



St Alkmund's Duffield Parish Magazine

February 2020

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The Vicar's Letter

JAMES HUGHES



Dear Friends,

The tragic events over New Year in Duffield have affected all of us. We are very conscious of the impact of these events on immediate family, on close friends, but also on the wider community, and at St Alkmund's we continue to pray for all those affected. An event like this challenges us to think hard about the world we live in, and to reflect again on the things in which we put our confidence.

As we do that, let me share with you a passage from Matthew's gospel, which is all about confidence. It begins with a centurion—a Roman officer—seeking help from Jesus. His servant is ill, and he would like Jesus to heal him (Matthew chapter 8, verses 5 to 6). Jesus asks a provocative question: shall he come and heal a Gentile, one of those occupying the land and oppressing the people? (verse 7). Look at the centurion's answer:

But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." (Matthew chapter 8 verses 8 and 9)

The centurion understands two things. He understands authority. He understands

what it means to be able to tell others what to do, and expect them to do it, and to be told what to do, and to do it. He understands that Jesus has authority, the authority to heal the servant, with just a word. He has confidence in Jesus' authority.

But the centurion also understands humility. He knows he is not worthy to have anything from Jesus. But that doesn't undermine his confidence, because he still trusts in Jesus' ability, and in Jesus' mercy and compassion.

This faith in Jesus causes Jesus to marvel (verse 10), and then to comment how the kingdom of heaven will welcome people from all nations with such faith (verses 11 and 12). The centurion gives us an example of confident faith here: trusting in Jesus' power and authority, and in his compassion and mercy. We see how the passage ends:

And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment. (Matthew 8 verse 13)

The centurion's confidence in Jesus is vindicated, as Jesus shows his power and authority. In 2020 then, where do we find confidence? In our morning services at St Alkmund's we are looking at Matthew chapters 8 to 13 through to Easter. Do join us as we continue to explore who Jesus is, and why we can have confidence in him, in an uncertain world.

I look forward to seeing you.

Yours in Christ,





Services & Events

SUNDAY 2ND FEBRUARY

- 8.00 am **HOLY COMMUNION** at All Saints' Chapel
- 10.00 am **MORNING SERVICE** at St Alkmund's—(*Matthew 9:35–10:15*)
- 4.30 pm **HOLY COMMUNION** at St Paul's (with refreshments from 4.00pm)
(*Genesis 27:41–28:22*)
- 6.30 pm **FIRST SUNDAY SPECIAL** at St Alkmund's (in Church)
MEETING THE REAL JESUS: "*Is Jesus Coming Back?*"
-

SUNDAY 9TH FEBRUARY

- 10.00 am **MORNING SERVICE** at St Alkmund's—(*Matthew 10:16–25*)
- 4.30 pm **AFTERNOON SERVICE** at St Paul's (with refreshments from 4.00pm)
(*Genesis 29:1–30*)
- 6.30 pm **HOLY COMMUNION** at St Alkmund's—(*Deuteronomy 34*)
-

SUNDAY 16TH FEBRUARY

- 8.00 am **HOLY COMMUNION** at All Saints' Chapel
- 10.00 am **HOLY COMMUNION** at St Alkmund's—(*Graeme Innes*)
- 4.30 pm **AFTERNOON SERVICE** at St Paul's (with refreshments from 4.00pm)
(*Genesis 29:31–30:24*)
- 6.30 pm **EVENING SERVICE** at St Alkmund's—(*1 Cor. 15:1–11*). Innes Family coming
-

SUNDAY 23RD FEBRUARY

- 10.00 am **MORNING SERVICE** at St Alkmund's—(*Matthew 10:26–42*)
- 4.30 pm **AFTERNOON SERVICE** at St Paul's (with refreshments from 4.00pm)
(*Genesis 30:25–43*)
- 6.30 pm **HOLY COMMUNION** at St Alkmund's—(*1 Corinthians 15:12–34*)
-

Regular Events:

SALT CAFÉ—Sunday 2nd, in church at 5.30pm. (For young people in school years 7–13).

IMPACT (school years 7–9)—Mondays (3rd, 10th & 24th), 7.00–8.30pm (*See leaders for venue*).

IGNITION (school years 10–13)—Tuesdays (4th, 11st & 25th), 7.30–9.00pm (*See leaders for venue*).

MORNING PRAYER—Tuesdays (4th, 11th & 25th) at 9.15am. Held in church for around half an hour.

PRAYER MEETING AT ST ALKMUND’S—Wednesday 5th, at 7.30pm.

LADIES’ BIBLE STUDY—Wednesdays (12th & 26th), at 10.00am (*Changed venue*).

MEN’S 5-A-SIDE FOOTBALL (at Ecclesbourne School)—Tuesdays (4th, 11st & 25th), at 8.00pm.

GROWTH GROUPS—Normally Wednesdays (12th & 26th) at 8.00pm, at various locations (*see leaders for details*).

MEN’S GROUP—Wednesday 19th, at 7.45pm.

EMMA’S LUNCHTIME CONCERT—Wednesday 26th, at 1.00pm in church.

Special Events:

OAK HILL EVENT: *Why Get Ordained in the Church of England?* (In Church)—Saturday 1st February at 10.00am.

LIFE EXPLORED COURSE AT ST PAUL’S CHURCH HALL—Thursdays (6th, 13th & 27th), at 7.45pm.

Half Term Holiday: Mon Feb 17—Fri Feb 21 (No youth groups this week)

Did you know?

St Alkmund’s church has a presence on various social media platforms. You can find us on **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **LinkedIn**, as follows:

 **St Alkmund’s Church Duffield**

 **@StAlksDuffield**

 **[linkedin.com/company/st-alkmund](https://www.linkedin.com/company/st-alkmund)**

Do “like”, “follow”, or “link-up” with us on your preferred social media site to receive regular updates about ongoing activities and events at church!



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Expressions of Love



Hans Christian Andersen claimed that: 'Just living is not enough ... one must have sunshine, freedom and a little flower.' Henry Penn, a former president of the Society of American Florists remarked: 'There is nothing that you can't say with flowers—when you send flowers, it says everything.' The days leading up to and including Saint Valentine's Day on February 14th are particularly busy for a florist and provide a suitable occasion for people to show their 'love' for another significant person. Whilst delivering flowers for RoseHips of Duffield some years ago, I enjoyed the positive responses recipients gave and reflected on the value of these acts of kindness. Paul the Apostle wrote two New Testament letters, or epistles, to the Christian community that he had founded at Corinth, Greece, and included his definition of love in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verses 4 to 8: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.' Saint Paul provides a useful reference for us to value in our lives whether the consideration is made on Valentine's Day or at any time of the year. I hope we can all both give and receive expressions of love.

Paul Wiggins

The big 30

The end of 2019 marked the end of my 20s, as the big 30 finally hit me in December. I just about managed to avoid doing a classic Rachel-from-*Friends* scene and hide away in my room all day; instead I spent the day with family and friends. It turns out, turning 30 wasn't as bad as I had anticipated!

But one thing that has been playing on my mind since the big 30 is the fact that I am now the same age that Jesus was when he first started his ministry. When I think over the last thirty years of my life—the adventures, the life lessons, the mistakes, the triumphs, the highs and lows, it really strikes me how little we know of Jesus' first thirty years of his life. And yet, we know that he was as fully human as he was fully God. He had a family whom he loved, friends and learning to do. He would have had chores and responsibilities and a job (he was a carpenter). He would have experienced the same highs and lows of life common to all people, and yet somehow, at the same time he did this all without sin so that he could take the place of any sinner who called on him as their saviour!

In the beginning of the Gospel of John, there is a line that always stops me in my tracks—"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us". The Son of God, the infinite creator of the universe, stepped down from his glory to become flesh. He could have appeared in a pillar of fire, or with thunder and lightening as he did in the Old Testament, but this time he chose to come just like us. He would get tired, he would ache, he would need to grow and learn to walk and live alongside other people. He would feel pain and joy and need to eat and sleep and ... poop!

We tend to mostly think about Jesus' humanity around the time of Christmas. We think of him as the little baby, so reliant on his mother and father. But God spent thirty whole years dwelling among us before he started his public ministry. He chose to live with us, as one of us for all that time. Why?

Hebrews 4: 14–16 says *"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

He did it all so that we can know that he fully understands everything and anything that we go through. God is not aloof, God does not lack care or understanding of what you are going through, rather he offers you something even greater than thirty years of human experience. He wants to walk through your life with you. He promises that he will never forsake you when you put your trust in him.



I don't know what the future holds for me. But Jesus knew at the age of thirty that he had three years left before he would hang on a cross and take the weight of *my* sin on his shoulders. Whilst I start filling my mind with the thought of aging and life in my thirties, Jesus had one consuming thought all those years ago—his love for us.

I mentioned that Jesus experienced the same highs and lows of life common to all people, but he actually experienced so much more. I cannot even begin to imagine what it would have been like to experience the things that Jesus was willing to go through in order to be here for me. Because the truth is that whilst he was fully human, he never stopped being God. He knew what would happen to him. He knew the cost of becoming human. And yet he chose to become human *for us*. He chose to leave his family and loved ones prematurely *for us*. He chose to be rejected and humiliated *for us*. He chose to go to the cross *for us*. He chose to do it all for us.

What a marvellous thing to think upon!

Helen Hawley



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First Sunday Specials Spring 2020 Meeting the Real Jesus

2nd February - Is Jesus coming back?

1st March - What does it mean to repent and
believe?

5th April - What kind of king?

IN CHURCH

REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED

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Facebook: St Alkmund's Church Duffield. Twitter: @StAlksDuffield

Office: 01332 840536 Monday to Friday 9.30am-3pm

My teacher got really angry with me about the format of my essay – I don't think it was justified!

On leaving school in 1962 I began a five-year apprenticeship in the printing industry, eventually qualifying, at the age of twenty-one, as a journeyman compositor – a typesetter.



Before the advent of word processors, a compositor composed type – that is, he picked up each individual letter from a type case, placed them in a typesetting stick, to form a line of words separated by spaces. Working to a page width – measured in *ems* – when the compositor had reached a point whereby there was insufficient space left to fit in the next word, he **justified** the line by either increasing the spacing between each word, bringing the line of type to the page width, or by reducing the spacing in order to fit in another word.

Thus, the printer's definition of **justification** is – to adjust a line of type to fill a space, bringing it to full measure.

In spiritual terms, **justification** is God's declaration that the demands of His Law have been fulfilled in the righteousness of His Son.

The basis for this **justification** is the death of Jesus. He has taken upon himself, the punishment for our sin. Jesus has paid the price for our **justification**, and it is through our faith that we can experience and enjoy His righteousness.

Justification means that our lives cannot merely have been adjusted, but changed and brought to the full measure of God's righteousness, by the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ and by faith in Him.

In Romans, the Apostle Paul writes:

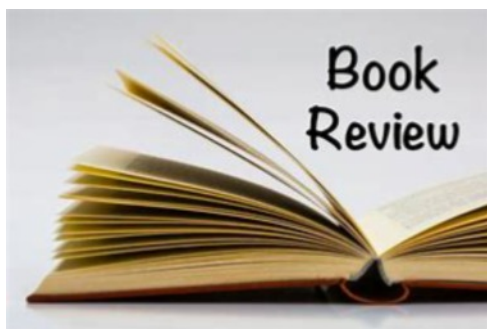
Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Michael Severn

A story about justification

A man took his Rolls-Royce to the continent for a holiday. While he was driving around Europe, the car broke down. The man contacted the *Rolls-Royce people* back in England. "I'm having trouble with my car," he explained, "what do you suggest I do?" Well, the *Rolls-Royce people* flew a mechanic over to the continent; the mechanic repaired the car then flew back to England leaving the man to continue his holiday. The man then spent the rest of his holiday wondering how much it was going to cost him. When he got back to England, he emailed the *Rolls-Royce people* and asked how much he owed them. He received a prompt reply which read:

"Dear Sir: We have no record anywhere in our files of anything having gone wrong with your Rolls-Royce."



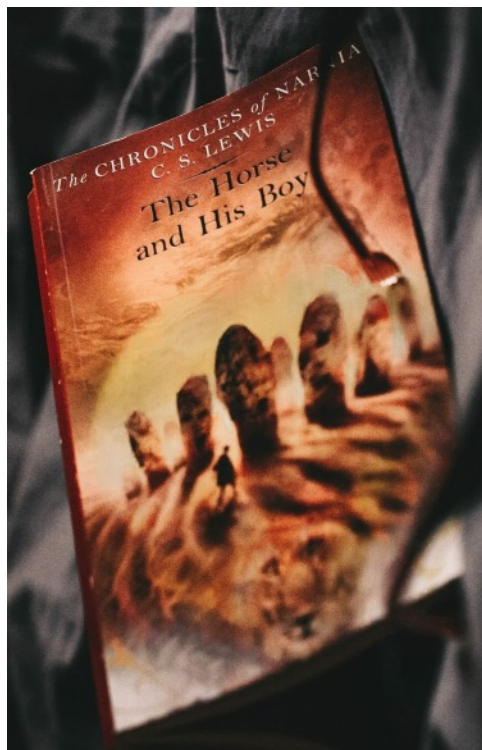
The Narnia Stories by C.S. Lewis

Seventy years ago, in 1950, an Oxford academic known for his scholarly studies on Mediaeval and Renaissance Literature and his Christian talks during WW2, published a children's story called *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, which has been delighting children (and adults) ever since, enhanced by Pauline Baynes's charming drawings. It was followed by six others, issued once a year until the concluding story *The Last Battle* in 1956. The books were written for children, and the chapter length is well suited to "a chapter a night" for bedtime reading. They are also most suitable for parents to read to their children: I remember with pleasure reading the whole series to both of my children.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is the foundation for the series, introducing the main characters for the first three (published) books and developing the magical parallel world of Narnia. The story starts with four children evacuated from London in 1940, to the house of an eccentric professor. The youngest, Lucy, discovers Narnia when she explores a wardrobe

during a game of hide and seek. She meets a faun, Mr. Tumnus. Later, all the children go to Narnia, where they discover that Edward their brother has met the wicked queen. The story develops as the good Narnians and the children seek to triumph over the wicked queen. The ruler of Narnia is Aslan, a great Lion, who represents Jesus. The conflict between good (Aslan) and evil (the queen) is played out in a most unexpected way. To say any more might spoil the story ...

In the next three books, the children, and others, return to Narnia, and have further adventures, all in the form of a quest to help the people and creatures of Narnia and its neighbouring countries, Archenland and Calormen. The fifth book *The Horse and His Boy* returns to the time



of the first book, and is the only story to take place entirely within the Narnian world. A poor boy Shasta living in poverty in Calormen escapes with a talking horse called Bree, and they have many exciting adventures with a posh girl Aravis and another horse, Hwin, before they reach Archenland and Bree discovers his true destiny.



Dawn in the Desert in the style of Pauline Baynes

The final two (published) books cover the Creation and End of Narnia. These have strong links to the creation story from the Bible (Genesis), and the new world (Revelation).

A word on the order. Modern sets of the books place the stories in chronological order in Narnia. Older sets place them in publication order, and scholars sometimes put them in the order in which they were written—see Wikipedia for more details!

C.S. Lewis became a Christian in his early 30s, and gave a series of wartime radio broadcasts about Christianity, which were later published as *Mere Christianity*. In the Narnia series many of the stories parallel Christian truths. From the children's

point of view, the ideas of right and wrong, following the right path, persisting in the face of adversity, doing a difficult task when easier options are more tempting and trusting in God (Aslan).

I would recommend these books, not only for children, but also for adults both new to the books and to others who read them as children or with children. Can you follow the Christian message through the books?

The creation of Narnia is found in *The Magician's Nephew*. The beauty and majesty of the new creation is tarnished by the introduction of evil into the new world. Two human children are sent to undo the wrong that Digory (the Nephew) has brought upon the new world, in an adventure that invites strong parallels with Genesis. The Chronicles of Narnia conclude with *The Last Battle*. The opening words "In the last days of Narnia..." foretell a time of increasing conflict, culminating in the end of the land of Narnia. But this is not the end! The story continues beyond the end into a new future, which concludes with a beautiful description of heaven.

The seven stories make a thrilling adventure for children—and their parents. But they also challenge us to think beyond the immediate stories into how we live our lives.

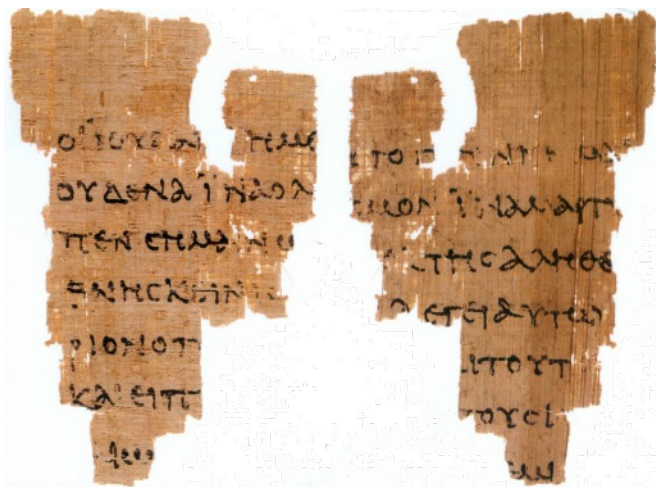


Courtesy of Duffield Craft Group at Duffield Library



Andrew Jackson

A few precious words...



In the John Ryland University Library in Manchester, there is a famous and fascinating ancient artefact which was discovered many years ago in Egypt and was acquired and conserved by the library. It is a tiny fragment, measuring only 3.5 by 2.5 inches (8.9 by 6.0 cm) at its widest point, written in Greek on papyrus, a reed which was found on the banks of the River Nile and formed into writing material. It was identified in 1935. The writing is on both sides of the papyrus and depicts five verses from the Gospel of the Apostle John. From the handwriting, the dating of the fragment is approximately AD 200, and it is believed to be the earliest surviving fragment of the New Testament ever found. A more accurate carbon-dating is not possible because the necessary procedure would most likely damage or destroy the papyrus fragment.

I visited the Rylands Library recently, having always wanted to view this amazing little thing! It stands alone in a large glass case under restricted lighting, together with what is the most extensive and wide-ranging papyrus collection in Britain.

The Bible verses written on the fragment are from John chapter 18, and feature the trial of Jesus Christ before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, just before the crucifixion. The curious dialogue between them concerns Jesus's identity and his claim to be the ultimate truth. The verse that struck me when I compared the fragment with our English Bible, has the challenging words of Jesus: ***"Everyone on the side of truth listen to me."*** A tremendous claim for Jesus to make! Maybe they are very significant words for today's culture, with its mixed and confused ideas and ideologies.

So, just a few precious words from an ancient fragment of Scripture, which remind us of the One who claimed to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the One who can still transform our lives today.

Faith Hanson

Where's the Bear?



Alkmund is enjoying getting into his new year's resolution of getting outdoors more, so here he is somewhere in the great outside! But can you work out where he is?

Further Adventures of Alkmund the Bear

In other Bear news, Alkmund was visited by his nephew Ferido, who travelled all the way from Peru to come visit him last week. The two had a wonderful time catching up, and between them, we reckon they got through ten whole pots of chocolate spread! They also enjoyed watching their distant relative's new movie, *Paddington 2*, with their host family.

Here's a picture of the two of them; there's a clear family resemblance don't you think?



[#wheresthebear?](#)

Our Stained Glass Windows

Sitting in the Nave of our church looking east we see the large stained glass east window depicting Christ crucified, with Mary his mother and John the Baptist on his right and John 'whom he loved' and Mary Magdalene on his left hand. Above are symbols of the crucifixion: nails, dice, scourge and the crown of thorns, together with supervisory angels. All this 'In honour of the Holy Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in memory of Francis Calvert Gillett, who entered into rest 25th June 1895 Mary Susanna his widow dedicates this window.'



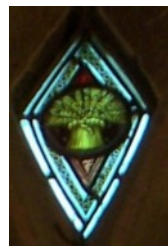
Gethsemane

Charles Eamer Kempe (1837–1907) was born at Ovingdean Hall, West Sussex. He had illustrious ancestors; his grandfather was Lord Mayor of London. Kempe was educated at Pembroke College, Oxford where he first thought of entering the ministry but was deterred because of a stammer. He was able to study architecture under one of the leading church architects of the day, GF Bodley, and there grew his sense of medieval design and a keen interest in stained glass.

In 1866 he started his own business in London. Kempe Studios began by supplying vestments, stained glass, and church furnishings. The studio was a

success and enjoyed continual growth throughout the late Victorian period, so much so that at one time he employed 100 people engaged in design and the beautiful draughtsmanship for which they were famous.

Kempe decided to use a trademark and chose a single wheatsheaf derived from his family crest containing three wheatsheaves or garbs in heraldic terms. There is one in our window which you may enjoy looking for. His other 'trademark' is an angel with wings of peacock feathers and there are quite a few of those.



Having appreciated the main east window, please do go up into the Chancel and look at the beautiful set of three windows depicting the way of the Cross from Gethsemane through the trials to Jesus bearing his cross to Golgotha.

M & D Taulbut



Pilate washes his hands



Jesus bears his cross

2 Minute Guide to the New Testament— Philippians



Iwonder if you've ever tried to sit down and work out what it is that motivates you. Is it money—or more likely, what you'll be able to do with it—is it prestige or honour? Is it caring for the family? Perhaps it is a combination of these things.

We've been looking in these 2 minute New Testament articles at Paul's letters for a while now, and so I think we've got a bit of an idea of what Paul is like. And here in Philippians, we get to see what motivates Paul:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians chapter 1, verse 21)

Paul is motivated by his desire to live for Christ. Which is even more remarkable when you realise that Paul was a prisoner, probably in Rome, because he followed Christ. Following Christ had got Paul into trouble—and yet he can still give thanks for the Philippians—the Christians in Philippi—and urge them to keep following Christ, even if it meant suffering for him (chapter 1).

Does this just mean that Paul is a bit of a blinkered fool? One of those religious nuts that you meet occasionally, a few sandwiches short of a picnic? No. It does mean however that Paul had understood what Christ had done for him. In chapter 2, we see why Paul is motivated to live for Christ—as he reminds his readers of what Christ has done:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped... he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians chapter 2, verses 6 to 8)

It is the fact that the Lord of the universe, God himself, came to earth and became a man, and died on the cross. That is what motivates Paul to live for Christ. And he wants his readers to do the same. He wants them to keep going as followers of Christ—like Timothy and Epaphroditus (Chapter 2). He wants them to focus on following

Christ, not on external rites like circumcision (Chapter 3). He wants them to rejoice in the Lord, and look to the Lord for guidance and with their requests (Chapter 4).

Paul’s motivation is to follow Christ, to live for Christ, and so he can face hardships and prison, and can encourage others to do the same, because he knows that Christ is worth following—Christ died for the things that we have done wrong. And Paul also knows, and wants us to know, that Christ not only died, but has also been raised again, and is seated in heaven—he is the Lord, and so he should be worshipped:

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians chapter 2, verses 9 to 11)

Paul knows what motivates him. He might ask us what motivates us—and he would certainly encourage us to live our lives as followers of Christ, to live for Christ.

James Hughes



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Youth and Children

I know that Christmas now feels like a long distant past for most of us as we trudge our way through February, but I have found myself time and again returning to the lovely memories that were made over the festive season. I couldn't resist sharing some of these memories with you in pictures, to brighten up the February blues!



We have some talented musicians at Ignition; here are three of them serenading us with 3-part carols at the beginning of one of our evenings together in December.



One of my favourite services is the Christingle service (not just because there are sweets involved!) but it is just such a lovely sight seeing families huddled together with their Christingles.

We had an “invite your parents along to youth group” Christmas Party at which we played a very competitive game of Sack or Steal—here is everyone with their winnings!



We had such fun this year at our nativity service, even some of our youth helped out!



Mary and Joseph enjoying the nativity



Finally, I got to enjoy time spent with some other locally based Youth and Children’s leaders from around Derbyshire, as we looked back on a year of the joys of church work, and look forward to another!

Helen Hawley



Not always straightforward...

Having recently commenced her studies at Warwick, Sarah Hughes reflects on living University life as a Christian—and a Vicar's daughter—and on handing out hot chocolate at 3am ...

When introducing myself, there are four stages which raise eyebrows. Firstly, my course—I do English Literature and Creative Writing, which is not only a mouthful but perhaps one of the least respected courses on campus (Warwick is a STEM dominated University—who knew?). But I hold my own, and am now used to gearing up for a defence as soon as the question is asked. Secondly, that I'm a Christian—often met by a vague belief in God, a relation of Catholic upbringing, or uncomfortable silence; later comes the realisation that I'm one of those Christians who 'actually believe something', at which I have to resist the urge to say 'is there any other kind?'. But my favourite, and the last one to come out, is that I'm a Vicar's daughter, which garners a wide range of reactions from 'not surprising' to subtle fear, all of which I enjoy immensely.

It's difficult to have expectations when you don't have any experiences to draw on, but somehow University still baffled them. I knew I'd love my course, but I didn't know how freeing it would be to finally be studying because you want to, not because you're afraid. I knew I'd be meeting new people, but I didn't expect to change them as they've changed me. I knew this would be the time to own my faith for myself, but I didn't know everything that it would mean.


Life at University isn't always straightforward. The first few weeks were full of new people, all of whom I couldn't possibly please, and most of whose names I forgot. One notable encounter lasted six hours, and has never been repeated. I've had to hand in my writing (read: my heart and soul) to be marked for the first time, and write academic essays without the obsessive guidance available at A level. I'm surrounded by the culture of our generation, which expects and holds values I cannot; I've sat through visiting speakers telling me that University was created to destroy religion and treating the Bible as a joke. But my first few months at University have been overwhelmingly full of joys, and I'm becoming more aware of how gracious God has been to me in that.

Where I expected derision and judgement for my faith, I've been met by respect, and sometimes, interest. There are more opportunities than ever to tell others about what I believe, the best of these 'hot choc', which involves staying up till 3am and handing out hot chocolate to drunk people (believe it or not, a highlight of the week). I can casually tell my flatmates that I'm going to church and they'll reply 'of course'; I can


discuss the Reformation and the Bible in English seminars and be completely on topic; I can be accountable to my Christian friends and share in the challenges of a Christian life. The Christian Union at Warwick is thriving and welcoming, always putting on evangelistic and discipleship events, and I'm sure there are weeks in which I've spent nearly as much time with the CU as I have in lectures and seminars; something likely to be repeated when we hold our 'events week', which I'm told is one of the highlights of the year. I was apprehensive that no longer living in a Christian household would be isolating, but the Christian friendships I've made have been a real source of encouragement and support.

As I look around the University, I see so many who are struggling to find their purpose and their identity, taking courses because of others or forcing themselves to 'live their best lives' every week. I am so grateful to be settled, not only in my course but in my faith; I can only hope that they may see that in me, and search for the life which offers so much more. ●

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Tom Corfield was educated at the Royal Academy of Music and the University of East Anglia, where he was the organ scholar of Norwich Cathedral. There followed four years as sub-organist of Leeds Parish Church, and a period of post-graduate study before his move to Derby, where from 1985 to 2016 he was Assistant Organist at the Cathedral. He teaches for the Open University and is a rehearsal accompanist for the Derby Bach Choir.

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‘Monday to Friday Living’

In this article, Phil O’Brien reflects on being a Christian and how he lives out his faith.

I have always thought of myself as a Christian, but only learned about 20 years ago, through the excellent teaching at St Alkmund’s, what that really means. I then faced up to the fact that I was kidding myself until then. I had been a churchgoer as a very young child and from age 9, when I joined a choir, went to church twice a week for practice (we were very good) and twice on Sunday—sung Eucharist in the morning and choral evensong at night. When I wasn’t in the Anglican church singing, I was at Roman Catholic Mass, with my Dad—it was complicated being the child of a mixed marriage!!

When my voice broke at 16 I became a typical teenager and lapsed from church attendance, though I still did Midnight Mass and Easter Sunday out of a sense of obligation. When I went to sea in 1980, as the most junior officer on Sea Princess I read the first lesson at the carol service on Christmas Eve—very odd being in broad daylight and with a temperature well in the 80s, as we were in the South Pacific.

When I left the sea in 1984, I joined Derby City Council, working in the Mayor’s Office, beginning a long and enjoyable relationship with Derby Cathedral. I planned set piece events with Deans and Canon Precentors and had my own pew, immediately behind the Mayor. I have

twice sung the National Anthem whilst looking directly across the aisle at Her Majesty, who was in attendance—a surreal experience.



Working in the public sector does not always sit well with professing one’s faith. The atmosphere is (quite properly) geared to the wide range of communities who are all strongly represented in the diverse City of Derby. Indeed, I worked very closely with Mayors from the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim faiths, so learned a good deal about the traditions of those communities. What became apparent was that Christianity is held in high regard by all of these faith communities.

In 2007 the incoming Mayor openly professed his Christian faith at his installation ceremony and I helped craft his speech. He pledged to be guided by two publications: the Council Constitution (compulsory) and The Bible—the latter being a much more inspiring read! He used a secular and biblical quote to set out principles for the year—one paraphrased President Kennedy, ‘ask not what your city can do for you, but what you can do for your city’, whilst the other was from Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45—along the lines of ‘I am here not to be served, but to serve’—though I should

point out that the Mayor made no claim to be the Son of Man!

The year had its highs and lows, but an enduring legacy is the work we did to create a Christian Fellowship for elected Members and council employees. The Mayor's Chaplaincy team prayed around the building perimeter and had prayer sessions before key meetings. Communion was taken in The Parlour, for what I think is the only time in its history, and the Mayor had regular sit-downs with a Chaplain to discuss events and issues.

A Mayoral term lasts for just twelve months, but I am so grateful that the employee Christian Fellowship continues to meet monthly some twelve years on. I was convener of the group, booking a room and e-mailing all participants each month, until I retired almost five years ago, but I ensured I had a successor in place before I left, who undertakes that role to this day. There are around 35 active members and we see 10–20 at each meeting on the first Tuesday of the month. I still attend whenever I can.

The Fellowship is properly recognised by the Council, as an Employee Network,

along with other groups such as the BME, Disabled and LGBTQ+ networks. In a further development the Council has instigated a workplace Chaplaincy Service, provided by the Derby City Centre Chaplaincy and they have a regular presence in the Council House.

Returning to Mark's Gospel—this time chapter 4, perhaps the election of that Mayor was a little like the sower of seeds—we are told 'other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.' There is no room for complacency or arrogance, but I am pleased to have played a part in this small success.

In retirement I have time to be Treasurer of the Duffield branch of Christian Aid, I am able to attend some of the excellent courses run by the church, sing (after a fashion) in the church music group, volunteer for a monthly community lunch at Emmanuel Church and most recently to join the key-holding team at St Alkmund's, to give a little time back to the place that has been so important in the development of my faith. ●

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Why bother with church?

It's a reasonable question—and one that even those who'd consider themselves Christians have maybe asked on occasion; it's perhaps an even more pertinent question these days, faced as we are with ever-increasing options (and ever-increasing demands) as to how we spend our leisure time. And if you're not a churchgoer, you may well have various objections in respect of church—"dull!"; "boring!"; "irrelevant!"; "I'm not the 'religious' type"—and so on and so forth. In this article, I'd like to briefly set out why Christians see attending church as important—and why church may not be like how you might think it is...

1. Christians are called to be part of a church community

The Bible is filled with examples of Christian believers meeting regularly together and exhortations to keep on doing so. For example Hebrews chapter 10, verses 24–25 says: "...let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."

We meet as Christians Sunday by Sunday to grow in our faith and to learn together, specifically to learn from the Bible, which Christians believe to be God's inspired word. Teaching from the Bible is central to our Sunday services at St Alkmund's; whether we come as longstanding Christians, new believers or those simply wanting to investigate and find out more, we all need to regularly hear the 'good news' of the Gospel—what God's done for us

through Jesus and His death and resurrection, in order that we can be reconciled with God to have a restored relationship with him and what that means for our lives.

2. A church community meet to encourage one another

As well as a place to keep on learning and growing in faith, we also meet at church to build each other up; to encourage, support and spur one another on as we seek to live as Christians and face the many challenges life brings. And, whereas many other walks of life, such as school or work, can often be comprised of a broadly similar demographic, a church community is perhaps relatively unusual in having a very wide range of ages and backgrounds. From "*the enthusiasm of youth*" to "*the wisdom of the old*" (and more or less everything in between!) it's a community rich with people who one perhaps wouldn't otherwise even have the opportunity to meet, never mind make friends with.



3. The church community isn't "religious"

A church certainly isn't full of 'uber-religious', 'holier-than-thou' types; at St Alkmund's we're just ordinary people from all walks of life who have heard the good news of the Gospel of Jesus and are seeking to follow Him as we live our lives day by day. And, like everyone, sometimes (alright, often!) we mess up and do the wrong thing—what the Bible calls 'sin'—as we all rub along together. Nor is there a need to sport one's "Sunday Best"; it's all fairly casual (hey, the Vicar doesn't even wear a dog-collar!). There's certainly no 'dress code', no seating plan and absolutely no expectations that you must be completely au-fait with all the words to all the hymns, or whatever.

4. And it's not all "Hymns & Hats"!

One Friday, a good mate needed me to give him a lift back from work in Derby to where we both live in Belper. I said I'd be more than happy to, as long as he didn't mind helping me drop some equipment

into St Alkmund's en-route. "What sort of equipment?" enquired my friend. "Oh, just the church's bass and lead guitar amplifiers", I replied (having had to take them away for repairs or something). "Guitar amplifiers?! In church?!" exclaimed my friend in disbelief. "But, but..." he spluttered, miming rather stilted singing from an imaginary dusty hymnal, "...I thought church music was all 'Songs of Praise'!" (When we walked into St A's, my friend nearly had a seizure upon seeing the church additionally had a drum kit).

Of course, we do sing and cherish many fantastic old hymns at St Alkmund's, but it's certainly not all *Songs of Praise* (and come to that, neither is said TV programme all "hymns & hats" nowadays!). Once a month we have a seminar-style 'First Sunday Special' service in the hall and sometimes our young people put on a drama, too.

Why not come along and see us to find out for yourself? You're very welcome to join us any time.

James Rollin

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