

ST JAMES' CHURCH
Brownhills



Following Jesus

THE MUSTARD SEED

On entering the house,
* they saw the child
with Mary his mother
and they knelt down
and paid him homage.
Then, opening
their treasure chests,
they offered him gifts
of gold, frankincense,
and myrrh.

Matthew 2, verse 12

www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk

*Our mission is to worship God
and to serve the community by sharing the love of Jesus*

January 2021 **50P**

Upstairs Downstairs

Cleaning Services

Proprietor: Helen Downes

Household Cleaning of the Highest Standard

Daytime: 07855 253562 – Evening: 01543 452501



Grace, Truth & Life Groups

There are now five GTL Groups which are now meeting on a regular basis. It would be good to think we could increase the number meeting, so if you would like to be involved, please speak to Revd Gayle in the first instance.

Telephone Prayer

If you would like any prayer ministry via the telephone, please contact Gayle on 07545 657 636, or Liz Corbett on 01543 370162.

Magazine Articles

If, in your reading, you find an article that you think bears repeating in the parish magazine, please let us know and we will try our best to include it in future issues.

Do more, learn more and be more.

Girls & boys aged 6 to 18.

Based at Group HQ, Barnetts Lane, WS8 6HZ

For info: www.brownhills-scouts.org.uk

Call: Sue 01543 276953 or Mary 01543 453293



Scouts
2nd Brownhills

Looking towards Wellbeing



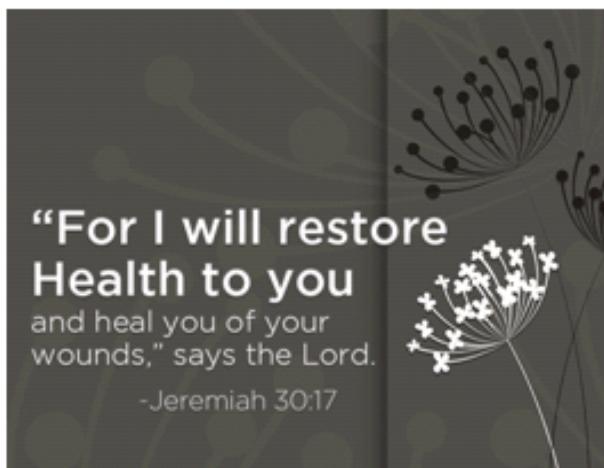
At the end of January as a church we'll be starting to journey through a programme on Sundays and in our Grace, Truth and Life (GTL) Groups that's all about wellbeing. But what is wellbeing and why is it so important to us as Christians? Wellbeing is extremely topical right now. So many in the media have an opinion about it, and it's being acclaimed as top priority for any who want to be in tune with the trials of our current times.

Reflecting on Jesus' words of comfort to His first hearers, we realise that He very much wanted them to attend to their own needs – especially their own need for refreshment with Him – so that they could serve others well in His Name.

Jesus said, and we read in Matthew 11: 28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Eugene Petersen's *The Message Bible* phrases this as: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real

rest. Walk with me and work with me watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

As we consider the impact of past almost 10 months of the Covid 19 pandemic, we can easily acknowledge that many around us – maybe us too – are tired of it all. We need to be replenished in every way, making sure that the foundation for us to be continually remade for each new week is God's Spirit.



From the end of January until Easter we'll be exploring the below aspects of wellbeing in order to help ensure that we're able to continue persevering through the challenges of the pandemic whilst attending our ours and one another's needs: -

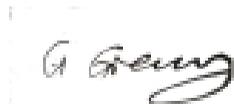
- Physical
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Relational
- Financial
- Vocational

Alongside this exploration and reflection, we'll be learning more about ourselves as well as about St James' and Brownhills, and also Holy

Trinity and Clayhanger's context, as the Spirit leads us. Serving for and with you as your vicar I am wholly confident in God that the time we're living in isn't at all a time in which life is on hold. It's a time God can use mightily to make us channels of His love to those of our church family and the wider communities of Brownhills and Clayhanger. It's for that reason that this programme all about wellbeing is going to be formational for us as we continue the journey together.

In these weeks until our Wellbeing Programme begins, I'd like to encourage each of you to start thinking about these six aspects of wellbeing. Start talking to God about them in your private prayer times and perhaps also as part of your prayer times with others. Richard Foster wrote in his book *Celebration of Discipline* that 'to pray is to change. All who have walked with God have viewed prayer as the main business of their lives'. Please make a commitment to God to make all we do to learn and grow together in 2021 built upon this foundation of prayer.

With love, prayer & every blessing in our Saviour,



Rev'd Gayle

Doing housework can help you live longer

If you spend half an hour a day tidying the house, going up and down your stairs, and doing household chores, you are reducing the risk of an early death.

So says recent guidance from the World Health Organisation, as it urges people to maintain regular moderate exercise on a daily basis, of up to at least 150 minutes a week. It also recommends vigorous exercise of at least 75 minutes a week.

The WHO recommendation was published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, and is part of the new global guidelines on physical activity.

WHO also warned that those who stay sedentary for 10 or more hours on a regular basis will have a "significantly heightened risk of death."

Where do we go from here?

Perhaps this was a question the Wise Men asked after seeing the infant Jesus. They had come from a distant land to Jerusalem. They had followed a star and expected to see a royal child. Now in Bethlehem, they saw things differently. No doubt, Mary and Joseph shared with these men their recent experiences and knew God was with them. Now the Magi had to have eyes of faith to recognise that this child was God in the flesh.

On 6th January many churches will celebrate Epiphany. On this day we remember the Eastern Men bringing their gifts to Jesus. The word 'epiphany' describes their 'revelation' or 'insight' that this was no ordinary baby. Who could they tell? Not King Herod. They had a dream warning them to return home a different way.

Their return to familiar surroundings was going to be different. They couldn't be silent about what they had experienced. Their lives were now changed. On returning home they faced new circumstances and challenges.

Doesn't this sound a bit familiar to us today? The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all of us in one way or another. Where do we go from here? We have celebrated our Lord's birth, but now we are returning to our previous activities. The festive break is over, and we are returning to changed, very difficult circumstances.

We go into a New Year that is so different from this time last year. While we might be downcast with all the upsets around us, there is one thing that has not changed.

It is almighty God! He is our rock. We can look to Him in this world of confusion and uncertainty. Perhaps, from now on, we shall be worshipping and serving Him in different ways. So, with the challenges that lie ahead, let's continually seek His guidance.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

I know where I am. I've been lost here before. - Anon

Readings for January

The readings are the ones we will use in church and online.

3rd January 2021 – Morning Service -
Ephesians 1 v 3–14 & John 1 v 1–18

10th January 2021 – Morning Service -
Genesis 1 v 1–5 & Mark 1 v 4–11

17th January 2021 – Morning Service -
1 Samuel 3 v 1–10 & John 1 v 43–end

17th January 2021 – Evening Service -
Psalm 145 & Isaiah 62 v 1–5

24th January 2021 – Morning Service -
Psalm 33 & John 3 v 16–21

24th January 2021 – Morning Service -
Psalm 33 & John 3 v 16–21

31st January 2021 – Morning Service -
TBA

*In His love He clothes us, enfolds us and embraces us; that
tender love completely surrounds us, never to leave us. As I saw
He is everything that is good. - Julian of Norwich*

Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Even nowadays, hiding away in remote parishes, there are still some colourful clergy about. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of-All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an Evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in parish life.

On how to deal with your church's correspondence

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

You may have had several years of intensive training on biblical interpretation, preaching and church history, but that doesn't cover the really important matters in parish life: how to evade disgruntled parishioners, run a brisk Summer Fete and, in your case at present, deal with correspondence, either by letter or email.

My regular practice, which I recommend to you as a New Year Resolution, is to read all the letters/emails you receive and then discard them. If the matter is truly important, you will receive a second message, to which you respond; more likely, the sender will either have forgotten all about his first letter/email after the second month or will write to some other cleric instead. In either case, you will be saved a great deal of trouble.

You only need two folders for your filing system, either for post or emails. The first is for complaints; they are to be filed and ignored, no matter how many duplicates you are sent. Should you be confronted personally, you simply say that the matter has been passed on to the bishop. Those

truly dogged complainants who pursue the matter will eventually receive an episcopal reply saying he knows nothing of the matter, for which you then blame the postal system/ spammed email. After letters and emails have ricocheted round the country for many months, the person complaining will either have lost energy to pursue the matter, or the will to live.

The second file receives all other correspondence/ emails chronologically. The earliest letters and emails will be at the bottom of the pile and the most recent on the top. In my experience, the postal file only needs attention when it reaches a height of about two feet and becomes unstable. The practice then is to discard the lower six inches and allow it to continue its steady growth. If the stack is kept in the church vestry, then mice usually attend to the papers on the bottom of the pile.

Sadly, your own church, with its electronic systems for filing, sorting and retrieving correspondence and with your parish secretaries, removes all of these blessings at a stroke. You have therefore no excuses for not dealing instantly with every note that comes your way. As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

May I also remind you that not even St Paul, that unflagging letter-writer, ever ended one of his letters with a request for a prompt reply. Need I say more?

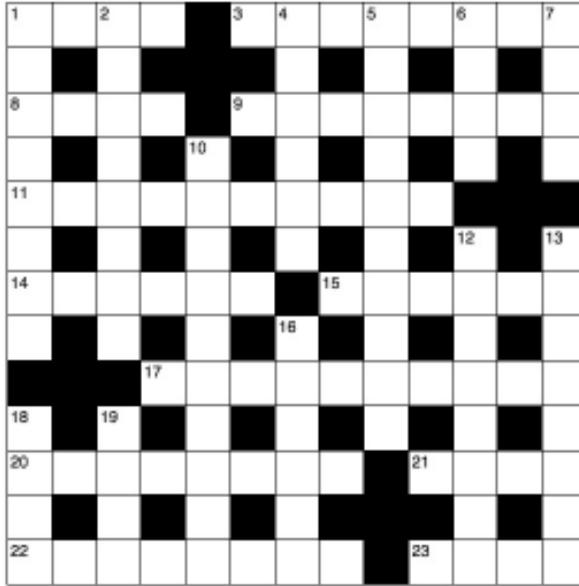
Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Always remember . . .

There are no strangers in our church –
just friends you haven't met

January



Crossword

Across

- 1 'Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a – began to crow' (John 18:27) (4)
3 Fetters (Job 33:11) (8)
8 Perform on a musical instrument (1 Samuel 16:23) (4)
9 Paul describes it as 'the third heaven' (2 Corinthians 12:24) (8)
11 Loyally (Deuteronomy 11:13) (10)
14 Hens? Me? (anag.) (6)
15 Not visible (Matthew 6:6) (6)
17 Predicted site of the final great battle (Revelation 16:16) (10)
20 Jacob's youngest son (Genesis 35:18) (8)
21 One of Zophar's eleven sons (1 Chronicles 7:36) (4)
22 For example, London, Paris, Rome (8)
23 United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (1,1,1,1)

Down

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

How many more waves?

As the days are dark, and winter still stretches ahead, many of us find the prospect of more restrictions for months to come even harder than when we first went into lockdown.

After nine months of coronavirus, we are emotionally drained. We are financially drained. We are lonely, depressed, frightened, and facing deep uncertainty, from job losses to health problems to relationship breakdown. We are running out of steam, and the virus is still going strong.

There is a strong parallel in all this with the ancient book of Job and his experience of loss and pain. Like Job, we are discovering that we are not always entitled to health, wealth, and happiness; and like Job our suffering inexplicably goes on and on. Like the irritating moralising of Job's comforters, the constant critique of the media only seems to make things worse. And, like Job, our minds are incapable of totally grasping the meaning of all this suffering. We need hope.

Job was deprived of everything, yet even in his despair he never lost his belief that God was there. Occasionally an indestructible hope burst forth like a ray of light in the darkness of his pain. "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God." (Job 19:26).

But the truly transformative moment for Job came when, instead of seeing his situation in front of God, he finally saw *God in front of his situation*. Then, even in the intensity of his suffering, the greatness of the Almighty eclipsed the problem. That is the revelation we need.

In this sad and weary time lament is therapeutic, and we can be completely real with our Father in Heaven. Yet in our lament, the path to rekindling true hope lies in the possibility of focusing on the character and immensity of God. Greater is He that is in us than the pandemic that is in the world.

Join in with the ancient words of Psalm 42: *'Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Saviour and my God.'*

Prayers & Poems

HAPPY NEW YEAR

(An acrostic poem where the first letter of each line spells out the title of the poem)

Heaven's gift of another year
As the old departs and the new is born,
Plans for a future and a hope
Preparing us for each new dawn.

Yesterday has gone forever,
New days and ventures lie ahead,
Even darkness turns to light
When we make the Lord our head.

Yielding to the Holy Spirit
Ever mindful that He's there,
As we live our lives before Him
Rejoicing in His loving care.

By Megan Carter

A New Year's resolution-prayer - following in His footsteps

Almighty eternal, just and merciful God, grant us the desire to do only what pleases you, and the strength to do only what you command. Cleanse our souls, enlighten our minds, and inflame our hearts with your Holy Spirit, that we may follow in the footsteps of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

St Francis of Assisi (1182 – 1226)

Giving gifts of HOPE

When Angie Godsell's husband died she had an idea, which she says, "I couldn't shake off."

She explained, "I sadly lost my husband, after a long illness with vascular dementia, at the end of February. I was looking for a way to commemorate his life, when I heard about the booklet *Hope in Uncertain Times*.

"I ordered 25 initially, but then was so struck by the presentation and clear Christian message, that I thought it would be brilliant if every home in the parish I live in, could receive a copy."

Having shared the idea with friends "in case it was one of my mad ideas, and so they could pray about it too." Angie says she was "really excited to be able to do something in memory of Ken that has the potential to give real life to those who receive it".

She ordered 1,000 copies of the booklet and had labels printed to put on inside front cover with a personal message explaining that the gift was to commemorate Ken's life, "sharing the message, which was so central to his life".

Angie attends St Giles Church in Bredon, near Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire and has bought the booklets to be delivered in Bredon and also to homes in the surrounding villages of Kinsham, Westmancote and Bredon's Norton. People in the village who usually give out Christian Aid envelopes, have agreed to help distribute the booklets.

Copies of *Hope in Uncertain Times* are available for just £1 each, 25-49 copies are 50p each and 50+ copies 30p each, from www.hopetogether.org.uk/shop

Christ is the great central fact in the world's history. To Him everything looks forward or backward. All the lines of history converge upon Him. All the great purposes of God culminate in Him. The great and most momentous fact which the history of the world records is the fact of His birth. - Charles H Spurgeon

Introducing 'The Wellbeing Journey'

Lockdown has led to the death of many of the hopes people have had... "but from a Christian point of view, there's a deeper hope," says Roger Bretherton, a clinical psychologist and university lecturer, who is one of the experts contributing to 'The Wellbeing Journey'.

This eight-part video series produced by HOPE Together and KingsGate Community Church, Peterborough, focuses on different aspects of wellbeing. The videos are presented by Simon Thomas (ex Sky Sports/ Blue Peter) and Joanna Abeyinka (CBeebies), with contributions from specialists like Roger Bretherton, bringing expertise from different fields alongside Bible teaching.

As well as the videos there is a book published by Waverley Abbey Resources, 'God's Plan for Your Wellbeing' by Dave Smith, which offers a 50-day devotional fuel for the journey.

Launching in January 2021, 'The Wellbeing Journey' aims to be accessible to people who would not yet call themselves Christians, as well as regular church-goers. Roger described it as 'bite-sized', meaning people can access different chunks of it as appropriate. "It's beautifully biblical," he said. "It integrates lots of spiritual material into the psychology. I love it as a resource and it's just my absolute delight to advise on it!"

Roger is convinced of the role of the church in supporting people's wellbeing. "Whole services in the NHS keep people out of hospital by being their friend, helping them decorate, making sure they eat, making sure they get their benefits so all those things we naturally do as Christians, the projects that many churches run, they do an enormous job of helping people with their wellbeing."

Roy Crowne, HOPE Together's executive director said, "At this time when so many in our nation are facing added psychological pressure, churches are in an ideal place to offer 'The Wellbeing Journey' to invite more people to experience the life to the full that Jesus offers."

Find out more at www.wellbeingjourney.org

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THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLE HAY

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by sharing the love of Jesus

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