



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

**June 2021
Parish Magazine**



The Gospel
Everyone who calls on the
name of the Lord will be
saved.
(The Holy Bible)



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Other Ministries at The Good Shepherd

Rev. Howard Wright leads the Discipleship (with Val Lucas) and Mission ministries; TBA: Prayer ministry; Chris McGrath: Worship ministry; Rev. Jonathan Rooke: Pastoral ministry.

The Vicar's Letter

There is a hope for our nation, for an end to the pandemic and the arising restrictions. There has been and are a mix of emotions and expectations as we move toward freedom. We have seen both sacrifice and selfishness. Some have shared resources and even lives generously; sadly, others have hoarded and turned in on themselves. We have seen a mix of optimism and hope against a culture of anxiety and fear. And if we are honest, most of us have been a mix of these responses in ourselves at different times.



So, what will we be like going forwards? We may not be able to change our circumstances, but can we be our best selves in response to them?

There is good, much good, that has come out of these difficult and tragic last months, but I am also aware that it revealed a darker side in society and if I am honest, a darker side in me.

We will have celebrated Pentecost by the time you read this. Pentecost for the Jews was, and is, a time for rejoicing in first fruits and crops harvested in the anticipation of the full harvest to come. For us now, Pentecost is remembered as the coming of God among us in the transforming and equipping power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus through his death and resurrection had made it possible for our hearts to be made new, clean, and now following his ascension, the Holy Spirit comes to empower us for change.

God wants to be in good relationship with us, but he makes demands on us to clean up our act. We know the world needs fixing and we know we do too. But God then does the work for and with us. By Jesus, we are enabled to begin the relationship, and through the Holy Spirit we are empowered to grow the relationship.

God wants good things for this world and its people, and he invites us individually and together to participate in making it good. As we move forwards, we need the enabling of Jesus and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Be praying for an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit as we continue, in response to God's love, to seek to grow deeper in him and larger in mission. And pray specifically for our PCC team, Lorna, Andy Walters, Pip Hughes, and Abi Mezzullo as they guide us with our PCC in discerning the practical steps forwards for our church.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Family Ministry

Messy Church Delivered

Continues each month. For May and June, we are looking at connections and how we connect and communicate with God and with each other.



Each family bag includes a craft, a game and a prayer activity alongside an invite to join in our Zoom café on the second Sunday each month at 4pm.

Dates for May Messy Church delivered:

25th May Registration opens via Eventbrite

10th June Packs delivered

13th June Zoom café 4pm.

Do check the website or join our Facebook group (click below or search COGS Messy Church... at home) for all the latest updates.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2324513037620944>

For July we are planning to meet in person for a Messy Church Family Picnic from 3.30-5pm on the 11th. Venue to be confirmed nearer the date

We are beginning to think about how we can meet face-to-face again from September. If you would like to be part of the team seeking God's will for Messy Church's next steps please get in touch with Jane .

Jane_cogs@btinternet.com

07711407831



COGS Tots

COGS Tots met in person for the first time on Tuesday May 11th at Four Marks recreation ground.

Much fun was had singing five little ducks and playing with water and bubbles. Ducks continued the theme



COGS
Tots

Duck pond prayer craft



*Mummy Duck kept calling, her babies knew
her voice and came back.*

*Jesus, the good shepherd, said My sheep listen
to my voice; I know them, and they follow
me.*

1. Stick the Blue pond to the green grass
2. Stick on the duck bodies, heads and beaks
3. Draw on the eyes

5 Little Ducks

Five little ducks went out one day
Over the hill and far away
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack, quack, quack"
But only four little ducks came back
One, two, three, four
Four little ducks went out one day
Over the hill and far away
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack, quack, quack"
But only three little ducks came back
One, two, three
Three little ducks went out one day
Over the hill and far away
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack, quack, quack"
But only two little ducks came back
One, two
Two little ducks went out one day
Over the hill and far away
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack, quack, quack"
But only one little duck came back
One
One little duck went out one day
Over the hill and far away
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack, quack, quack"
But none of the five little ducks came back
Said mother duck went out one day
Over the hill and far away
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack, quack, quack"
And all of five little ducks came back
Five little ducks went out to play
Over the hill and far away
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack, quack, quack"
And all of the five little ducks came back!



in May's packs, sent out to 14 local families. Our prayer craft thanked Jesus for calling us to follow him. The next date is 8th June.

Similar to our Messy church packs, but more suitable for younger family members, bags each month contain a game, a craft, a prayer idea and a story or song plus an invitation to join in Tots Time on Zoom on the Tuesday afternoon at 2pm.

More information and details of how to register each month can be found on our website.

Under 2's Group

Our Monday morning groups continue to meet each week either at Four Marks recreation ground or in the church hall, weather dependant We currently have two groups

9-10.30am for those with babies aged 1-2 years and 10.45am-12.15pm for those with babies aged 1 year and under.

Do get in touch with Jane if you would like to know more or would like to be involved in our Young family ministry as we begin to plan what this might look like as lockdown eases.

Community Cupboard

saving food from going to waste and serving the community

Four Marks and Medstead community Cupboard operates from the Church of the Good Shepherd every Thursday afternoon from 3.45pm- 4.15pm. Come along and save a bag of food from going to waste.

Four Marks and Medstead
Community Cupboard



How did the Apostles die?

How the Apostle Philip Died.

According to most historians, Philip's death was exceedingly cruel. He was impaled by iron hooks in his ankles and hung upside down to die. Precious little else is known about the process but it is enough to know how he died.

How the Apostle James (son of Zebedee) Died.

The apostle James is not the same James as Jesus' brother. James is thought to have been beheaded by King Herod and not far from where he was a local missionary to the Jews in Judea.

How the Apostle Jude Died.

The apostle Jude, who wrote the next-to-the-last book in the New Testament by the same name, went all the way to Persia and it was there that he was crucified by Magi. It is unlikely that they were the same Magi as mentioned in the New Testament who were searching for the child, Jesus.

It is thought that Jude was in Persia on a missionary trip.

How the Apostle Matthias Died.

Matthias was the apostle that was selected to replace Judas who hung himself. Acts 1:20-26 reveals how this was done, and some scholars say it may have fulfilled a prophecy in Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. Regardless of whether the prophecy was about Matthias, he was apparently stoned and then beheaded late in the 1st century.

Judas Iscariot. The Bible says that he betrayed Jesus and then being consumed with worldly guilt went out to hang himself (Matthew 27:3-8).

Playing Second Fiddle (Andrew)

The twelve apostles included "Andrew" (Matt. 10:2)

Andrew is a picture of all believers who humbly minister behind the scenes. It's been said that no one likes playing second fiddle, but that wasn't Andrew's perspective at all. Growing up in the shadow of an aggressive, outspoken brother like Peter would be a challenge for anyone. Even in the biblical record Andrew is known as "Simon Peter's brother" (e.g., John 1:40). Yet when Andrew met Jesus, his first response was to tell Peter, knowing full well that once Peter became a disciple he probably would run the group. But Andrew was a truly humble man who was more concerned about bringing people to Christ than about who was in charge.

Andrew's faith and openness prompted him to take advantage of every opportunity to lead others to Christ. He knew that the Lord's primary mission was to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6), but he led Gentiles as well as Jewish people to Christ (John 12:20-22). He had seen Jesus change water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11), so he knew Jesus could do much with very little. That must have been on his mind when he brought the boy with five barley loaves and two fish to Jesus, knowing it would take a miracle to feed the huge crowd with such a small offering (John 6:8-9).

Tradition tells us that just prior to his death, Andrew preached in a province in which the governor's wife heard the gospel and was saved. The governor demanded that she reject Christ, but she refused. In anger he had Andrew crucified on an X-shaped cross, on which Andrew hung for two days before dying. Even then his courage didn't fail. He preached the gospel from that cross – still trying to bring others to Christ.

Andrew symbolizes all those humble, faithful, and courageous Christians who labour behind the scenes. They're the backbone of every ministry and the ones on whom every leader depends. You might never be a prominent leader like Peter, but you can be a faithful, courageous servant like Andrew.

Suggestions for Prayer: Thank the Lord for all the humble, faithful servants in your church.

Ask Him to teach you greater openness and courage so you can serve Him more effectively.

[Source: John MacArthur, www.gty.org]

Mission of the Month: The Daylight Christian Prison Trust

"From darkness to light"



Daylight an independent trust, working inside prisons and young offender institutes sharing the Christian faith with prisoners, and to support them during their sentence and provide practical post-release support to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Since 2009 Daylight has developed new courses; mentoring schemes have been set up; staff and volunteers have been leading Bible studies and assisting prison chaplains with Sunday services; and many new volunteers have been recruited for a ministry of letter-writing to prisoners. Still more men are needed to write letters.

Daylight's approach is to encourage churches not only to be involved inside prisons but also to work on the outside to support ex-offenders when they are released. Also Daylight Prayer & Support groups have been set up right across the UK. Daylight continues to develop this strategy working inside and outside prisons, bringing change from the inside out into the lives of men and women as they hear the Gospel.

The launch of the prison version of the highly-acclaimed Christian evangelistic teaching course, "Christianity Explored", and a programme of volunteer training having commenced, Daylight feels it is well placed to encourage its Prayer and Support Groups to send more teams into local prisons.

As they build relationships in the prisons, other members of each group can assist released prisoners in the difficult task of resettling into the community.

God is changing lives, and opening more doors in prisons. Opportunities are arising in new prisons in starting new Christianity Explored courses. The opportunity to bring God's transforming love and power to prisoners and their families has never been greater.

Inevitably there is a cost to support this work and they would obviously like more funds.

As one of our missions, The Good Shepherd supports Daylight with our tithe money. We can also support them with prayer. Daylight sees

God answering prayers every day. So, please carry on praying for their work and for raising the money required.

Daylight is grateful for our continued support and prayers as there is much work still to be done to reach out to prisoners and offer them support inside prison and after their release.

If you would like to find out in more detail about what God is doing, please get in touch.

Daylight CPT, 126 New London Road, Chelmsford CM2 0RG and www.daylightcpt.org

Follow Daylight on Twitter @daylightcpt

Please see the mission board for the latest news and prayer requests.

DCPT rep Janet Foster on behalf of the mission-giving committee.

Westlands Care Home

For many years a small group from The Good Shepherd has taken a Communion service into Westlands Care Home monthly. During the pandemic this had to stop and an audio taped service was made and used by the activities manager with the residents. We and they have missed the interaction by not going in and spending time with them.

The good news is that Westlands would like us to return for live services from July.

To do this properly we need a few more people to join us please. Just once a month we spend between one and two hours where we set up, talk to the residents, give the service and then pack up.

If you would like to be part of the team please let me know. Am happy to answer any questions and perhaps you could join us for a visit and then decide if this is for you.

The management and staff are welcoming and say that after our visits the residents are relaxed and content.

If you would like to make a difference to the lives of the Westlands' residents then please consider joining us.

Thank you

Janet Foster. 01420 563993 jmfoster1973@gmail.com

Results from the Anglican Anti-Racism Taskforce Report

In our own Diocese, we know that we have not done enough to tackle the sin of racism. The shocking death of George Floyd in Minnesota last year, and the widespread protests which followed, forced us all to evaluate questions about institutional racism, colonialism, and the historic links the UK has with slavery. Since then, we have been considering deeply issues around racism and equality in the Church, including in conversation with the Revd Yemi Adedeji, Director of the One People Commission at the Evangelical Alliance. We committed at the time to increase accountability and to champion real change in our Diocese.

As part of our work to tackle racism, we have been working on convening a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group for the Diocese of Winchester. The EDI Group will be instrumental in our Diocesan response to the Church of England's Anti-Racism Taskforce report and the issues it raises. The Group will recommend proposals for the implementation, development and monitoring of equality, diversity and inclusion within the Diocese and it will hold us all to account in our efforts to bring about meaningful change within the Church.

We are delighted that Yemi himself has agreed to chair the new EDI Group. He is a champion of diversity and is experienced at helping Christian leaders work towards better ethnic integration within churches, organisations, and communities. Yemi will also be installed as an honorary canon of Winchester Cathedral in the Autumn, and further details about his new role will be announced soon.

Bishop Tim, Bishop David and Bishop Debbie.

God is not a White Man & Other Revelations

A new book

What does it mean when - from our internal assumptions to our shared cultural imaginings - God is presented as white?

Chine McDonald asks in a searing look at her experience of being a Black woman in the white-majority space that is the UK church - a church that is being abandoned by Black women no longer able to grin and bear its casual racism, colonialist narratives and lack of urgency on issues of racial justice.

Part memoir, part social and theological commentary, *God Is Not a White Man* is a must-read for anyone troubled by a culture that insists

everyone is equal in God's sight, yet fails to confront white supremacy; a lament about the state of race and faith, and a clarion call for us all to do better.

Chine McDonald is a writer, broadcaster and head of public engagement at Christian Aid.

[Anyone reading this book, why not do a review for us?]

Thy Kingdom Come : We Seek Your Kingdom



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Lp2mMpSa1E>

We seek your kingdom throughout every sphere

We long for Heaven's demonstration here

Jesus your light shine bright for all to see

Transform, revive and heal society

Before all things, in him were all things made

Inspiring media, culture and trade

May all our work serve your economy

Transform, revive and heal society

Peace, truth and justice reigning everywhere

With us be present in our public square

Fill all who lead with your integrity

Transform, revive and heal society

Forgive us Lord, when we have not engaged

Failing to scribe your heart on history's page

Make us again what we were made to be

Transform, revive and heal society

Faithful to govern ever may we be

Selfless in service, loving constantly

In everything may your authority

Transform, revive and heal society

The Key to Life-Changing Biblical Engagement

By Jeff Martin of Lifeway Research

A recent study polled 40,000 people ages 8 to 80 to see how people were engaging in Scripture. The Centre of Bible Engagement compiled the extensive research findings by Arnold Cole and Pamela Caudill Ovwigho into "Understanding the Bible Engagement Challenge: Scientific Evidence for the Power of 4." As they compiled the results, they made a profound discovery they were not even looking for when they originally planned the survey.

The study indicated that when people engaged in the Scripture one time a week, which could include a pastor instructing the congregation, there was negligible effect on some key areas of their life. The same result was true if people engaged in the Scriptures two times a week. The result equalled little to no effect.

Three times a week saw a small indication of life. There was a slight pulse, a faint heartbeat. Something moved in the behaviour of the person engaging in Scripture. The eye opener happened when Bible engagement reached at least four times a week.

There are profound differences between people who engage the Scriptures at least four times a week and those who engage with Scripture less often.

A steady climb of impact would have been expected, but that was not the case. The level was basically stagnant over days one and two, with a small bump on day three. But when day four was reached, the effects spiked in an astounding way. The stunning findings included the following:

- Feeling lonely drops 30%
- Anger issues drop 32%
- Bitterness in relationships drops 40%
- Alcoholism drops 57%
- Sex outside of marriage drops 68%
- Feeling spiritually stagnant drops 60%
- Viewing pornography drops 61%
- Sharing your faith jumps 200%

- • Discipling others jumps 230%

The research literally leaps off the charts. The findings hammer home the truth that there are profound differences between people who engage the Scriptures at least four times a week and those who engage with Scripture less often.

Integral to these findings is that people who engage the Bible one to three days a week indicate basically the same effect on their personal lives as those who do not engage at all. The deceptive reality is that they can feel good about their activities without any sustainable results. They think they're being "good Christians," but their lives are no different than people who aren't Christians at all.

Limited activity is often elevated to the same effect as consistent activity, when statistically it is actually the same as no activity.

The studies show that the best spiritually based predictor among 13 - to 17-year-old teenagers was their engagement in Scripture.

Similarly, with children raised in church, a Lifeway Research study found the biggest factor for predicting their spiritual health as young adults is whether they read the Bible regularly as kids.

[Source: <https://lifewayresearch.com>]

Ways for Friendship with God

1. Obedience to His commands. John 14:21 – Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.
2. Believe in justification by faith alone. Psalm 1:2 being the gateway to the Psalms and prayer – Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.
3. Dynamic two-way communication: hearing from the Bible & responding. Hebrews 4:12 – the Word a two-edged sword.
4. Sometimes, as the psalmist says, by seeking His face. Psalm 27:4 – to gaze on the beauty of the Lord.
5. Meditate on Jesus' death and resurrection as an act of His friendship.

[Source: Pastor Tim Keller.]

Church is back in the building and is still available online.

Latest: Refer to the website for the latest details. The in-Church service attendance must be booked.

The on-line 9.30am Service is available from 6pm on the Friday before, the Coffee on Zoom at 11am, the 7pm Service, COGS Kids Online, Messy Church at Home, Alpha Online, and COGS on YouTube. Church is open daily for prayer.

Morning Prayer & Compline: David Bush, d.l.bush@mac.com

Giving to The Good Shepherd

This can be done via the "Donate" button on the Church website.



Small Groups

For further information contact Val Lucas, the ministry leader for small groups (01420-561139).

Prayer Chain

If you have any urgent requests for prayer through the Prayer Chain, please email Matt Senior, or Howard Wright (howardwright.cogs@gmail.com, 01420-563344).

Pastoral Care

If you would like to hear from a member of the Team or you know of someone who would, please contact the team leaders, Debbie Norgate (84534) or Gilly Cobb (544404), or Howard Wright (01420-563344) or Matt Senior.

Resource Sharing Network (RSN)

The Resource Sharing Network (RSN) will accept and circulate requests from the Church Family – for themselves or for family / friends. Money is not to be part of requests. Email cogs.rsn@gmail.com to go on the circulation.

Giving to the Church of The Good Shepherd

This can be done online or through the Church or Church office.



The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord

Words: S J Stone (1866)

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation by water and the word:
from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her and for her life he died.

Called out from every nation, yet one through all the earth;
her charter of salvation one Lord, one faith, one birth:
one holy name she blesses, and shares one holy food;
as to one hope she presses with every grace endued.

... Continues.

The Music Trust Appoints Alexander Armstrong as Ambassador

The Cathedral Music Trust has announced the appointment of Alexander Armstrong as its Ambassador. In this role, Alexander will promote the Trust's work, sustaining and developing this invaluable part of the country's cultural heritage, and nurturing the next diverse generation of fine cathedral musicians.

A presenter, comedian and actor, Alexander has a strong background in cathedral music. He counts his time as a chorister at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh as one of the most important and formative experiences of his life and went on to sing as a choral scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge. Still performing and recording as a bass-baritone, Alexander currently presents Classic FM's flagship mid-morning radio programme as well as the popular television quiz show 'Pointless' on BBC1.

[<https://www.cathedralmusictrust.org.uk>]

How to Live in Praise

1. Even in Trials

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

How can we live a life of constant praise? 1 Thessalonians 5:18 calls for us to give thanks in all things for this is God's will for our lives.

2. Believers Must Focus on Their New Home — the Heavenly Realms

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

The first aspect of Paul's praise that must stand out is the believers' new home. He says that we have been blessed in the heavenly realms; this can be literally translated as "the heavenlies."

Second, we must focus on it. Colossians 3:1-2 says, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

3. Believers Must Focus on Their Spiritual Blessings

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

The next aspect of Paul's praise to God (while in prison) focuses on every spiritual blessing of believers in the heavenly realms. What does Paul mean by "every spiritual blessing"? "In the New Testament pneumatikos (spiritual) is always used in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit." In fact, it can be translated "all the blessings of the Spirit" – referring to the Holy Spirit of God.

4. Believers Must Focus on Their Union with Christ

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

The next thing we must focus on if we are going to live in praise is our union with Christ. This is the sphere of our blessing – the reason we receive them. Scripture teaches that when we were born again, we were united with Christ.

5. Believers Must Focus on Their Adoption as Sons.

He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. (Ephesians 1:5)

6. In Order to Live in Praise, Believers Must Focus on God's Abundant Grace to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Ephesians 1:6)

[<https://bible.org>]

Heavenward

They do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

1 Corinthians 9:23

Last August as the pilot of an American Airlines flight was approaching Los Angeles International Airport, he radioed the tower, saying, "Tower, American 1997. We just passed a guy in a jetpack." Another flight also radioed, "We just saw the guy pass by us on the jetpack." The man was in the air at about 3,000 feet. As of this writing, the highflyer hasn't been caught or identified, but the FBI is investigating.



Flying in a jetpack near an airport isn't recommended! But it does bring to mind an old hymn that says, "I'm pressing on the upward way, / New heights I'm gaining every day; / Still praying as I'm onward bound, / Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Faith is not about perfection, but direction. When we make it all the way to heaven, we'll be perfected and glorified. Until then, we press upward, trusting God at every level. You don't need a jetpack to live above the world. Just pray: "My heart has no desire to stay / Where doubts arise and fears dismay; / Though some may dwell where these abound, / My prayer, my aim, is higher ground."

Look up in simple faith to the Crucified Saviour, who alone can lift you to a higher plane of life.

Dr David Jeremiah.

Britain is Still a Christian Country, Say Most Brits

Most Brits, including those with no faith, still regard the UK as a Christian country, a YouGov poll has found.

Over half (56%) of the 2,169 people surveyed said the UK was a Christian country, a proportion that rose to over two thirds (69%) among Christians.

Even a significant share of non-Christians (47%) and the non-religious (49%) said the same.

However, young people - those aged 16 to 24 - were split on whether the UK was a Christian country, with 41% saying it was and 39% saying it wasn't.

Viewing the UK as a Christian country rose with age, with just over half (53%) of 25- to 39-year-olds saying it was, and 61% of those aged 60 and above believing the same.

The study also found universal support for Christmas and Easter remaining as public holidays, regardless of how many Brits actually celebrate them.

Even among non-Christians, eight in ten supported Christmas Day as a public holiday and nearly three quarters (74%) Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

And there was broad support for British schools putting on Nativity plays during the Christmas period, with 45% of the public saying they "strongly approve" and a third saying they "somewhat" approve. Only 12% were against schools organising Nativity plays.

When it comes to teaching in schools though, only a third of Britons felt that children should be taught more about Christian festivals than those of other religions. Over half (53%) said they should be taught equally about the festivals of Christianity and other religions.

[Source: <https://www.christiantoday.com>]

Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on Earth.

John Wesley.

Gideons International, Now Known as Good News UK in this Country

A body of believers dedicated to making the Word of God available to everyone and, together with the local church, reaching souls for Christ.

The organisation started as the result of a meeting between two men who wished to band commercial travellers together for evangelism. What began in 1908 as an Association of Christian businessmen placing Bibles in hotel rooms evolved into an expanding mission to provide Scriptures to all people in nearly every facet of life. Today, more than two billion Scriptures in more than 95 languages have been placed in up to 200 countries, territories, and possessions across the globe.

It exists as an advocate for the lost, to bring them the saving knowledge of the Word through not only placing and distributing Scriptures, but also through personal witnessing and by associating together for service. As a united force for the Gospel, it remains rooted in tradition and operates under the firm belief that anyone can be a valuable asset to this invaluable cause. Many opportunities to partner are provided through either prayer or financial support.

[Source: <https://goodnewsuk.com>]

The important thing is not the size of your faith – it is the One behind your faith, God Himself.

Rev. Oral Roberts.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.

Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness.

For you are their glory and strength, and by your favour you exalt our horn.

Psalms 89:14-17

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

John Piper

Justin Martyr, 100 - 165 AD

"I fell in love with the prophets and these men who had loved Christ; I reflected on all their words and found that this philosophy alone was true and profitable."

When Justin was arrested for his faith in Rome, the prefect asked him to denounce his faith by making a sacrifice to the gods. Justin replied, "No one who is rightly minded turns from true belief to false."

Justin wrote two bold apologies [i.e., defenses, formal justifications, and *not* as the word we know today – from the Greek *apologia*]. Justin's First Apology, addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius, was published in 155 and attempted to explain the faith. Christianity was not a threat to the state, he asserted, and should be treated as a legal religion. He wrote "on behalf of men of every nation who are unjustly hated and reviled."

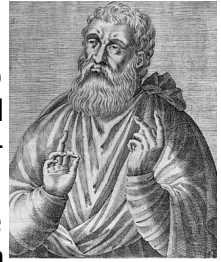
Justin argued that Christians are, in fact, the emperor's "best helpers and allies in securing good order, convinced as we are that no wicked man ... can be hidden from God, and that everyone goes to eternal punishment or salvation in accordance with the character of his actions." He further showed that Christianity is superior to paganism, that Christ is prophecy fulfilled, and that paganism is actually a poor imitation of the true religion.

However, this apology has gained the most attention for modern readers because in it Justin records detailed descriptions of early Christian worship (to show unbelievers that Christianity was not subversive).

The most famous passage is this:

On the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a given city or rural district. The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then when the reader ceases, the president in a discourse admonishes and urges the imitation of these good things. Next we all rise together and send up prayers.

When we cease from our prayer, bread is presented and wine and water. The president in the same manner sends up prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people sing out their assent, saying the "Amen." A distribution and participation of the ele-



ments for which thanks have been given is made to each person, and to those who are not present they are sent by the deacons.

Those who have means and are willing, each according to his own choice, gives what he wills, and what is collected is deposited with the president. He provides for the orphans and widows, those who are in need on account of sickness or some other cause, those who are in bonds, strangers who are sojourning, and in a word he becomes the protector of all who are in need.

Justin's Second Apology [defense / justification] was written soon after Marcus Aurelius became emperor in 161. In these writings, Justin tried to show that the Christian faith alone was truly rational. He taught that the Logos (Word) became incarnate to teach humanity truth and to redeem people from the power of the demons.

Four years later, Justin and his disciples were arrested for their faith. When the prefect threatened them with death, Justin said, "If we are punished for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, we hope to be saved." They were taken out and beheaded. As he gave his life, Justin has been surnamed Martyr.

[Source: Christianity.com;

the fifty-seven chapters of his first work may be found at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-firstapology.html>]

Tertullian

Tertullian, Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, (born c. 160AD, Carthage [now in Tunisia], died after 220, Carthage), important early Christian theologian, polemicist [refuting errors] and moralist who, as the initiator of ecclesiastical Latin, was instrumental in shaping the vocabulary and thought of Western Christianity.

Quotes:

- You can't undo anything you've already done, but you can face up to it. You can tell the truth. You can seek forgiveness. And then let God do the rest.
- The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.
- Nothing that is God's is obtainable by money.
- If the Tiber rises too high or the Nile too low, the remedy is always feeding Christians to the lions.

Faiths and Sects, a Short Summary

What do Pagans Believe?

The recognition of the divine in nature is at the heart of Pagan belief. Pagans are deeply aware of the natural world and see the power of the divine in the ongoing cycle of life and death. Most Pagans are eco-friendly, seeking to live in a way that minimises harm to the natural environment.

Pagans worship the divine in many different forms, through feminine as well as masculine imagery and also as without gender. The most important and widely recognised of these are the God and goddess (or pantheons of them) whose annual cycle of procreation, giving birth and dying defines the Pagan year.

Paganism is not based on doctrine or liturgy. Many pagans believe "if it harms none, do what you will." Following this code, Pagan theology is based primarily on experience, with the aim of Pagan ritual being to make contact with the divine in the world that surrounds them.

[Source: bbc.co.uk]

The Christian Gospel

God reveals Himself in many ways; including in creation, in the prophets and apostles, and supremely in Jesus Christ.

- God became a man in Jesus Christ.
- He lived the perfect life that we couldn't live.
- He died on the cross the death for sin for which we should die.
- Three days later he rose from the grave, so proving that he is the son of God.
- He offers forgiveness of sins – past, present and future sins (Hebrews chapters 9, 10) – and eternal life to all those who repent and believe.

Those who do:

- become children of God (John 1:12),
- have sins forgiven; but not forgetting to turn to God when you do (1 John 1:9),
- Have prayers answered (Mark 11:24),
- a new spirit and power to live a transformed life (2 Cor 5:17),
- and have no need to fear death (Hebrews 2:9).
- and find proof in relationship with God because Jesus is alive.

Christianity is a relationship, not a religion in the formal sense. Christians are to be born from above (John chapter 3).



About the Dead Sea Scrolls

1. The Dead Sea Scrolls are biblical, apocryphal, and sectarian works.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are ancient manuscripts discovered between 1947 and 1956. Archaeologists found about 950 different manuscripts of various lengths, mostly in fragments, though some were intact.

2. The first scrolls were found in a cave by teenage shepherds.

The documents that have become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 11 caves along the northwest shore. The location is 13 miles east of Jerusalem and 1,300 feet below sea level.

3. Most Old Testament books are present in the scrolls.

More than 230 manuscripts in the collection are "biblical scrolls," copies of works that are now part of the Old Testament. The scrolls contain partial or complete copies of every book in the Hebrew Bible except the book of Esther.

4. It includes the oldest intact Old Testament manuscripts.

The Great Isaiah Scroll is one of the original seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1947. It is one of the largest (24 feet long) and best preserved of all the biblical scrolls, and the only one that contains the entire text.

5. Most of the scrolls are about 2,000 years old.

The majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written between the second century BC and second century AD, probably between 225 BC and AD 50.

6. No one knows for sure who wrote the documents.

Scholars have not come to a consensus about who created and collected the original scrolls. Most believe it was a Jewish sect, though some have argued it was first-century Christians.

[Source for the full article: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org>]

Ancient Bible fragments dating back nearly 2,000 years discovered in Judean Desert

Fragments from a biblical scroll have been uncovered by archaeologists in the Judean Desert Nature Reserve. It is the first time in around 60 years that archaeological excavations have yielded fragments from a biblical scroll.

The scroll dates back to the Bar Kokhba period in the 2nd Century AD and is written in Greek. The fragments contain portions of the Minor Prophets, including the books of Zechariah and Nahum. The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) said the fragments had been written by two different scribes.

The discovery was made by the IAA as part of a major national operation to prevent the looting of antiquities in the Judean Desert, which has been a problem since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls 70 years ago. "The aim of this national initiative is to rescue these rare and important heritage assets from the robbers' clutches," said IAA director Israel Hasson.

"The newly discovered scroll fragments are a wake-up call to the state. Resources must be allocated for the completion of this historically important operation.

The latest discovery yielded dozens of parchment fragments, some of which contained parts of Zechariah 8:16–17: "These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to one another, render true and perfect justice in your gates. And do not contrive evil against one another, and do not love perjury, because all those are things that I hate—declares the Lord."

Other fragments contained Nahum 1:5–6, "The mountains quake because of Him, And the hills melt. The earth heaves before Him, The world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His wrath? Who can resist His fury? His anger pours out like fire, and rocks are shattered because of Him."

Unusually, although most of the text is in Greek, the name of God appears in ancient Hebrew script, known from the times of the First Temple in Jerusalem.

The IAA, which called the latest discovery "thrilling", said the fragments were discovered in a cave on the side of a sheer cliff that hid Jewish refugees almost 1,900 years ago.

[Source: <https://www.christiantoday.com>]

King Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20

Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea."

Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard and said:

"Lord, the God of our ancestors.

Are you not the God who is ...

Did you not ...

Will you not ... but our eyes are on you."

As they began to sing and praise, the Lord ...

[The Lord acted decisively; to the praise of His holy Name.]

John Stott, 1921 – 2011

Servant of Jesus and the Global Church

The impact of John Stott's ministry continues today through his books and the ministries he founded, such as the Langham Partnership, as they work to multiply church leaders in the Majority World.

John Stott used his ministry to help start and assist a number of ministries around the world. Apart from Langham, his influence and impact continues to be felt through the following ministries:

- London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, fuelling a movement to renew our nation.
- All Souls Church Langham Place, an Evangelical Anglican church in central London.
- Lausanne Covenant, challenging Christians to work together to make Jesus Christ known throughout the world.

[Source: <https://johnstott.org>]

Faith is a process. If you can see the processes of God you would never get discouraged.
Marilyn Hickey.

Little Richard, Rock and Roll Legend

Richard had a church upbringing, had sung in the choir, had released a number of gospel albums and was regarded by many as a Christian. But despite all of that outward suggestion of a Christian faith, he finally admitted that he needed to surrender fully to Christ. He said that he asked God to save him and that God said to him, "Richard, you're singing Tutti Frutti. You're singing Good Golly Miss Molly. You're singing Long Tall Sally. You're singing The Girl Can't Help It and She's Got It, and all of these things."

Richard asked, "Lord, can I do this and still be saved?"

The Lord replied, "Richard, no man can serve two masters."

Richard said that after that he retired from performing and recording. He chose to release everything and to serve God for the remainder of his years. "People want to go to heaven, but they don't want to have to give up nothing, and in order to see Jesus, you've got to give up something."

He said that in recent years a producer came to him, offering millions of dollars for a new television series entitled "Little Richard." The producer told him that if he would allow the series to go forward, he would be the hottest thing on the planet.

Confessing that the offer was tempting, Richard replied to the promoter, "I don't want to be hot in the fire. I don't want to be hot in the flames! I want to do what God wants me to do. I don't want to sing rock and roll no more ... I want to be holy like Jesus. Give everything you've got to Jesus, and oh, you'll feel so much better. I want to show the world that I know a man that created everything. I know a man that gave his life that I might have a right to the tree of life."

Little Richard died on 9th May 2020 after a short battle with cancer. He was 87 years old.

[<https://www.reallifestories.org>]

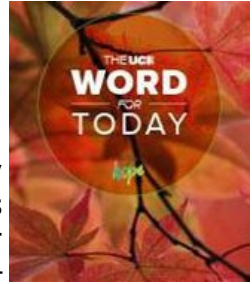
Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you. Amen.

Thomas Aquinas.

Your words reveal your heart

Your speech betrays you.

Matthew 26:73



The words you speak will give you away every time. It happened to Peter. On the night Jesus was arrested and all His disciples scattered, Peter stayed close enough to see what was happening – but not close enough to be identified with Him. The Bible says: ‘Those who stood by came up and said to Peter, “Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.”’

Then he began to curse and swear, saying, “I do not know the Man!” Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” So he went out and wept bitterly’ (verses 73-75).

After that episode nobody accused Peter of being a follower of Jesus! Isn’t it interesting how profanity in any language has a way of making others question the quality of your relationship with Christ? Your words have the power to build people up or tear them down, draw them to Christ or drive them away.

With that in mind, here are two Scriptures you need to underscore and think about often: 1) Let your speech always be with grace ...th at you may know how you ought to answer each one (Colossians 4:6). 2) Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up...that it may benefit those who listen (Ephesians 4:29).

Today, here’s a prayer for you to pray: Father, may the words I speak this day bring credit to the name of Jesus and draw others to Him. In His name I pray, amen.

Bible in a year:

Luke 8:26-56, Psalms 46-48



Copies of The Word for Today are available from www.ucb.co.uk

A Prayer for The Church of the Good Shepherd's Future Strategy:

Father God, thank you for your faithfulness to us so far. Please guide us now and fill us with wisdom. Show us how we can grow deeper in you and larger in mission, and give us the courage to follow wherever you may lead us.

Amen.

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Amen.

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