

Issue 10:
December 2024



Christus Natus Est!
The cockerel from the
John Piper Window in
Iffley Church.
See December 2023

A candle in...

THE

WINDOW

News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames

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by:

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“O Little Town of Bethlehem” is one of my favourite carols, but I am finding it increasingly difficult to sing with the continuing destruction in Bethlehem and the West Bank. Last year’s nativity scene of a baby lying in the midst of rubble and destruction was a powerful image, reminding us of those who are still trying to live in Bethlehem today. Palestinian Christians like Daoud Nassar and his family, who have owned land just outside Bethlehem for over a century. They still try to harvest their olives but have also created the Tent of Nations, a centre for peace building, on their land.

Last August, among a crowd of several thousand at Greenbelt, I found myself singing new words to the familiar tune. We had just heard and seen Daoud Nassar speaking directly to us from Bethlehem, and then we sang:

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Beyond thy bleak and dreamless sleep
The deathly comets fly
And in your torn streets, haunted
By visions of the dead,
The walls don’t shield and can’t rebuild
A house of broken bread.



The streets of Bethlehem will not be packed with travellers or tourists this year. The silent streets are a sign of no income for shopkeepers there, and the many people who have left to find a life away from the violence.

The letter written by the church leaders in Jerusalem last Christmas is still relevant today:

“Yet it was into such a world that our Lord himself was born in order to give us hope. Here, we must remember that during the first Christmas, the situation was not far removed from that of today. Thus the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph had difficulty finding a place for their son’s birth. There was the killing of children. There was military occupation. And there was the Holy Family becoming displaced as refugees.”

In the midst of the violence and suffering of two thousand years ago and today, we are reminded that the angels’ message is peace. God comes among us in the midst of all the pain and horror. This year, I shall remember both the words we sang last August, but also trust “the hopes and fear of all the years are met in thee tonight” and pray: “Come to us, our Lord Emmanuel”

A letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Jerusalem can be read [here](#):

Rosalind Rutherford

Veiled in Flesh

Tony Richmond with added questions, with Tony's agreement, from Rob Rutherford



Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th' incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new born King!"



We sing it joyfully at the end of our Christmas services but it is strange, is it not? The incarnation means the taking on of flesh – God took on human flesh, in the form of the baby Jesus. He veiled his Godly glory, “emptying himself, making himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, and being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” (*Philippians 2.7-8*)

We don't know that Jesus was pleased to dwell with us as a man. And we don't know what exactly he emptied himself of, and Charles Wesley's hymn doesn't tell us how we can see the godhead behind his veil of flesh. Whatever the “emptying” entailed, Jesus remained fully God: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” (*Colossians 2.9*) Clearly he gave up his throne in heaven and all the privileges of that, in coming to earth in the form of a servant. But he didn't give up his deity – his Godliness. Nor did He ever cease to be God during any part of His earthly ministry, although He did voluntarily refrain from using His divinity to make His way easier.

Artists have struggled to depict Jesus' appearance - we have no idea what he looked like but he clearly came among us as a Jew. That would be the genetic inheritance from his mother. He was certainly fully male – as shown by a ceremony performed as part of his cultural inheritance (*Luke 2.21*). But for us today, both inside and outside these cultural inheritances, there is a more important physical sign that marks out his incarnation – his punctured hands and feet. The marks of the crucifying nails are the essential signs that the risen incarnate one is God. A saviour who had come back from death to life unscathed would not be one of us. He would just be God in disguise, an example of divine technology, but not a symbol of hope for struggling and damaged human beings. Our incarnate resurrected God is indeed a sign of hope for all in this broken world, and that is why we can sing joyfully, with the herald angels, “Glory to the new-born King.”

Thank you, Tony. I've got some questions! Do you think Jesus was aware of his divinity? I can't imagine that he arrived with that built in. Did he grow into being God? And what about his humanity? I think we believe that he was fully God and fully human. It is hard to get your head round that! I seem to remember John Kerr saying that what was not 'incarnated' could not be 'redeemed'. In that sense Jesus had to experience all of what it is like to be human – including growing up and learning.

Perhaps our readers can come up with questions too and bring them to the second Faith Forum of the New Year - which will be on the Incarnation - part of a series on Big Topics in Theology. (Good luck AKMA!)

Here are some more questions of mine:

How important is it to believe in the Virgin birth?

If Jesus had a Y chromosome, where did it come from?

Are the nativity stories literally true, symbolically true, or just an inspired guess?

If we see ourselves as the body of Christ in the world, is incarnation still happening?

If there are other civilisations out in space, has God been incarnate in more than one way?

The Problem of Evil

Agnostics Anonymous interpreted by Paul Sheppy

If God exists, where does evil come from? Or, to put it another way: if God is good, why does evil exist? John Kerr introduced a discussion of this ancient question at the November meeting of Agnostics Anonymous and acknowledged from the outset that there is no knock-down answer to it. He began by suggesting that evil might be categorised under three main headings: moral, natural and metaphysical. In each category John Kerr offered an example. Moral evil might be typified by cruelty; natural evil might be seen in catastrophes, such as earthquake or flood (events which insurance companies refer to as “acts of God”!); metaphysical evil occurs in systemic failures, such as genetic disorders.

In his great poem, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton describes the presence of evil in the world as the result of “man’s first disobedience” (the Fall). But how did this come about? If Adam had a choice between good and evil, then evil must have existed before Adam chose it. It cannot be the result of his choice. John also pointed out that the fossil record suggests that suffering predates Homo Sapiens.

At the start of this article, we asked why evil exists if God is good. Putting the question this way suggests that God and evil might be like boxers found in opposing corners of the ring. Similarly, while God is not of the same being as the natural order, is it necessary to say that God is detached from it? This is (crudely) the way that Deists solve the problem: God made the world and has left it to its own devices. Christians (along with Jews and Muslims) do not accept this answer, since on our understanding God has never ceased to be engaged with the world. God is “the god of history” and does not stand apart.

Intriguingly, there are hints in scripture that God has a shadow self. To take just one example, in Isaiah 45 we read, “I create weal and I create woe”. Good and evil are both of God’s making. What, then, does it mean to say that God is “good”? The Hebrew word *tōv*, usually translated as ‘good’, does not simply mean good in the sense of ‘beneficent’. Even in English ‘good’ may have several meanings. When we speak of a good soldier, we probably mean ‘brave’ or ‘courageous’. A good footballer has different connotations from a good teacher, and so on. When the Old Testament talks of God as good (*tōv*), there may be a sense of something more akin to being trustworthy/reliable/life-giving than simply kind or nice.

We are not able to resolve the problem of evil fully in philosophical discussion. Indeed, it has been suggested that the philosophical approach is a First World preoccupation, which the Third World disregards. There the issue is not how evil arises, but how do we respond to those afflicted by it?

Keith Ward referred to a saying of the Buddha: “A man who is shot by an arrow does not need to know who the archer is. He needs a doctor.” Cruelty, catastrophe and dysfunction are evils. When we encounter someone who has been tortured or another who is the victim of an earthquake or yet a third who suffers from cystic fibrosis, the primary question is the one posed by the parable of the Good Samaritan. How can we help? How can we be neighbourly?

Further, if we take the story of Jesus seriously, we look at human suffering not in isolation from God, but as something into which God enters. German Christian thinkers after the second world war began to ask the same question that Jewish rabbis were asking: “Where was God at Auschwitz?” The answer they came to was that God was in the suffering. They dared to see God as victim. Our pain is God’s pain, our loss is God’s loss, and – do we risk saying? – our incompleteness is God’s incompleteness. In the end, evil is experienced; and our experience is shared by God. This answer will not satisfy Richard Dawkins; but the god Dawkins doesn’t believe in doesn’t exist. If God is love, then God suffers and weeps. For who has loved and never known agony or tears?

Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense The Response of Being to the Love of God

By WH Vanstone (London: DLT, 1977) Reviewed by Gwen Bevington

WH Vanstone (1923-1999) was an Anglican parish priest. The story goes that he could have had a distinguished academic career, but chose instead to minister in a struggling north of England parish, only publishing works of theology in his latter years. *Love's Endeavour*, *Love's Expense*, and his next book, *The Stature of Waiting*, made an impact in the 70s and 80s among the theologically inclined. They certainly had a significant effect on me. Re-reading *Love's Endeavour*, *Love's Expense* this week, I realise how much Vanstone has affected my thinking, and also how different aspects of his thought leap out at me on each reading.

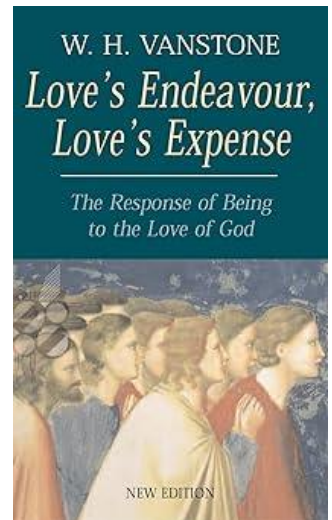
The book is dated, of course. He constantly uses “man” or “men” where I and most others today would say “humans”, “humanity” or “people”. Even when he was writing, he knew himself that his assumption that the post-Beveridge state would produce a happy, well-adjusted society was to view things through rose-coloured glasses.

The book in fact begins with an account of Vanstone's confusion, indeed depression, when first ordained in the 50s, when he couldn't see that the church could have the same kind of ministry to needy people as he had witnessed when growing up in the 30s. Proclaiming the love of God by feeding, clothing, educating and bailing out could not be done on the same scale when the state was so successful. (Yes, it's dated. He'd never seen a food bank.)

The epiphany, the lightbulb moment, happened when two young teenage boys asked him to suggest a holiday activity. He suggested making a model of an area they had visited: “I offered them a room in which to work, and I told them where they might find the necessary materials.” (Yes, it's dated. Safeguarding alarm bells! Was the room in the vicarage or a parish centre? Whichever, rest assured that no solitary priest today is going to supervise two lads without the presence of another adult. Those boys, as it happens, were safe, but everyone was taking chances.) What struck Vanstone, and set off the chain of thinking that produced his book, was the way the boys came to relate to the task. The way, after initial lack of enthusiasm, they fell under the spell of their own creation. The way they came early and left late and worked through lunch breaks. The way they agonised over the placing of each stone, each piece of tile, each dead twig. Would something look right, would it “come right”, would it look wrong. The boys gave themselves to their creation; Vanstone came to feel he was witnessing an example of creative love. He then goes on to reflect on the nature of such creative love.

He observes that humans, even those without a huge IQ, know when love is inauthentic. Three signs of inauthenticity are: limitation (a parent does not limit love for a child); controllingness; detachment (love cares; the loved comes to have power over the lover). Thus we can say that authentic love is limitless, precarious and vulnerable. This leads to what may be the core of his argument. Vanstone's thoughts about love seem to relate to the kenotic theory of atonement, an idea which was advanced in the mid-twentieth century but had fallen out of favour. Kenosis means *emptying*; kenotic theology took up the phrase from the hymn in Philippians 2 which refers to Christ “emptying himself”. Is that what the cross was about, the self-emptying of God? The logical flaw seemed to be: how could God, emptied of all that makes God God, still be God?

Vanstone wants to say that “From his [sic] self-giving nothing is held back; nothing remains in God unexpended.” It is wrong to equate the power of God with the idea of an immeasurable reserve held back from the universe. If God sorted a universe by a twiddle of thumbs and little effort, God's love would be less authentic than the love of the teenagers for their model. On the contrary, Vanstone



suggests that everything in God is engaged by the work of creation, that God labours and longs for things to “come right.” At every step, because of the autonomy love gives to creation, there may be triumph or tragedy; from tragedy, love labours to find a way to redeem things and lead to greater triumph. If creation is the work of love, its shape can't be predetermined, nor its triumph foreknown. The difference between God and God's creation is qualitative, not quantitative.

The implication for thinking about the atonement is the thought that a self-emptied God on the cross is no paradox or accident – not if God is at all times, in all ways, in God's very nature, engaged in being precarious, vulnerable and self-emptied. Vanstone goes on to consider the levels of response to divine love, and the role of the church (the church exists not *primarily* to promote social justice, but to be the place where the love of God is recognised – with knock-on effects, of course, in the field of justice in society).

What did I find so important from my recent re-reading?

First, Vanstone's thinking about the vulnerability and precariousness of love, and the patient struggle to get things coming right, tied for me with John Barton's thinking (in his book *Love Unknown*) about the role of chance in the universe, and the susceptibility to chance which God accepted through the Incarnation.

Secondly, it seemed to me that the emphasis on love's vulnerability, and dependency on the loved, is a much more helpful way of thinking about the creative power of God in evolutionary development than to put one's whole emphasis on an unexamined notion of unnuanced omnipotence. God waits and works for things to “come right”. Things may go in wrong directions, and God works to redeem. The role of chance again figures largely. Thirdly, Vanstone has I think one sentence explicitly about intercessory prayer. Again, I find it helpful to think that in interceding, we are aligning ourselves with love's struggle for things to come right, love's work to achieve triumph, to redeem tragedy.

I feel that this article is not excitingly written, but it is trying to get to grips with something I think important. It's workmanlike but neither a barrel of laughs nor glitteringly poetic. I think that's true to the book. The book is not over-long at all. It's by no means impenetrable, but it takes concentration to read it. It's sober and serious. It's worth the effort.

Our Candle editor asked if the book review would relate to Christmas. I think it does, because if those carols and mangers and stuff mean anything at all, they point to God's willingness to be vulnerable. “The Word of God,” says Vanstone, “discloses to us at Christmas the helplessness of Love at the hands of Love's creatures.” I've used the book in the past as the basis for a midnight mass sermon (a sermon apparently appreciated by some, though not by members of my family, my most honest hearers). I have to admit that Good Friday also comes to mind.

If you don't want to read the book, you might still like to reflect on the poem that Vanstone wrote and placed at the very end of *Love's Endeavour*; *Love's Expense*. Hymn 259 in Common Praise.

Morning glory, starlit sky,
Leaves in springtime, swallows'
flight,
Autumn gales, tremendous seas,
Sound and scents of summer night;

Soaring music, tow'ring words,
Art's perfection, scholar's truth,
Joy supreme of human love,
Memory's treasure, grace of youth;

Open, Lord, are these, Thy gifts,
Gifts of love to mind and sense;
Hidden is love's agony,
Love's endeavour, love's expense.

Love that gives gives ever more,
Gives with zeal, with eager hands,
Spares not, keeps not, all outpours,
Ventures all, its all expends.

Drained is love in making full;
Bound in setting others free;
Poor in making many rich;
Weak in giving power to be.

Therefore He Who Thee reveals
Hangs, O Father, on that Tree
Helpless; and the nails and thorns
Tell of what Thy love must be.

Thou art God; no monarch Thou
Thron'd in easy state to reign;
Thou art God, Whose arms of love
Aching, spent, the world sustain.

Prince of Peace

Eyeless houses, gaping blank holes
where windows were, buildings flattened
to smoking ruins where remnants of a
previous normality lurk, a shoe, a child's
toy, a cooking pot.

Shattered lives, lost lives, the wounded,
the dying, innocent victims of extreme
hatred which knows no compassion,
hatred feeding upon hatred.
Families torn apart, communities
destroyed.

Bodies are pulled from
rubble, the bereaved are broken
by grief, children cry out and find
no comfort.

All, all is lost, save for fear.
Fear for what the next night, the
next day might bring, fear that
fills every breath, every thought,
and from which there is no escape.
Anger too, and bewilderment that
life should be reduced to this.

Where in this devastation is the Prince of Peace?

He suffers with the suffering,
He feels their pain and distress,
He knows loneliness and
abandonment, He too has been
consumed by darkness and despair,
He has come through the deep
waters of death and,
in His rising, brings hope.

Susan Gee
28 October 2024



Picture: Rob Rutherford

Trinity Learning

Nicola Williams



We started the 2024-25 school year with lots of training. Our Thinking Books external trainer Lisa from Its Time for Change, returned to deliver updated training to our Thinking Books Volunteers, and more than 20 regular in-school volunteers received Oxfordshire County Council Safeguarding training, delivered by Nicola and Taz. The start of the school year is always very busy for us but the time we spend on ensuring our Safer Recruitment procedures and training are up to date is time saved for schools and means that our volunteers can feel confident that they fully understand and are prepared for any situations they might encounter whilst volunteering.



We also had a successful month applying for resource grants for various ongoing projects and are pleased to report that Christ's Hospital have provided funds to enable us to provide books to children taking part in Thinking Books for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years and Abingdon Town Council has provided funds for resources for Family Change Packs and Bereavement Packs for the same period.

We're currently planning Christmas activities as I write this. This year will see us supporting and providing 15 school Christmas events including Carol Concerts, a Nativity play, a celebration of St Nicolas day and a range of sensory services for Kingfisher school. It is always wonderful to see all the different ways schools remember and celebrate the Christmas story.



Kingfisher Singing Group Volunteers

Volunteers Opportunities- Experience Easter!

It seems strange to be talking about Easter in December but we are starting to plan for Experience Easter 2025, which will offer schools the choice to visit Trinity Church for live workshops or to take part online. Experience Easter is a series of reflective workshops, specially developed by TrinityLearning to allow Key Stage 2 children (7 to 11-year-olds) to access the Easter Story in a meaningful way. It is also an introduction to mindfulness, using stilling exercises and simple activities to allow the children to consider their emotions. TrinityLearning is committed to Safeguarding so all Experience Easter volunteers must have completed safer recruitment procedures, including an enhanced DBS check and Safeguarding Training. We are always very happy to support people with this but it all takes time, so please get in touch soon via email or by dropping a note with your contact details into the Conduit Centre if you're interested in helping out at Experience Easter 2025.

Crafty Volunteers needed

We are looking for confident crocheters and knitters to help make tiny toys for several of our packs. Over the years some of our fantastic volunteers have created tiny Teddies for our TrinityLearning Bereavement Packs. These packs are designed for adults working with bereaved children. We send one bear out with each pack and distribute an average of 10 packs a year to local schools. The packs have been very well received by schools and we now also provide Family Change packs to help support adults working with children experiencing change due to divorce or separation. TrinityLearning will provide all the materials needed so if you have crocheting or knitting skills and would like to help, please email Nicola at nic.trinitylearning@gmail.com.



Help us to ‘grow’ our volunteer gardeners’ team



We are planning a refurbishment to the Carswell School Sensory Garden. Originally designed by Rosemary Perrow in 2012, the garden has been used by many Carswell School pupils as well as being appreciated by the local community. Now however, many of the original features have become overgrown and features such as seating are in need of replacement. Refurbishing the garden to reflect the schools changing needs will be a major project and will require both short term and long-term volunteer support. If you have experience in garden design or would be interested in volunteering for one off gardening sessions or regular maintenance of the completed garden please let Nicola know at nic.trinitylearning@gmail.com.

Join us at our 2025 TrinityLearning AGM – 6pm, Monday 20th January on Zoom

TrinityLearning’s AGM will be held via zoom on 20th January 2025. All volunteers, supporters, stakeholders and friends are warmly invited to join us, so if you are interested in finding out more about TrinityLearning and our recent work, please email Nicola at nic.trinitylearning@gmail.com for a copy of the Annual Report and a zoom link.



As we in the northern hemisphere can navigate by the pole star, in the southern hemisphere, the southern cross can be used to find south.



BRF Ministries: Faith Forum December 1st

Summarised by Rosalind Rutherford

“Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,”



Karen Laister, from BRF Ministries, introduced her talk at Faith Forum with the collect for Bible Sunday, and the question: which phrase in this collect is most important for you? A few people shared their thoughts. The phrase “read, mark, learn and inwardly digest” was the one most commonly mentioned. Her question remains for each of us.

Karen started by explaining that the change of name from simply BRF to BRF Ministries, is to recognise that in recent years, BRF has not just published bible reading notes, but also provides resources and training to help churches “be church”. It now sponsors and supports Anna Chaplaincies (chaplaincy with older people), Messy Church, Parenting for Faith and Living Faith resources.

However, the core of the work of BRF is still producing bible reading notes and some books to help bible study. “New Daylight” and “Guidelines” have been published for years but are still valued by a range of people of all ages. We asked about bible reading apps and podcasts – these are areas that BRF are looking at developing, but they still find that many people like to have a physical booklet to use. It is not just a question of age – quite a lot of younger people like to have a booklet to use for their own bible reading.

If you are wondering about using notes but are not sure which to use, this page on the website introduces the different notes. <https://www.brfonline.org.uk/pages/bible-reading-notes-at-a-glance>

We learned that it can take two years to produce an edition of bible reading notes. It starts with an editor working out which theme or book of the bible to read, commissioning writers and then designing and producing the final copy. Karen then talked about the sort of reasons people give for reading the bible, which include support when times feel hard, times when the reading speaks into a particular issue in our lives, and the chance to learn more about unfamiliar parts of the bible.

We often think of bible reading notes to help us when we read the bible alone. However, Karen also emphasised how many people share their thoughts with friends and family members, sometimes by WhatsApp or a phone call. They find that they engage even better with the passage by sharing their responses and ideas. There are also groups who read the notes, then meet to share their responses.

For any of us, who would like to read the bible regularly, or learn more about what we are reading, subscribing to a set of notes is one way to begin. It might even be a new (church) year resolution.



PARISH PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF VACANCY

Almighty God,
You have called us to follow in the way of Jesus.
By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we are equipped to build up his body in this place.
During this season of vacancy, strengthen us to be faithful to our calling,
raise up a faithful shepherd and pastor to serve among us in this parish,
and grant that, together with the one you choose and call,
we may proclaim the good news with courage and joy.
In the name of Christ, we pray, Amen.

Welcome!

His Majesty The King has approved the appointments of the Revd Canon Dave Bull as the next Bishop of Buckingham and the Revd Canon Mary Gregory as the next Bishop of Reading.

For more details click [here](#):



Photo from the Diocese of Oxford website



Michaelmas Daisies outside the Parish Centre in November
Thanks to David Bevington for the photo and Anne Faulkner for tending the garden!

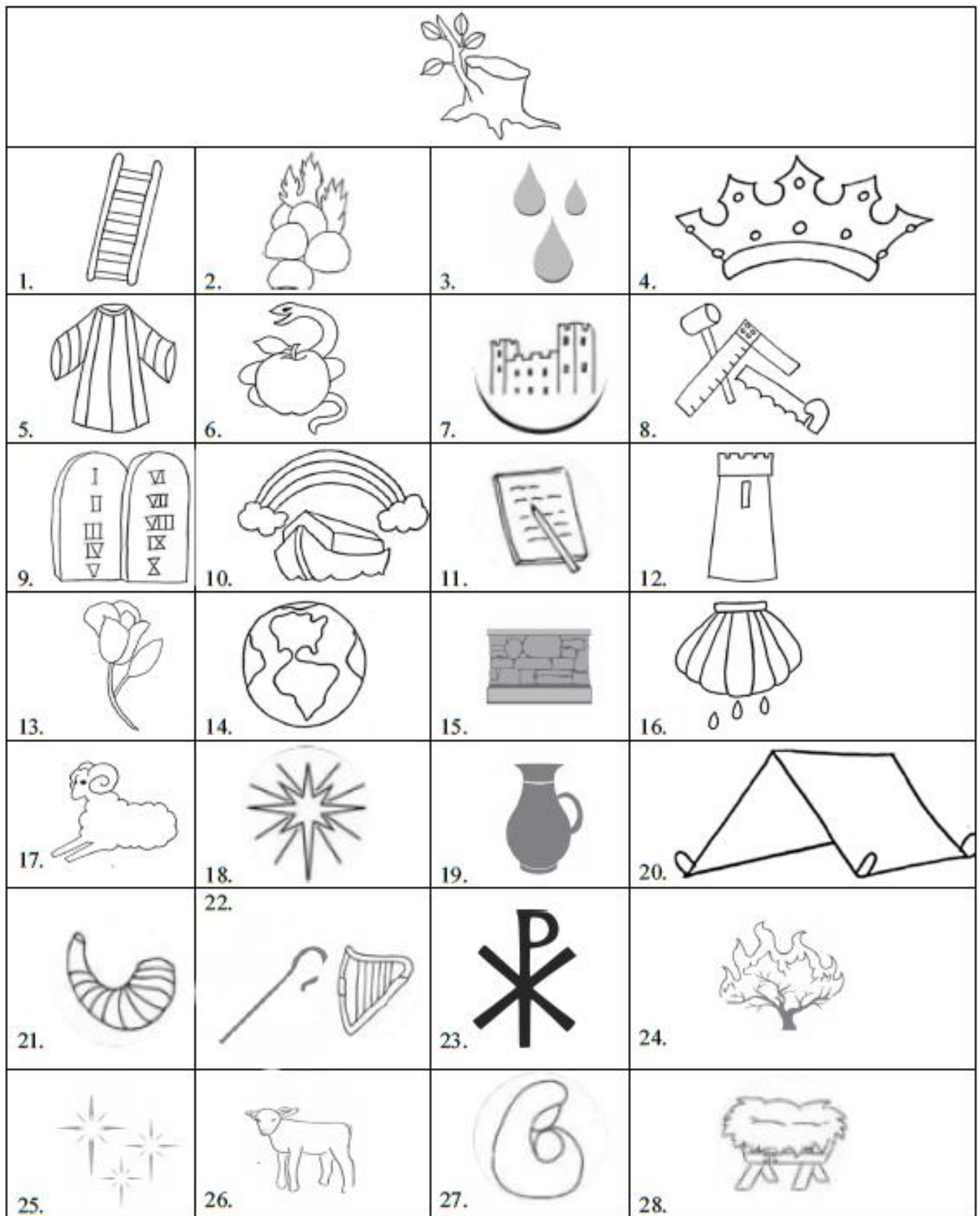
The Jesse Tree

Original idea: Norman Dawson. Adapted by Eluned Hallas

The Jesse Tree is named from Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot will spring forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots." It is a vehicle to tell the Story of God in the Old Testament, and to connect the Advent Season with the faithfulness of God across 4,000 years of history.

Each day of Advent we are encouraged to consider a significant person and / or theme in the story of God's redemption of the world through the birth of his Son, Immanuel – God with us. There are many different ways of assigning people and themes to days, here is one – can you fill in the gaps and assign the images?

Date	Events/Themes	Scripture	Persons	Symbol
First Sunday	Introduction of the Jesse Tree		X	
Mon Wk 1	Creation	Gen 1:1-2:3		
Tues Wk 1	The First Sin	Gen 2:4-3:24		
Wed Wk 1	The Flood	Gen 6:11-22, 7:17-8:12, 20-9:17		
Thur Wk 1	The Promise	Gen 12:1-7, 15:1-6		
Friday Wk 1	Offering of Isaac	Gen 22:1-19		
Sat Wk 1	Assurance of the Promise	Gen 27:41-28:22		
Second Sunday	God's Providence	Gen 37, 39:1-50:21		
Mon Wk 2	God's Leadership	Exod 2:1-4:20		
Tues Wk 2	Passover and Exodus	Exod 12:1-14:31		
Wed Wk 2	Giving the Torah at Sinai	Exod 19:1-20:20		
Thur Wk 2	The Fall of Jericho	Josh 1:1-11, 6:1-20		
Fri Wk 2	Unlikely Heroes	Judg 2:6-23, 6:1-6, 11-8:28		
Sat Wk 2	The Beginning of the Kingdom	1 Sam 3:1-21, 7:1-8:22, 9:15-10:9		
Third Sunday	A Shepherd for the People	1 Sam 16:1-23-17:58, 2 Sam 5:1-5, 7:1-17		
Mon Wk 3	The Threat of False Gods	1 Kng 17:1-16, 18:17-46		
Tues Wk 3	Faithfulness and Deliverance	2 Kng 18:1-19:19, 32-37		
Wed Wk 3	The Call to Holiness	Isa 1:10-20, 6:1-13, 8:11-9:7		
Thur Wk 3	The Exile	Jer 1:4-10, 2:4-13, 7:1-15, 8:22-9:1-11		
Fri Wk 3	Waiting	Hab 1:1-2:1, 3:16-19		
Sat Wk 3	Return and Rebuilding	Neh 1:1-2:8, 6:15-16, 13:10-22		
Fourth Sunday	Repentance	Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-207:18-30		
Mon Wk 4	The Hope for a Future	Luke 1:26-38		
Tues Wk 4	Joy	Luke 1:39-56		
Wed Wk 4	Anticipation	Luke 1:57-80		
Thurs Wk 4	Trust	Matt 1:19-25		
Fri Wk 4	Worship	Matt 2:1-12		
Dec 24	Birth of the Messiah	Luke 2:1-20		
Dec 25	The Son of God	John 1:1-18		



December Quiz Answers:
Don't peek!

Date	Events/Themes	Scripture	Persons	Symbol	#
First Sunday	Introduction of the Jesse Tree	Isa 11:1-10		The Tree	0
Mon Wk 1	Creation	Gen 1:1-2:3	God	World	14
Tues Wk 1	The First Sin	Gen 2:4-3:24	Adam and Eve	Apple / Snake	6
Wed Wk 1	The Flood	Gen 6:11-22, 7:17-8:12, 20-9:17	Noah	Rainbow or Ark	10
Thur Wk 1	The Promise	Gen 12:1-7, 15:1-6	Abraham	Field of Stars	25
Friday Wk 1	Offering of Isaac	Gen 22:1-19	Isaac	Ram	17
Sat Wk 1	Assurance of the Promise	Gen 27:41-28:22	Jacob	Ladder	1
Second Sunday	God's Providence	Gen 37, 39:1-50:21	Joseph	Coat	5
Mon Wk 2	God's Leadership	Exod 2:1-4:20	Moses	Burning Bush	24
Tues Wk 2	Passover and Exodus	Exod 12:1-14:31	Israelites	Lamb	26
Wed Wk 2	Giving the Torah at Sinai	Exod 19:1-20:20	God	Tablets of the Torah	9
Thur Wk 2	The Fall of Jericho	Josh 1:1-11, 6:1-20	Joshua	Ram's Horn Trumpet	21
Fri Wk 2	Unlikely Heroes	Judge 2:6-23, 6:1-6, 11-8:28	Gideon	Clay Water Pitcher	19
Sat Wk 2	The Beginning of the Kingdom	1 Sam 3:1-21, 7:1-8:22, 9:15-10:9	Samuel	Crown	4
Third Sunday	A Shepherd for the People	1 Sam 16:1-23-17:58, 2 Sam 5:1-5, 7:1-17	David	Shepherd's Crook	22
Mon Wk 3	The Threat of False Gods	1 Kng 17:1-16, 18:17-46	Elijah	Stone Altar	15
Tues Wk 3	Faithfulness and Deliverance	2 Kng 18:1-19:19, 32-37	Hezekiah	An Empty Tent	20
Wed Wk 3	The Call to Holiness	Isa 1:10-20, 6:1-13, 8:11-9:7	Isaiah	Hot Coal	2
Thur Wk 3	The Exile	Jer 1:4-10, 2:4-13, 7:1-15, 8:22-9:1-11	Jeremiah	Tears	3
Fri Wk 3	Waiting	Hab 1:1-2:1, 3:16-19	Habakkuk	Stone Watchtower	12
Sat Wk 3	Return and Rebuilding	Neh 1:1-2:8, 6:15-16, 13:10-22	Nehemiah	City Wall	7
Fourth Sunday	Repentance	Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-20:18-30	John the Baptist	Scallop Shell	16
Mon Wk 4	The Hope for a Future	Luke 1:26-38	Mary	Rose	13
Tues Wk 4	Joy	Luke 1:39-56	Elizabeth	Mother and Child	27
Wed Wk 4	Anticipation	Luke 1:57-80	Zachariah	Pencil and Tablet	11
Thurs Wk 4	Trust	Matt 1:19-25	Joseph	Carpenter's Tools	8
Fri Wk 4	Worship	Matt 2:1-12	Magi	Star or Candle	18
Dec 24	Birth of the Messiah	Luke 2:1-20	Jesus	Manger	28
Dec 25	The Son of God	John 1:1-18	Christ	Chi-Rho Symbol	23

Advent and Christmas Services

St Helen's Church



Christmas Lessons and Carols

Sunday 22nd December 5.30pm

St Nicholas' Church

Special services during Advent

Patronal Choral Evensong

Sunday 8th December 5.30pm
The Feast of St Nicolas

Christmas Carol Service

Sunday 22nd December 6.00pm
Music and readings for Christmas

St Michael's Church

Advent Labyrinth Walks

Tuesdays 10th and 17th
December 11.00am till
12.noon

Walk the labyrinth or simply to enjoy the sacred space. A short prayer will be said at the beginning and end of each session, but feel free to come and go as you please.

Tuesday 24th December - Christmas Eve

Christingle Service

4.00pm (Doors open at 3.15pm.)

A family service. Receive your 'Christ Light' and help raise funds for The Children's Society.

Crib Service 4.00pm

Help us assemble our Christmas Crib. Families with young children especially welcome.

Crib Service 3.00pm

Hear the Christmas story and build the Christmas crib. Families with young children especially welcome.

First Eucharist of Christmas

11.00pm

The candlelit *Midnight Mass*

Christmas Lessons and Carols, 6.00pm

This traditional service tells the story of Christmas through carols and readings

Wednesday 25th December - Christmas Day

Holy Communion (1662)

8.00am with hymns

Holy Communion

10.00am

Sung Mass

10.00am

Family Service with Eucharist, 10.30am

Sacred Organ Concert

Sunday 29th December 5.30pm,
La Nativité du Seigneur,
Messiaen

Organist: Peter Foster



Epiphany Carols, Tea and Blessing of Families for New Year.

Sunday 19th January 4.30pm

December and January Events

Compiled by Louise Heffernan

ALBERT PARK SINGERS
CHRISTMAS
concert

BACH
CAROLS
JOHN LENNON
MENDELSSOHN
VIVALDI

JOIN US FOR
FESTIVE MUSIC &
REFRESHMENTS

FRIDAY
DECEMBER 13
7.00PM

ST MICHAEL'S
CHURCH,
PARK ROAD

FREE ADMISSION
DONATIONS TO CRISIS AT CHRISTMAS AND ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

The **ARCADIAN SINGERS**

Dir. Gerard Lim

Bach * Darke * Hassler
Head * Joubert * L'estrange
Ord * Paget * Praetorius
Rutter * Willan * Willcocks
Plus other traditional carols

An Arcadian Christmas
£15 / £7 (students)

Saturday 14th December, 7.30pm
St. Helen's Church, Abingdon



CiA - Christmas Carol Singing Saturday 14 December 2024 at 10 am in Abingdon Market Place.

Hope to see you all there with your best voices and all musicians welcome. Sally Mears will be leading us all again in song. For further information, please contact the CiA Administrator on 07896 860381

Abingdon & District
Musical Society

SUN 15TH DECEMBER 4PM

**FAMILY
CHRISTMAS
CONCERT**

HUMPERDINCK - HANSEL AND GRETEL: Overture
DÉLIUS - Sleigh Ride
TCHAIKOVSKY - Sleeping Beauty: Rose Adagio
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV - Christmas Eve Suite with choir
A SELECTION OF CHRISTMAS CAROLS
ALEXANDER WALKER - CONDUCTOR
KATE BAILEY - LEADER

St Helen's Church
St Helen's Court
Abingdon
OX14 5BS

CONCERT SUPPORTING:
PACT
Parents And Children Together

Tickets: www.wegottickets.com/ADMS

SAVE THE DATE! Barn Dance at St. Helen's Church, Abingdon. Music by the Chameleons, Saturday 1st February 2025 6:30-9:30pm to include Ploughman's supper. Tickets £15 Adults, £5 accompanied children under 16. Click [here](#) for details of the band. Use the QR code for ticket sales:



Oxfordshire County Council Chair's Carol Service

St Michael's and All Angels Church Monday December 16, 6:30-7:30pm.

Councillor Alison Rooke, Chair of Oxfordshire County Council, and The Rt Revd Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester, invite us to join them for this carol service with the Albert Park Singers. Mulled wine and mince pies will be served following the service. **All welcome**

CiA - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18- 25 January 2025, Serving Others in our Local Community. Midday Prayers (St Nics) from Monday 20 Jan 2024 to Friday 24 Jan 2025, 12 noon, with refreshments provided. Talks by various local groups who work with the hungry, the fatherless, the lonely, the bereaved and refugees.
The Inter-church quiz will take place on Friday 24 Jan 2025, at Abingdon Baptist Church.

OPEN MEETING St Michael's Church, Park Road, 26 January 2025, 3-5pm

You are warmly invited to an Open Meeting to offer your thoughts and suggestions about what we are looking for in a new Team Rector who will lead our parish into the next phase of our Christian Ministry in Abingdon-on-Thames. If you are unable to attend and wish to have your views noted please contact a Church Warden or the PCC Secretary (eluned@hallas.org.uk).



St HELEN'S CHURCH

**AGNOSTICS
ANONYMOUS**

Meeting for Open Discussion

Is Christian language too male?

Led by John Barton, with John Kerr & Jennifer Brown,

**Tuesday 28th January 2025
6pm to 7.30pm**

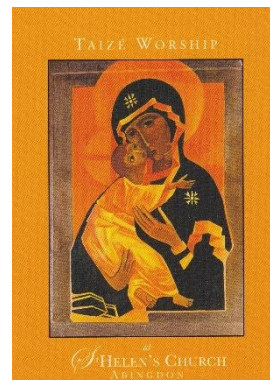
In **Parish Centre** (opposite main door of St Helen's Church, Abingdon)

FREE Everyone Welcome

Contact for more Information: Jill Gant 01235 528929

**Faith Forum Spring Series
Big Topics in Theology**
'Creation': February 2nd led by Margaret Adam at the Parish Centre

Time 12.45 preceded by a light lunch at 12.30
Further dates: March 2nd, April 6th, May 4th



Taizé Prayer

**Sunday 12th
January
5.30pm
St Helen's
Church**

Abingdon Foodbank at Christmas

Louise Heffernan

Imagine not having enough to eat at Christmas. Some local families will struggle to put food on the table, let alone provide a meal to celebrate this special time of Christ's birth. The Abingdon Foodbank, in both north and south centres, aims to give a few treats over and above our normal provision which will enable our families to eat well and have a few extras for the children to enjoy. If you feel able to contribute, please donate some of the suggested items below. Foodstuffs can be taken to either centre (Christ Church, Northcourt Road, on Tuesdays and Fridays between 11am and 1pm, or Preston Road Community Centre on Wednesdays between 12 noon and 2.30pm). Or it can be dropped off in a collection box in your church or in a local supermarket (Waitrose certainly does this). We aim to start distributing special Christmas parcels in the week beginning 9th December so not much time to lose. Thank you for your continued support.



Abingdon
Foodbank
Together with Trussell

Christmas Food Donations

Please help us by donating long-life food items this festive season

ROAST DINNER ITEMS
Tinned ham, peas, carrots, potatoes, cranberry sauce, gravy, sage & onion stuffing

PUDDINGS
Christmas pudding, mince pies, custard, tinned fruit, trifle mix, crackers for cheese

TREATS
Chocolate, shortbread, nuts
Family size chocolate / biscuit box

Please **NO ALCOHOL** 

Please drop all items at Christ Church, Northcourt Road or your nearest Abingdon collection point by the start of December



The angry Thames in late November 2024. Photo: Rob Rutherford

Christmas Shopping

Eileen Duckett

I have started my shopping early
As I have a lot to buy you see
And the shops have been full from September
With Christmas goodies just waiting for me.

I have been round the garden centres
Where I found a few presents to buy
But the outlet centre at Swindon
Took a lot of my cash I can't lie.



Photo: RR

The Lindt shop had such wonderful chocolate
With samples they were giving away
I couldn't resist buying presents in there
And a few things for myself I must say.

And then there was the Cadbury shop
With more chocolate to deplete my funds
And a Haribo shop where I spent the most
money
On sweets for my four grandsons.



Photo: RR

I seem to have bought lots of sweets
For the people I hold most dear.
I just hope they won't need the dentist
For fillings in the New Year.

And now it all needs wrapping
Which is a chore I have to say
But I don't do the wrapping
I leave that to my husband Ray.



The mystery yarn
bomber has struck
again! This time with
Robins as well as
Christmas Puds.

Photo: David
Bevington

Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the Parish Website:

<https://abingdonparish.org.uk>

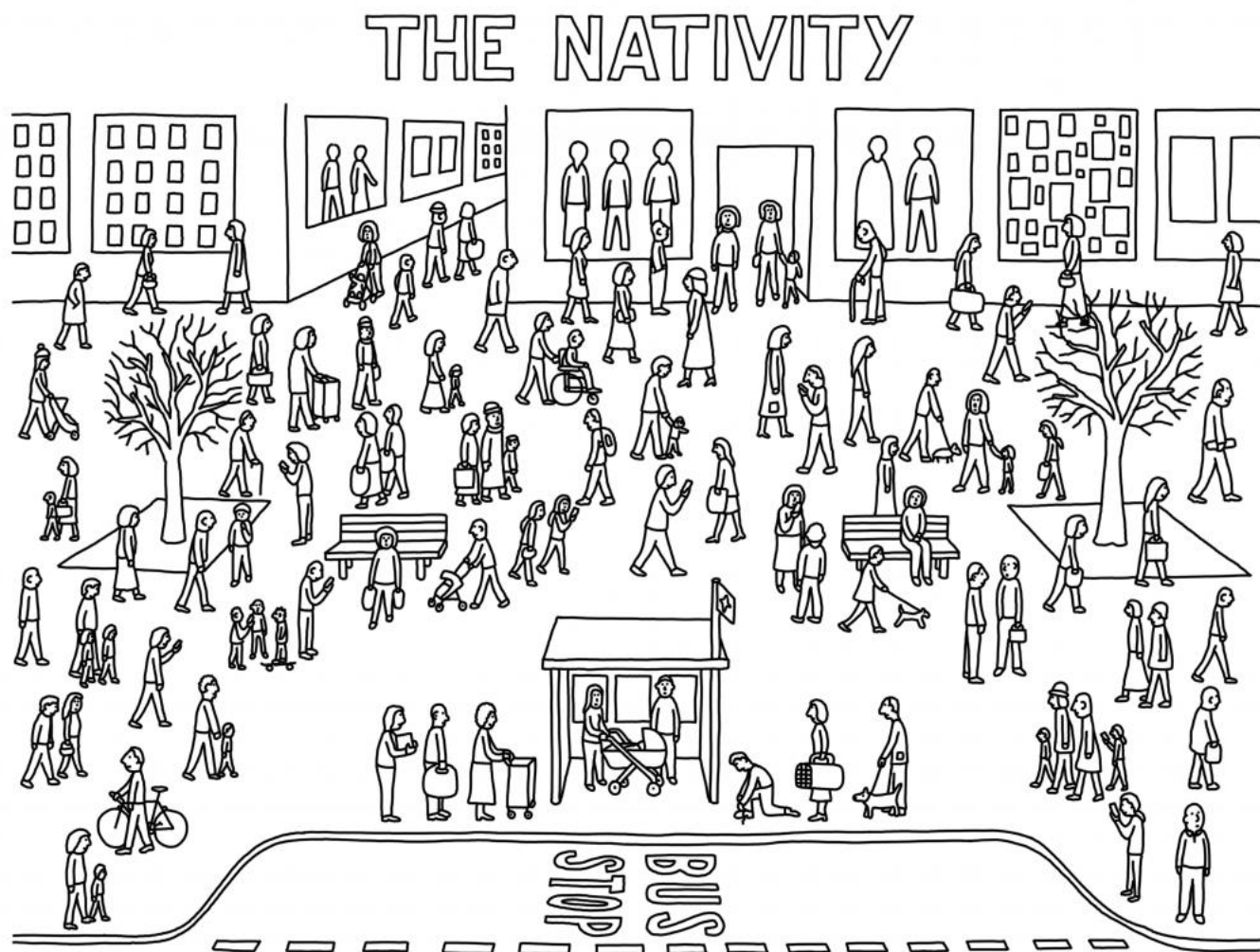
for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm. The foodbank also operates from Preston Road Community Centre. Donations are welcome there too between 12.00 and 2.30pm on Wednesdays. You can also donate money by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank' or via the Foodbank website

<https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office has details if you want to donate via online banking. **Urgent: see also page 17**

Finally, from Dave Walker:



CartoonChurch.com

Happy Christmas and thanks to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published on February 9th - ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk