

THE

December 2024 - February 2025

ELBOW

The Magazine of **Formby Methodist Church**



Peace
for all

From the Editor

As I write this, the first Sunday in Advent is just a few days away - and before too long 2024 will be over. And what a year it has been! See pp28,29 for some memories of a momentous year of commemoration and celebration at Elbow Lane.

But it hasn't been just about 150. The *Shoebox Express Bazaar*, for example, was a magnificent 'all hands on deck' event - and over 1000 shoeboxes are now en route to Ukraine (see p36). As always, a huge thank you to Andrew & Maureen and all the elves.

2024 has also been a year of consolidation within our new Circuit, and I think it is fair to say that we have settled in well - and been made to feel extremely welcome.

Sadly, however, we have lost several dear friends during the year, including Kath Walton, Joyce Orme, Don Levin, Sybil Hall, Alan Roberts, Susan Howden, Angela Tulley, Nicky Williams, Mary Tripp and Val Hawgood. We miss them all.

And so it will soon be Christmas! Indeed, as I write this, preparations are well underway for our second Christmas Tree Festival! As always, we will have a variety of services and events for everyone (see 16) as well as something a bit different (see back cover) so I hope you will be able to attend as many of them as possible. Everyone, young and not so young, will be most welcome at all our services and events - including Christingle & Cake and our Nativity Service.

As always, I am indebted to Graham Watts for another beautiful '*Elbow*' cover and to Helen for all her help and support in the production of the magazine and also her splendid '*Our News*'.

Thanks also to a group of members who all too often work, - and work hard - usually unseen, in the background but without whom our Church simply could not survive - our Property Committee.

Finally, may I thank everyone who has helped in so many different ways to make 2024 such a successful and memorable year in the history of Elbow Lane Methodist Church, and wish you all a truly Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year.

SERVICES AT ELBOW LANE

(see p16 for our special Christmas Services)

1 Dec, 10.30	Toy Service	Mr Nigel Mawdsley
8 Dec, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
15 Dec, 10.30	Morning Service	Mrs Shirley Potts
22 Dec, 10.30	Morning Service	Mrs Jean McKenna
22 Dec, 4.30	Carol Service	Rev Sheila Prest
25 Dec, 10.30	Christmas Day Service	Rev Sheila Prest
29 Dec, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Derek Bowker
5 Jan, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
12 Jan, 10.30	Morning Service	TBA
19 Jan, 10.30	Morning Service	Mrs Debs Attwater
19 Jan, 6.30	Evening Service	Rev Patrick Evans
26 Jan, 8.30	Holy Communion	Rev Derek Bowker
26 Jan, 10.30	Morning Service	Miss Lesley Goddard
2 Feb, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
9 Feb, 10.30	Morning Service	Mr Rodney Hoyle
16 Feb, 10.30	Morning Service	Mr J Clifford Hill
16 Feb, 6.30	Evening Service	M Richard Cowan
23 Feb, 11.00	Circuit Service	St Philip & St Paul with Wesley, Southport

A Celtic Invocation of Peace

*Deep peace, pure white of the moon to you;
 Deep peace, pure green of the grass to you;
 Deep peace, pure brown of the earth to you;
 Deep peace, pure grey of the dew to you;
 Deep peace, pure blue of the sky to you;
 Deep peace of the running wave to you!*

Minister's Letter

Hi All,

If there is a single word that describes what Christmas is all about, it's the little word **"JOY."** Several of our favourite carols mention it: *"Joy to the world, the Lord is come," "O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant," "Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies, with the angelic host proclaim, 'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'"*

I wonder how many of us feel completely joyful on Christmas morning? It's easy to feel joyful when you sing these wonderful songs but our life circumstances sometimes make it difficult always to feel joyful.

Part of our problem is that sometimes we've got the wrong idea about joy. We tend to connect it with always being happy. We think perhaps that joy depends only on our circumstances. However, you can't have real joy by frantically racing through the shops. In fact, that can be an excellent way to lose your joy!

Let's hear what it says in the Bible: *"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord'".*

One moment you're tending the sheep in the middle of the night, the next you're being scared out of your wits by an angelic choir. I don't know how delightful that is, but it's definitely unexpected. I'm sure that after the shock, there would have been exhilaration, amazement and joy in the magnitude of the occasion.

The angel comes with *"good news of great joy that will be for all the people."* What is this *"good news of great joy?"*

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

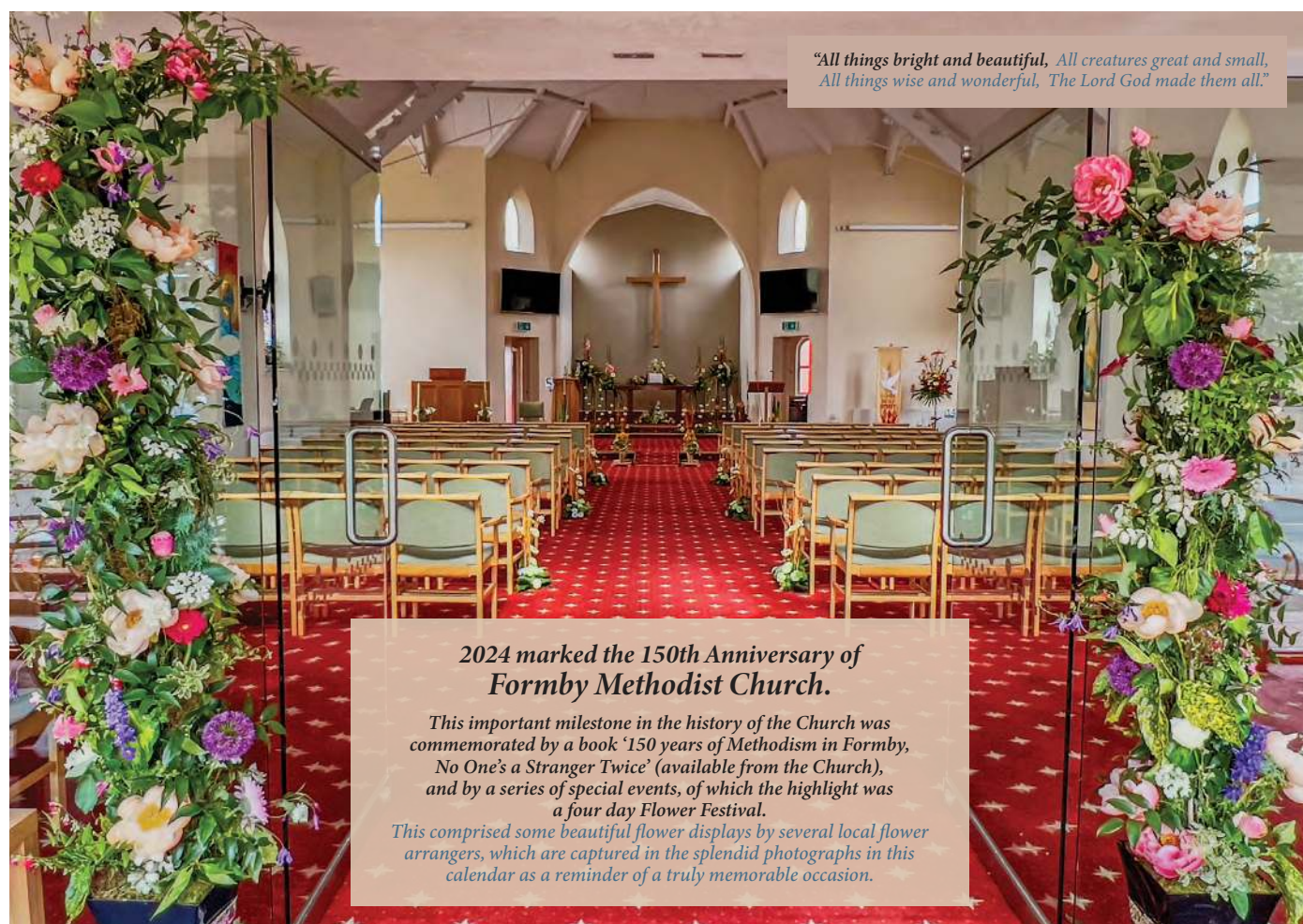
If you are looking for Christmas joy, I suggest that you can find it in those verses. For Jesus was born for us, to support us, to be present with us as we go about our daily lives. He will never forsake or condemn us

but always offers us an opportunity to share in the LOVE that He offers freely and allow us to respond to that LOVE by entering into an everlasting relationship with Him despite all our circumstances.

And as those shepherds were exhilarated at the news that first Christmas, may we also be prepared to be moved and exhilarated at the news this Christmas and experience real joy. Have a great Christmas!

Love and peace

Sheila



Our 2025 Church Calendar

I do hope you haven't bought your 2025 Calendar yet, because our Church Calendar has now arrived! Here is the inside cover as a taster. With some beautiful photos to bring back some memories of our wonderful Flower Festival, it's a blooming bargain at £5!!

Our Anniversary Banners

Irene and I felt that the celebration of **150 years of worship at Elbow Lane** called for a pair of new anniversary banners! So earlier this year we put on our thinking caps, cleared the kitchen table as our work bench, looked at our supply of fabrics and decided to create a companion pair of banners. At first sight they look identical but there are subtle variations to highlight the changing role of the church over time. **Spot the differences!**

Both banners have a date plaque 1874-2024, the outline shape of our building, the cross as the central focus of worship, the candle as the light of the world and the circular red logo of The Methodist Church. Both feature key words from the hymn '*All are welcome*' which jumped out to inspire us.*

The theme of the first banner is **WORSHIP** and we chose the words ***Hope, Faith and Love*** to represent traditional worship with the greatest of these as love. (*1 Corinthians 13 v13*). The figures are shown in prayer and praise and the love of God shown as a red heart encompassed within the bright bold golden lettering.

The theme of the second banner is **ALL ARE WELCOME** and we chose the words ***Serve and Share*** from the hymn as they place emphasis on the importance of us being the hands and feet of God. We need to be active in taking the love of God (seen here as the red heart symbol within the hands) into the community in caring and outreach. In this way we attempt to follow the example of Jesus and the mission of Conference by ensuring that all are welcome and that our church is alive and relevant perhaps for another 150 years?

* *Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

(Singing the Faith, 409)

Anne White and Irene Watts

WORSHIP
AT
FORMBY M.C.



FAITH

HOPE



1874-2024

ALL
ARE
WELCOME



SERVE

SHARE



1874-2024

Remembrance Sunday

Our Remembrance Sunday service, led by Rev Derek Bowker, was a moving occasion. We remembered those who died in war, and particularly the three members of our church - George Christophers, Harry Rimmer and Tommy Okell - who were killed during World War I. But we also remembered those who survived, but in many cases after the ordeal which they had been through, were never the same again.



One of our church members, Bob Jenions, was too young to serve in



World War II but was on active service during the Korean War just seven years later. As always, he wore his medals on Remembrance Sunday, and after the service he showed them to the young people and explained their significance.

*"Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they
shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion."*

(Dylan Thomas)

Robert Burns 1759 – 1796

This coming 25th January marks the anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns. In July 1786, following the publication of his *Book of Poems*, chiefly in the Scots dialect, he went to Edinburgh where he was proclaimed the '*Bard of Scotland*' - indeed, at the age of only 27, he had become the most famous man in Scotland.

At one of many society dinners where he was the guest of honour, he met Mrs Agnes McLehose, known to her friends as Nancy, and estranged from her Glasgow husband of ten years. The resulting relationship lasted for 12 months but as far as history tells us, was never consummated. They corresponded using the names Clarinda and Lysander, characters from a popular novel of the early 18th century, to protect Nancy's virtue and identity.

Their farewell produced arguably one of the greatest of all love songs, which Sir Walter Scott described as '*containing the essence of a thousand love tales*'.

Colin McLellan

AE FOND KISS

Ae fond kiss and then we sever!

Ae farewell and then forever!

Deep in heart wrung tears I'll pledge thee,

Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy:

Naething could resist my Nancy!

But to see her was to love her,

Love but her and love for ever.

Had we never loved sae kindly,

Had we never loved sae blindly'

Never met – or never parted –

We had ne'er been broken hearted.

Fare the weel thou first and fairest!

Fare thee weel thou best and dearest!

Thine be ilka joy and treasure every

Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure

The Story of a Carol

'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'

Charles Wesley

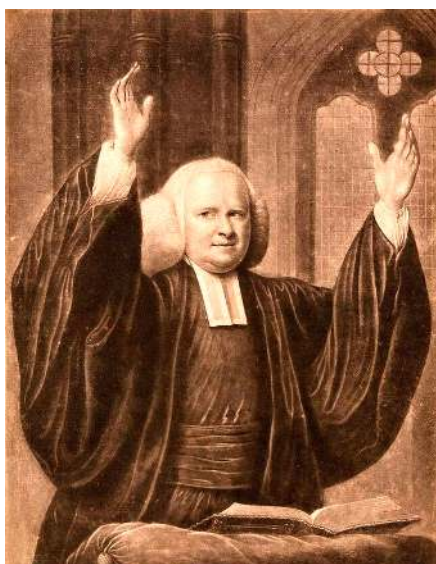
Hark the Herald Angels is one of the most Methodist of all carols - the words were written, in 1739, by none other than Charles Wesley. He based his carol, which tells of an angelic chorus singing praises to God, on the verse, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men*" (Luke 2:14).



Like his elder brother John, Charles was also a renowned preacher, but it is for his hymns - some 6,500 of them - that he is best remembered. '*Hark the Herald Angels*' was actually one of his earliest compositions. It was judged to be one of the so-called 'Great Four Anglican Hymns' (another of his hymns, '*Lo! He Comes With Clouds Descending*', was another of the four).

The carol's original form was actually very different to that which we know today - Wesley's original version was called '*Hymn for Christmas-Day*', and began with the words

*"Hark! how all the Welkin [heaven] rings,
Glory to the King of Kings".*



Over the years, various amendments were made, not least by another renowned Methodist, George Whitefield, to make them more up-to-date. It was Whitefield who changed the opening lines to the words with which we are familiar today:

*"Hark! The Herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King".*

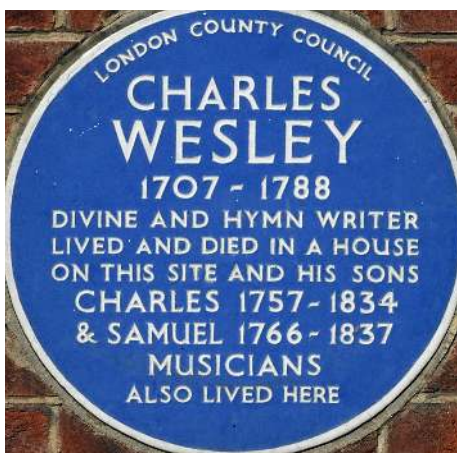
And in 1782 he adapted it further by adding a refrain to these same words.

For a century or so, Wesley's *'Hymn for Christmas Day'*, as it was first called, was sung, as he had instructed, to slow and solemn - indeed very gloomy - music. Only in the 1840s was the tune changed to the one with which we are so familiar today; it was adapted from one composed by none other than Felix Mendelssohn. The eminent German composer had written a cantata to commemorate the invention of movable type, and it is a tune from this cantata which was adapted by the English musician, William Hayman Cummings, organist at Waltham Abbey Church, to fit the lyrics of *'Hark! The Herald Angels Sing'*. The carol has also been sung to the tune of *'Christ the Lord is Risen Today'* and *'See the Conquering Hero Comes'* from Handel's *'Judas Maccabaeus'* (we know it as the tune for *'Thine Be the Glory'*).



Today, Wesley's carol - with both words and tune suitably modernised - is one of the most commonly sung of all carols, especially but by no means solely, on Christmas Day. And for many years it has been sung as the recessional hymn during the annual service of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College Chapel, Cambridge. The final verse:

*"Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the sun of righteousness!
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give the second birth"*



particularly lends itself to a glorious and memorable descant.

Like his brother, Charles Wesley had a long and busy life. He died in 1788 at the age of 80. Although a lifelong Methodist, on his deathbed he told his local rector that he wanted to die a member of the Church of England and to be buried, as indeed he was, in the churchyard of St

Marylebone Parish Church.

Alastair

❄️ Eco News ❄️



Christmas card display – in December we will display your single Christmas cards, with greetings, to all your friends at church. This is growing in popularity and makes an attractive display! If you are unsure how to add a card to the display in the church porch, please ask me, Jane Gillies or Irene Watts. Many heartfelt and special greetings are written in these cards, so please read them.



Recycling - gift wrap and cards that contain foil, plastic or glitter are not recyclable (wrap that contains plastic unfolds when scrunched). More 'eco-friendly' options are products made from paper or card that is recycled or has FSC approval. FSC certification ensures that products come from responsibly managed forests.



Charity gift cards are increasing in popularity as alternative Christmas presents. Most options are 'online' but some charities have them in their shops. The gift card shows what help will be given to those across the world less fortunate than us. The gifts range from 'a pair of chickens' which helps to start a business selling eggs to a pack of emergency essentials for those hit by natural disasters or war.



Feed the birds - As a family we often live on Christmas leftovers for several days! Garden birds can also enjoy some of our leftovers such as Christmas pudding, Christmas cake and roast potatoes cut into bite-sized chunks. Grated mild cheese, crushed or crumbled unsalted nuts, apples and soaked dried fruit will also be a treat.

However, don't put out salty food and chocolate as they are bad for birds. Hard fat balls are great but don't put out leftover fat from your roasting tin as it remains soft and may get smeared on their feathers, damaging them and making it difficult to fly.' Bread will expand in a bird's stomach and contains very few nutrients. It is important that birds are fed high-energy food during winter so although a few crumbs are OK large pieces of leftover bread will fill them leaving little room for anything else.

It's good to put out water for birds too, particularly when it is very cold and usual water sources might be frozen. The most important thing is to keep it clean and to put out fresh water every day.



Eco Coffee Morning - Sat 11 Jan, 10.30 - 12.30 in the Church hall. Free admission - come and enjoy a cuppa and a chat. There will be a cake and a White Elephant stall. Any donations for our White Elephant stall gladly received (nearly new or new items preferred). We will put out a box for donations in early January.



The Big Garden Birdwatch - 24-26 Jan is an opportunity to spend a relaxing hour noticing the birds in your garden or nearest green space. Register online at www.rspb.org.uk.

Finally, and not least, a very Happy Christmas and New Year to you all. Thank you.

Jenny Wallbanks

Hedgehog extinction fears grow as population plummets

The status of hedgehogs in western Europe has recently been downgraded to 'near threatened', according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. If European numbers decline any farther, hedgehogs will be listed as being at risk of extinction. Numbers have shrunk in more than half the countries where hedgehogs live – including the UK, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. Some national declines have been as much as 33%.

Since 2000 the rural population of hedgehogs in the UK has fallen by 75%, although city-dwelling hedgehogs are doing a bit better. But the combined pressures of intensive agriculture, domestic pesticides, garden strimmers, busy roads and urban development have taken their toll. 12% of UK hedgehogs die every year just as roadkill.

Now a national hedgehog conservation strategy has been launched by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS).

(from the Parish Pump)

Christmas at Elbow Lane

Thursday 5 December, 7.30

A Christmas Tapestry

(see back cover for details)

Saturday 14 December, 4.30

Christingle & Cake

Sunday 22 December, 4.30

Carol Service

Tuesday 24 December, 4.30

Family Nativity Service

Wednesday 25 December, 10.30

Christmas Day Family Service

EVERYONE IS VERY WELCOME!



Our Christmas elves (aka the Craft Group) have been busy. These are some examples of their work for sale at our Christmas Fair

Signs of the Times!

Elbow Lane now has its own QR code for donations!

It is located in the Church porch. Just use your phone camera to take a photo and you will be directed to our Church Account using the provider Dona.

Unfortunately, however, it's not contactless so you will still need to input your Credit or Debit Card details. But at least it is an alternative to cash donations!



*We don't sing carols no more...
you 'ave to listen to 'em off me iPod!*

Eglantyne Jebb

founder of 'Save the Children'

Here is the story of a modern-day saint who has saved literally millions of lives - yet few people would be familiar with her name.

Eglantyne Jebb did not begin as an obvious 'mover and shaker' of people.



Born in Shropshire in 1876, she grew up in Ellesmere, studied history at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, taught at Marlborough, and then resigned as she was not physically robust. She moved to live with her mother in Cambridge where, as a Christian, with a passion for social concerns, she was driven to take action.

In 1906 she published some research on the poverty she had found in Cambridge. Then in 1912 the Balkan Wars broke out, and Eglantyne left for Macedonia. Her months among the refugees led her to decide that long-term constructive aid was more effective than short-term handouts.

The prolonged Allied blockade on Germany and Austria-Hungary during World War I horrified her, and even after the Armistice, millions of civilians, especially children, were still suffering from starvation. So in 1919 she and her sister Dorothy Buxton founded the 'Fight the Famine' Council, aiming to end the blockade and establish a League of Nations.

One day during a rally in Trafalgar Square, Eglantyne was arrested for distributing a leaflet showing starving children which read: "*Our blockade has caused this – millions of children are starving to death.*" She ended up in court and was fined, but the judge was so impressed with her commitment to children that he himself paid her fine. His money became the first donation to 'Save the Children', the sisters' new charity.

The charity was officially launched in May 1919, with the aim of helping the starving civilians of central Europe. It raised £400,000 in that first year alone. And when in 1921 Russia was facing famine, 'Save the Children'

chartered a cargo ship, the *SS Torcello*, to carry 600 tons of lifesaving food and medical supplies to Russia – saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

By 1922 ‘Save the Children’ had become one of Britain’s biggest charities. Eglantyne’s ‘Declaration of the Rights of the Child’, written in 1923, was adopted by the League of Nations. The present-day UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is derived from it.



Memorial Plaque in Geneva

But ten years of running ‘Save the Children’ had sapped Eglantyne’s fragile strength, and she died in Geneva in 1928, aged only 52.

The Challenges of Christmas

Christmas is a great time of year, but it’s not without its challenges!

The challenge of over-indulging

We all remember the episode of the Vicar of Dibley, where she had to consume four Christmas dinners! Christmas is a time when we usually eat and drink far too much, the average person gaining six pounds in weight! But Christmas is not simply about gaining weight, but losing what weighs us down. ‘*Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*’ (1 Peter 5:7). Whatever your concerns or worries this Christmas, bring them to God.

The challenge of overspending

In the rush to buy Christmas cards, one woman bought a pack of 50 identical cards. Without reading the verse, she hastily signed and sent them off, except for one. A few days later she read the message: ‘*This card is just to say a little gift is on the way.*’ Christmas is not about getting into debt, but God getting us out of debt. He spent exactly what was needed on the first Christmas night: ‘*You are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.*’ (Matthew 1:21).

The challenge is over too quickly

Christmas doesn’t last very long, yet the effect of the first Christmas is long-lasting. ‘*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*’ (John 3:16). Jesus has come to bring us life in all its fullness, both for now and all eternity.

How do we face the challenges of Christmas? In the immortal words of Christina Rossetti’s beautiful carol, ‘*Yet what I can, I give Him - give my heart.*’

(from the Parish Pump)

The Other Side of Christmas

The Everlasting Turkey

On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me
I've bought a big fresh turkey and a proper Christmas tree.
On the second day of Christmas much laughter could be heard
As we tucked into our turkey – a most delicious bird.
On the third day of Christmas people came from just next door,
The turkey tasted just as good as it had done before.
On the fourth day of Christmas came relations young and old
We finished up the Christmas pud and had the turkey cold.
On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the snowflakes scurried,
But we were nice and warm inside, and had the turkey curried.
On the sixth day of Christmas, the Christmas spirit died.
The children fought and bickered – we had the turkey rissoles fried.
On the seventh day of Christmas my true love he did wince
When he sat down at table - and was offered turkey mince.
On the eighth day of Christmas, the dog had run for shelter,
For he'd seen our turkey pancakes and the glass of alka-seltzer.
On the ninth day of Christmas, by lunchtime dad was blotto,
He knew that bird was back again, this time as a risotto.
On the tenth day of Christmas we were drinking home-made brew,
Anything to help us face that steaming turkey stew.
On the eleventh day of Christmas our lovely tree was moulting,
And with chilli, soy and oyster sauce, the turkey was revolting.
On the twelfth day of Christmas we had smiles back on our lips,
The guests had gone, the turkey too – WE DINED ON FISH AND CHIPS.
(from the Parish Pump)

'My brother heard a woman on the bus say, as the bus passed a church with a crib outside it, "Oh Lord! They bring religion into everything. Look – they're even dragging it into Christmas now!"' (C S Lewis)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in 36 Languages!

Apache (Western) - *Gozhqq Keshmish*

Arabic - *I'D Miilad Said ous Sana Saida*

Croatian - *Sretan Bozic*

Danish - *Glædelig Jul og godt nytår*

Farsi - *Sal-e no mubarak*

French - *Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!*

German - *Fröhliche Weihnachten und ein glückliches Neues Jahr!*

Greek - *Kala Christougenna Ki'eftihismenos O Kenourios*

Chronos Hawaiian - *Mele Kalikimaka & Hauoli Makahiki Hou*

Hebrew - *Mo'adim Lesimkha. Shanah Tova*

Hindi - *Shubh Naya Baras*

Iraqi - *Idah Saidan Wa Sanah Jadidah*

Irish - *Nollaig Shona Dhuit*

Italian - *Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo*

Japanese - *Shinnen omedeto. Kurisumasu Omedeto*

Korean - *Sung Tan Chuk Ha*

Kyrghyz - *Jangl jllIngIz guttuu bolsun!*

Latin - *Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*

Maori - *Kia orana e kia manuia rava i teia Kiritimeti e te Mataiti Ou*

Mongolian - *Zul saryn bolon shine ony mend devshuulye*

Nepali - *krist Yesu Ko Shuva Janma Utsav Ko Upalaxhma Hardik Shuva & Naya*

Barsa Ko harkik Shuvakamana

Norwegian/Nynorsk - *Eg ynskjer hermed Dykk alle ein God Jul og Godt Nyttår*

Polish - *Wesolych Swiat i Szczesliwego Nowego Roku*

Russian - *Pozdrevlyayu s prazdnikom Rozhdestva i s Novim Godom*

Samoan - *Ia manuia le Kilisimasi ma le tausaga fou*

Sinh - *Chuc Mung Tan Nien*

Somali - *ciid wanaagsan iyo sanad cusub oo fiican*

Spanish - *Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo*

Sudanese - *Wilujeng Natal Sareng Warsa Enggal*

Swedish - *God Jul och Gott Nytt År*

Tagalog - *Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon*

Tahitian - *Ia ora i te Noere e ia ora na i te matahiti 'api*

Thai - *Suksan Wan Christmas lae Sawadee Pee Mai*

Ukrainian - *Veseloho Vam Rizdva i Shchastlyvoho Novoho Roku!*

Vietnamese - *Chuc Mung Giang*

Welsh - *Nadolig Llawen a Blwydden Newydd dda*

Christmas throughout the Christian World

For nearly four weeks leading up to Christmas Christians recognise Advent. It is a time of spiritual preparation. 'Coming' refers to Jesus' first coming as a baby, but it also looks forward to a day when Jesus is expected to return in triumph at his 'second coming'.

Originally Christians marked Advent as a time when they refrained from excessive eating and drinking - until Christmas Day. Christmas celebrations continued until Epiphany (6 January). Today, however, Advent is more likely to be associated with accelerating festivity, with the days following Christmas something of an anti-climax until '*twelfth night*', when decorations are removed. Many Christians worldwide now try to revive the spirit of Advent by setting aside time to pray.

Christmas Day is celebrated as the anniversary of Jesus' birth, although the actual date is unknown. Most Christians celebrate it on 25th December, but the Orthodox Church (the ancient churches in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia) follows a different calendar and celebrates on 7th January. Many Christians ensure that they take communion on Christmas Day - for many, it is the first thing they do at midnight.

Epiphany, meaning '*the appearance*', is when Christians remember the visit of wise men (magi) to Jesus, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Christmas tradition of exchanging gifts originally honoured these men, the first Gentiles to worship Jesus. It is a reminder that in Jesus, God was giving Himself for the benefit of the entire world.

Orthodox Christians use this day to recall the baptism of Jesus as a grown man, when He identified Himself with human beings in all their need - they pray for God's blessing on rivers, wells and water sources.

Christmas should not be an escapist festival for Christians. Boxing Day was historically marked as the feast of St Stephen - the first man to be put to death rather than give up his belief that Jesus was God. And two days later a day remembering the '*Massacre of the Innocents*' recalls Herod's attempt to destroy Jesus by killing all male babies in Bethlehem. And so Christians have the opportunity to pray for children today who suffer as a result of the actions of adults. *(from the Parish Pump)*

Remembering the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004

The dreadful flooding in Spain is a reminder of Boxing Day 20 years ago, when one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history occurred. The Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami killed over 230,000 people in 14 countries - a massive undersea earthquake near Sumatra caused a devastating tsunami that swamped coastal areas in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and East Africa.

Waves generated by the earthquake and travelling at up to 500mph were up to 50ft high in places. These massive surges of water swept away buildings and people, and some effects were felt as far away as Somalia on the east coast of Africa, nearly 2,800 miles (and seven hours for the waves) west of the epicentre. Nearer coastlines were hit in as little as 15 minutes. Aftershocks continued to shake the region daily for up to four months after the original earthquake.

The cost in lives and damage was so extensive because, as this was not a prime area for such events, detection and warning systems were relatively primitive. Scientific monitoring and warning plans, led by Australia, have since been considerably improved, but sadly the unpredictability of tsunamis remains a major problem.

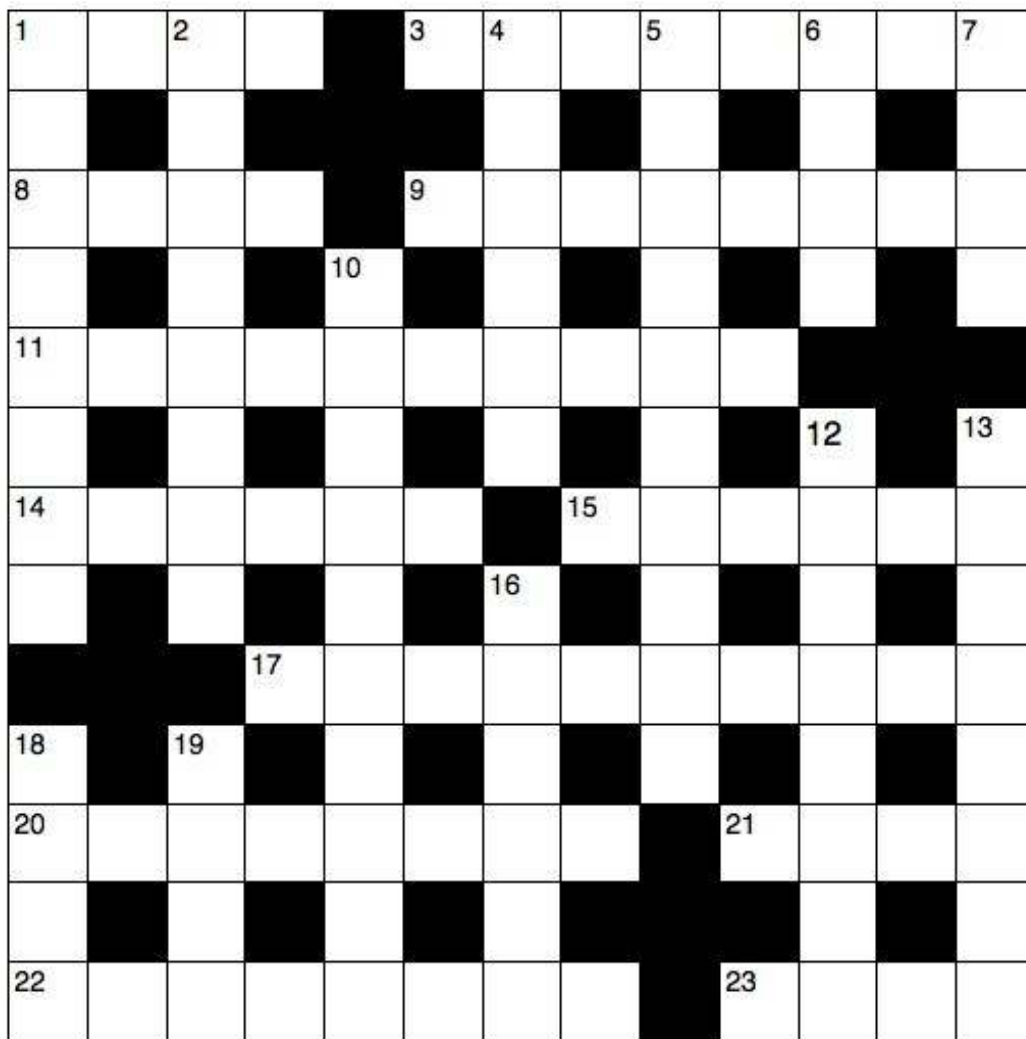
(from the Parish Pump)

FLOWER ROTA

5 Jan	Irene Watts	Margaret
12 Jan	Ivy Chapple & Colin McLennan	Margaret
19 Jan	Vicky & Bob Jenions	Trish
26 Jan	Margaret Carleton	Trish
2 Feb	Bill Roberts	Vicky
9 Feb	Maureen & Andrew May	Vicky
16 Feb	Phil & Eileen Morgan & Janet Kemp	Margaret
23 Feb	Lynda & Steve Gee	Margaret
2 Mar	Iola Douglas	Trish
9 Mar	Annette & Michel Lempereur	Trish

Please put your donation in the envelope provided, sign it and whether you can gift aid your donation, then give it to the flower arranger as listed above. Thank you.

Vicky (873317)



Across

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
 9 Castigated for dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)

- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)
 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "*I don't need you*"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)

Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
 4 'The tax collector beat his — and said, "*God have mercy on me,*"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
 16 Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)

(Answers on p38)

Harvest Sunday, 22nd September



Good afternoon
Here at Compassion Acts, we would like to Thank You for supporting our charity with regular donations. You have donated **123kg** of food items for Harvest 2024. We couldn't do what we do without the support from the community. Thank you again for your continued support 😊
Kindest Regards
Compassion Acts Team

China has been very much in the news of late, with our Prime Minister holding talks with their President. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering what life is like for Christians there. Ed

How China is increasing Persecution of Christians

China has been trying to tighten its grip on Christians in China through a programme of 'Sinicization', a policy to compel churches to adopt the atheist ideology of the Communist Party.

A recent conference was attended by state-appointed pastors of the government-controlled Three Self Church. It called for Christianity with a Communist core to be exported around the world, and concluded with a rallying cry to 'change the face of world Christianity'.

So, what does this hybrid of Communism and Christianity look like in China itself? The official policy of Sinicization, of state assimilation and control, has led to a ban on online religious content and the tearing down of more than a thousand crosses from official churches. Pastors have been imprisoned, along with Chinese lawyers who try to defend their legal right to display the cross of Christ on their buildings.

The Communist Party has insisted that pictures of Mao and President Xi Jinping are displayed in churches and demanded recently that a large hammer and sickle be put up beside a church sign in Zhejiang province. Pastors who rock the boat are put under surveillance, singled out for harassment, and accused of extremism. Some who take up offerings have been arrested for fraud or illegal business operations.

The current wave of persecution in China has been described as the most severe since the Cultural Revolution. Yet China watchers point out that thousands of Chinese Christians each year express what they think of Sinicization by voting with their feet to leave the Three Self Church. There is an exodus to the unofficial house churches.

Bob Fu, a partner of UK-based Release International, says that, despite worsening persecution, the church is growing: he estimates that the number of Christians in China today exceeds at 100 million."

(from the Parish Pump)



Well, it's been quite a year! See over for some memories of a truly memorable celebration of 150 years!

It all began in November last year with our first ever Christmas Tree Festival. Then things really got underway in March, with a talk by Joan Rimmer and our own Stephen Gerrard, followed by a wonderful concert by G:Force Gospel Choir. My history of our church, 'No One's a Stranger Twice', was published in March. And the last day was Easter Sunday, when our service was led by our dear friend, the then Chair of District, Rev Dr Sheryl Anderson.

In April the Hoghton Players performed 'The Gilbert & Sullivan Story', and in May we were privileged to welcome Ian Tracey (Liverpool Cathedral Organist) and Jack Watson (tenor).

June was a memorable month, with a wonderful Flower Festival. And the month ended with a splendid concert by the Sefton Ladies Choir.

Our 150th Anniversary Service in July was led by the Vice President of Conference and Sheryl Anderson, followed by a splendid lunch.

Our celebrations resumed after the summer when we welcomed back Rev David Somerville to lead our service commemorating the 150th anniversary of the first service held at Elbow Lane, followed by the Aughton Male Voice Choir in concert. Now the wheel has turned full circle, with a second Christmas Tree Festival. And our final event will be on 5 December - a Christmas Tapestry (see back cover).

I can honestly say that every event has been highly successful in every sense. For that I must give my sincere thanks to so many of the congregation for their help and support through the year. But most of all to the 150 Group - Bill, Sarah, Tim, Trevor & Vicky - for all their hard work, support and friendship We've certainly worked hard but it's been great fun and well worth it.

So all good things come to an end - or do they?!!! See p30.

Alastair

IT ALL HAPPENED AT



ELBOW LANE IN 2024!



'REJOICE!'
Flower Festival

Plus

150Quiz

1 point for each
question!

Th
Sunday



Formby Methodist Church
Elbow Lane, L37 4AF



Our 150 celebrations are nearly over - or are they?!

We in the 150 Group feel that, in view of the outstanding success of our commemorative events during 2024, it would be a great shame not to continue the momentum, albeit on a very reduced scale. Indeed, I have already had enquiries from several of our 2024 performers about the possibility of returning in 2025!

There will definitely **not** be another Flower Festival in 2025! However, one extremely popular choir from 2024 has already accepted our invitation to return in 2025 and a definite date has been confirmed. So here is an important date for your diaries:

Tuesday 4 March 2025
G: Force Gospel Choir

Hopefully there will be one or two more dates to follow in due course.

LADIES FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

December

- 5 Visit from Woodlands School - held in Church
- 12 Christmas Celebration
- 19 No Meeting

January

- 9 Rev Sheila Prest
- 16 Steve Gerrard - Memories of Sefton Church, Formby
- 23 Merseyside and Cheshire Blood Bikes
- 30 Members Afternoon

February

- 6 Rev Ernie and Mrs Nicky Grimshaw

Our Meetings are every Thursday afternoon from 2.00pm. We invite and welcome anyone who would like to join us when able to attend.

Irene Watts (876219)

The Colours of Christmas



A Beautiful Colourful Nativity Scene from Katowice, Poland

Green: Evergreen plants like holly, ivy and mistletoe were used for thousands of years to decorate buildings during the long dark winters. The Romans exchanged evergreen branches in January to wish each other good luck. The ancient Egyptians brought palm branches into their home during the mid-winter festivals.

Red is the colour of holly berries, and it reminded people of Jesus' blood when He died on the cross. Red is also the colour of bishops' robes, which is how St Nicholas came to be portrayed wearing red.

Gold is the colour of the sun and light. It was the present of one of the Wise Men, and traditionally, the colour of the star over Bethlehem.

White represents purity and peace. It is also the colour of the altar cloth at Christmas.

Blue is the colour of Mary's robe, and also of the sky and heaven.

(from the Parish Pump)

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve has its own customs, the most popular of which is going to Midnight Mass, or the Christ-Mas. This is the only Mass of the year that is allowed to start after sunset. In Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy and Poland, Midnight Mass is in fact the most important church service of the entire Christmas season, and many people traditionally fast beforehand. In other countries, such as Belgium and Denmark, people dine during the evening, and then go on to the Midnight Service.

In Germany, Sweden and Portugal, the custom is to exchange presents on Christmas Eve. But in Serbia and Slovakia, the Christmas tree is not even brought into the house and decorated until Christmas Eve.



A Traditional Nativity Scene from Slovakia

And in many countries, Yule logs were traditionally lit on Christmas Eve from the previous year's log, then burned non-stop until 12th Night (6th January). Any greenery such as holly, ivy or mistletoe could not be brought into the house until Christmas Eve.

(from the Parish Pump)

Methodist World Mission and Mission In Britain Funds

Another year of generosity from the many givers via mission boxes to the above funds. The overall amount was once again over £600, and if the church is able to give their usual £500 contribution when the state of finances is reviewed in January, this will make another where a £1100 plus figure can be passed on. Details are as follows:

World Mission Fund

6 months to March 2024	£139.95
6 months to Sept 2024	£90.59
Total for the year	<u>£230.54</u>

Mission in Britain Fund

6 months to March 2024	£154.98
6 months to Sept 2024	£223.48
Total for the year	<u>£378.46</u>

Our overall contributions over the last 10 years amount to £9137.03 which after a year out because of Covid means a significant amount - over £1000 per year - has been sent to very many worthy causes via the above funds. Thank you on behalf of so many people in need. If you would like to be a new giver please contact me or a Steward and I will gladly ensure you are given a box. Every little helps!

However, after 10 years holding my position of Methodist Mission Enabler I am now looking for someone who might like to succeed me and thus ensure this valuable and satisfying position is secured in the future. It is not too onerous and mainly revolves around just a busy day or two twice a year. Please feel free to ask me for more details. Thank you so much.

Brian Ashworth

“Let us give according to our incomes lest God make our incomes to match our gifts” (Anon)

“The world provides enough for every man’s need but not for every man’s greed” (Mahatma Gandhi)

New Year Quiz 2024

(from the Parish Pump, so don't blame me! Ed)

1. This year was a Leap Year. Were 1900 and 2000 Leap Years?
2. What is Whamaggedon?
3. Alan Bates hit the headlines in January. He shares his name with a famous actor, but why is he well known?
4. HRH Duke of Edinburgh met a special resident at St Helena in January who had also met his grandparents. Who is he?
5. A young actor, fresh out of drama school, was told by Arthur Lowe, *"don't worry if there's not a lot of lines. They'll come. In the meantime get yourself a funny costume and stand near me"*. Who was the actor who passed away this year and starred in this classic sitcom?
6. Why did a family photo taken for Mothering Sunday lead to a lot of media speculation?
7. Why did North Korean television object to Alan Titchmarsh and his trousers?
8. How did a black cat called Matins get into trouble on 2nd June 1953 at Westminster Abbey
9. Where was the Carnation Revolution 50 years ago?
10. What product manufacturer (a byword in usefulness) announced in 2024 they would introduce the first bladeless version?
11. Which Oxford Don applied unsuccessfully to be a code breaker in the 1940s? There was a note by his name "keen"
12. Where is the Elephant and Bear Line?
13. What is Election purdah?
14. What was Gamblegate?
15. 17th July was National Emoji Day. One of the most popular is known as ROTFL. What does that mean?
16. In this year's Olympics the Philippines gold medallist Carlos Yolo got an unusual reward as well as the medal. What was it?

17. In August a north Italian city advertised for people to learn an ancient skill. The job requirements include being 18 or over, haveng a high school-level education, knowing how to swim, and possessing a medical certificate that proves “*a healthy and robust constitution*”. What job was this for?
18. What music celebrated its 200th anniversary? Liked by many, and Karl Marx thought it “*a solemn mass of earthly joy*”?
19. Why might you be looking forward to not looking back in anger?
20. What types of special judges were cancelled after 147 years’ service and replaced electronically?

(answers on p38)



Anne White very kindly made this beautiful cake for us all to enjoy after our Anniversary Service (see also p8)

Shoebox Express



We waved goodbye to 1150 Christmas shoeboxes as they began their journey by road all the way to Ukraine. The support and encouragement of everyone at church has been even more amazing than last year. The Trustees and elves of Shoebox Express are looking forward to some down-time before Christmas. We hope to share photos of your shoeboxes in the hands of Ukrainian children in the New Year.



Children's Exam Papers

These real-life answers explain why teachers are looking forward to their Christmas holiday!

What is a nitrate?

Cheaper than a day rate.

What was Sir Walter Raleigh famous for?

He invented cigarettes and started a craze for bicycles.

What did Mahatma Gandhi and Genghis Khan have in common?

Unusual names.

Name one of the early Romans' greatest achievements.

Learning to speak Latin.

Name six animals which live specifically in the Arctic.

Two polar bears. Four seals.

Name the wife of Orpheus, whom he attempted to save from the underworld.

Mrs Orpheus.

Where was the American Declaration of Independence signed?

At the bottom.

What is the meaning of the word varicose?

Close by.

What is a fibula?

A little lie.

Why would living close to a mobile phone mast cause ill health?

You might walk into it.

Where was Hadrian's Wall built?

Around Hadrian's garden.

The race of people known as Malays come from which country?

Malaria.

And remember: the chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion!

Answers to New Year Quiz (see p34)

1. The year 2000 was a leap year but 1900 was not. End-of-century years, although divisible by 4, must also be divisible by 400.
2. Whamageddon is a game played during the 24 days before Christmas in which players try to go from 1 December to the end of Christmas Eve (24 December) without hearing "*Last Christmas*" by Wham!.
3. Sir Alan Bates has been very active in trying to address the Post Office scandal.
4. A giant tortoise.
5. Ian Lavender, who played Pike.
6. The photo taken by the Princess of Wales had not been successfully altered.
7. He was wearing American style jeans.
8. The cat fell asleep on the Coronation throne.
9. Portugal.
10. Swiss Army knife.
11. JRR Tolkien. The word "keen" may have been a misspelling of his surname.
12. Near Coventry from Nuneaton down to Royal Leamington Spa.
13. The rule that civil servants and others will normally observe discretion about making new announcements or decisions that could influence voters.
14. The allegations that some politicians took bets on when the general election would be when they had insider information.
15. Roll on the floor laughing.
16. A lifetime of free colonoscopies.
17. Gondolier.
18. Beethoven's 9th Symphony.
19. The news that the group Oasis are performing again.
20. Line judges at Wimbledon.

Answers to Crossword (see p24)

ACROSS: 1 Lame 3 Obtained 8 Omit 9 Merchant 11 Burdensome 14 Crafty
15 Please 17 Blacksmith 20 Splendid 21 Tier 22 Singeing 23 Hand

DOWN: 1 Look back 2 Main road 4 Breast 5 Accomplish 6 Near 7 Date
10 Pestilence 12 Basilica 13 Tethered 16 Action 18 Asa's 19 Clan



Formby Methodist Church & Formby Civic Society

present

A CHRISTMAS TAPESTRY

A Celebration in Carols and Flowers

Sing favourite carols and hear their story, demonstrated
in floral displays



Liz Broad

(Formby Flower Club)

Alastair Gillies

(Formby Methodist Church)

Thursday 5th December, 7.30

Formby Methodist Church

Elbow Lane L37 7AF

Refreshments, including mince pies, at the interval!

Entrance by donation at the door

(including entry into a draw to win one of Liz's creations!)