parsnips, unblemished potatoes, giant cabbage or colourful tomatoes. In fact, anything that will make people think that I actually know what I'm doing!

It's time to choose what seeds I'm going to try and grow this year. I have five raised beds, each 8 feet x 4 feet so I can attempt to grow a good selection of 'veg', as well as a greenhouse and lots



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COLD MONTHS continued

of red recycling boxes for growing potatoes in - I've even grown potatoes in a Morrisons "bag for life" in the past.

It's also the time of year for "wondering".

I wonder which pests I'll encounter this year? Which animals will surprise us with a visit? Last year we had a badger in the garden, who was

digging huge holes all over the place. I bought a "trail camera" just to see who was doing the damage so we knew who and what time he came. As neither of us had ever seen a live badger, Marjorie took up position outside just as it was getting dark and came face to face with one at last, I don't know who was more surprised! I put the outside lights on and then we realized just how big badgers are.

I wonder if our resident squirrel family will put in an appearance? They're always good for a laugh but it does make me mad when three or four of the adolescent ones start chasing each other around the garden.

We'll find out as we go through the year!!

Pete (New Swannington Church)

OVERSEAS MISSIONS

Project 2024-2025

'HOPE FOR CHILDREN'

HELEN VIPASS VISITS JUMP

On 6th November 2024 Helen spoke at an event organised by Ian Sykes at our Jump Church. I attended the event and took some notes so here is a summary of what was said.

March 2024 marked the 30th Anniversary of Hope for Children.

Helen was born in the UK and her Dad was Latvian. She learnt Russian and worked in Siberia for a time, then came back to the UK thinking that this would be where she would settle. However, God called her to serve in Latvia in 1991 just before the Baltic States regained their independence from the Soviet Union. These changes led to extreme poverty as lots of factories closed, families became homeless, some children were abandoned, and alcoholism was rife. Helen and a small group of people started to work with the street children. At this time charities were unheard of in Latvia and so their work was treated with suspicion at first and it took a while to gain people's trust. In time Hope for Children became established.

Now 800 families a year are supported by the small family centre in Riga that the WRU project is raising funds to renovate.

The charity is built on Christian values and everyone is upheld in prayer.

The families are supported in lots of practical ways and they are given the opportunity to have quality time together such as games days at the centre and summer camps at a summer house by the sea.

Children are given birthday and Christmas gifts which are very much treasured.

There is still a lot of poverty and state support is much less than in the UK even though food prices are about the same.

Many of the people who now work at the family centre have personal experience of being on the streets. A local businessman who now supports the charity was once one of the boys that Hope for Children supported.

Helen shared with us that along with our financial support there are

also opportunities for people from the UK to go out to Latvia and volunteer. This could be short term from as little as a week to longer term.

Such opportunities include:

- Serving on a team on day camps in the Summer, leading activities.
- Assisting in the family centre with sorting and mending donations of clothing.
- Painting, decorating, gardening and handyman jobs.
- Cooking.

I have more details about these opportunities - please email me if you're interested in finding out more. Overseas Missions have a small training fund that could contribute towards any expenses such as airfares and accommodation.

Anne-Marie Wilcock WRU Overseas Missions Co-ordinator
annemariwilcock@gmail.com

ST ANDREW

PATRON SAINT OF SCOTLAND PART TWO



Following on from last time, now let's take a closer look at Andrew the apostle – perhaps after all not such a surprising choice of patron. One of Jesus' core team of twelve apostles, he is best known for playing second fiddle. Throughout the gospels he is Andrew - the brother of Simon (Peter). We must assume that Peter was the elder brother. Although they lived and worked together, it's always 'Simon and Andrew his brother' or 'Simon's house' or 'Simon's boat'.

Simon was the one with the big personality, a natural leader: active, impetuous, even rash, throwing himself with all his considerable force and enthusiasm and the whole of his being where his good heart led him. One can imagine the boys in childhood, Simon leading them into daring scrapes and Andrew faithfully following, an admiring lieutenant. He would have been completely loyal. When Simon obeys the command to follow Jesus, Andrew goes too. After the crucifixion he is there in the upper room with the other disciples, but he doesn't visit the tomb. Just after the resurrection, he is back there at their old livelihood with Simon Peter and the other four Galilean fishers.

Unlike Simon Peter, he is not one of the inner circle.

He is not invited into the room when Jairus' daughter is revived (Luke 8:51) He is not invited up on to the mount of transfiguration to witness the Godhead and messiahship of Christ confirmed. But then he was not the one who dared to answer Christ's earlier question: "and who do you say that I am?" And he was not the one to challenge the unpalatable truths of His messiahship that Jesus was attempting to share with all his disciples. ('this will never happen to you'). That was Peter's role, desperate to understand, although maybe most of the disciples were longing to ask those questions. Nor did Andrew put himself forward for any sort of pre-eminence or place of honour, like the sons of Zebedee. Andrew was a born follower, not a leader.

There are two places in the gospels where we meet Andrew on his own, as it were and the first of these is very interesting. According to the synoptic gospels' account of the calling of the first apostles, Jesus summoned Simon and Andrew simultaneously – at that moment, they were both in the same boat! But according to the evangelist John, who gives us more detail and should know better than anyone since he was actually there, it was in fact

Andrew who led his brother to Jesus. Andrew and 'the other disciple' (thought to be John himself) were already disciples of John the Baptist. This means that Andrew was already actively seeking for the Messiah who would save Israel and prepared to follow him. John the Baptist (telling them plainly 'I am not the messiah') pointed out Jesus after His baptism to the two young men - "behold the lamb of God". Immediately, we are told, they left the Baptist and followed Jesus. They spent the day with him. Only afterwards, Andrew went to tell his big brother (one wonders if John also went off to find James, because after that, they too are always mentioned together). Why wasn't Simon Peter already following John Baptist? Perhaps he needed to be summoned, to be ordered, by a larger personality than his own: by the true authority of Christ, the true leader of Israel? Did the natural leadership in Peter's character respond to the true and higher authority of Jesus? Whereas Andrew was a seeker and a follower first: and according to John, he was Jesus' first disciple. (John 1:35 - 42).

And the second occasion – well that's for next time.

*Lesley Notghi
(Griffydham Church)*

The Hired Workers



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS - WE CALL THEM PARABLES.

ONE WAS ABOUT PEOPLE WAITING TO BE HIRED TO DO SOME WORK.



A HOUSEHOLDER HIRED A GROUP OF WORKERS FROM THE MARKET PLACE, FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. HE AGREED UPON A FAIR WAGE.



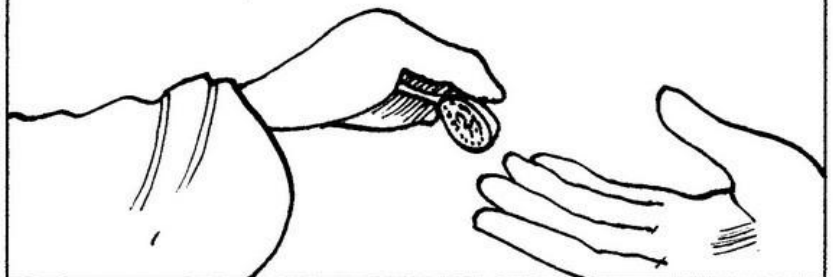
A BIT LATER ON THE HOUSEHOLDER RETURNED TO THE MARKET PLACE AND HIRED SOME MORE WORKERS.



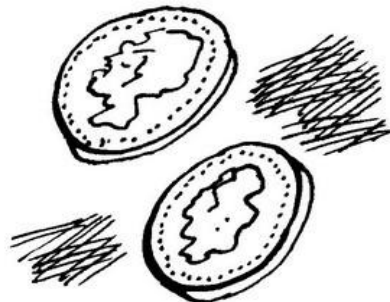
HE RETURNED SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE DAY, EACH TIME HIRING MORE WORKERS. HE EVEN HIRED SOME PEOPLE JUST AS THE SUN WAS SETTING!



WHEN THE DAY WAS OVER THE HOUSEHOLDER BEGAN TO PAY THE WORKERS, STARTING WITH THOSE WHO HAD ONLY JUST ARRIVED. HE PAID EVERYONE THE SAME.

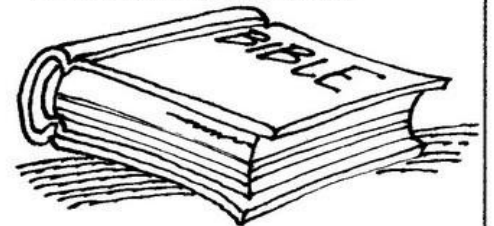


THIS UPSET THOSE WHO HAD WORKED ALL DAY. THEY THOUGHT THEY SHOULD GET MORE.



BUT THEY WERE BEING PAID WHAT THEY HAD AGREED AT THE START OF THE DAY.

JESUS CONCLUDED "SO THOSE WHO ARE LAST WILL BE FIRST, AND THOSE WHO ARE FIRST WILL BE LAST" - IT'S A HARD PARABLE!



see Matthew 20:1-16