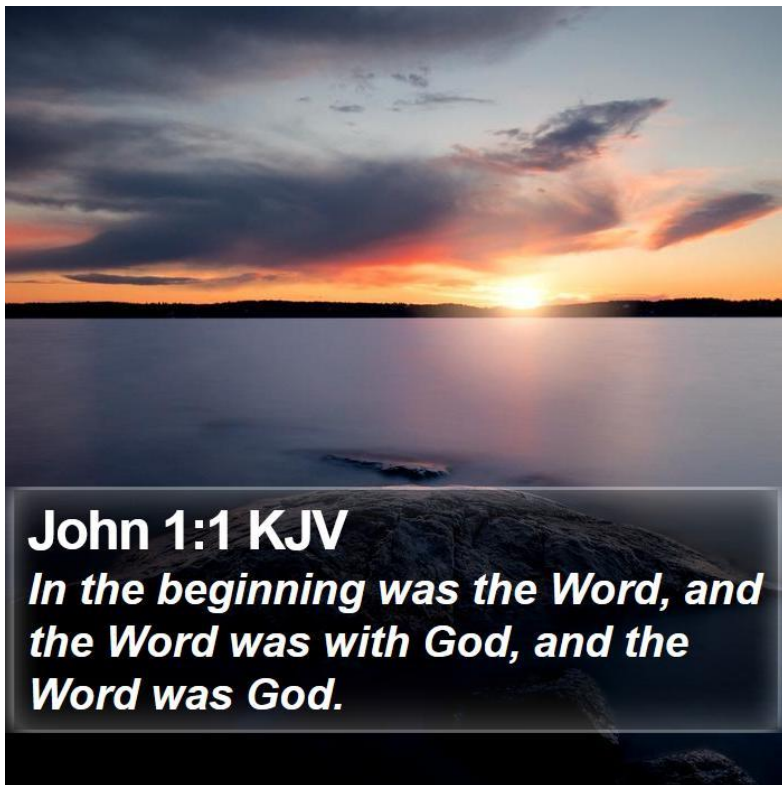


Facebook Posts – January 2022

1st January



4th January – Deacon Jen Woodfin

In our house we have advent candles that are put on the windowsill at the start of advent to show the light of the world coming to us. This year I also used them as part of the services I was leading. Initially I used them just as they were then added relevant items for each particular service. On one side is the decorations that go on the Christmas tree. All of these are either 'just for fun' or have some personal significance. On the other side is a hanging nativity set. It depicts the Magi worshipping the baby Jesus. It reminds us of the real reason for Christmas celebrations and that the greatest Gift of all is God coming to this world in Jesus.

As we now put all the candles, decorations and nativities away for the next eleven months let us remember, with gratitude, the pleasure of families and friends being able to meet up, the joy of gathering to worship, the gifts shared. But most importantly let us not put away, out of our minds, the greatest treasure ever given. Let us continue to see the light, to feel the joy, to share the love of Jesus being in our lives.



5th January – Sam Parfitt

I once made a very grand gesture at the beginning of worship when lighting the candle. I felt very important as I stated in a very important way that the light reminds us that the love of God is always with us - unfortunately the match wouldn't strike and the candle couldn't be lit!! There was a bit of a frantic scramble until I could light a match and eventually the candle was lit. I think about that event every time I light a candle now and it brings me a little chuckle about the time God reminded me to be humble whilst demonstrating that he has a sense of humour ! There will be times in the coming year when things happen that we have no control over, some may be good things and some not so. From some things we may learn and grow, others may find us deep in lament. For those times may I offer you the words from John 1:5 "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" The love of God is always with us, the promise isn't that there will never be darkness, but that it will not overcome the love known to us in Jesus Christ, given freely to all.



6th January – Rev Cliff Shanganya



Jeremiah 31:33 NLT

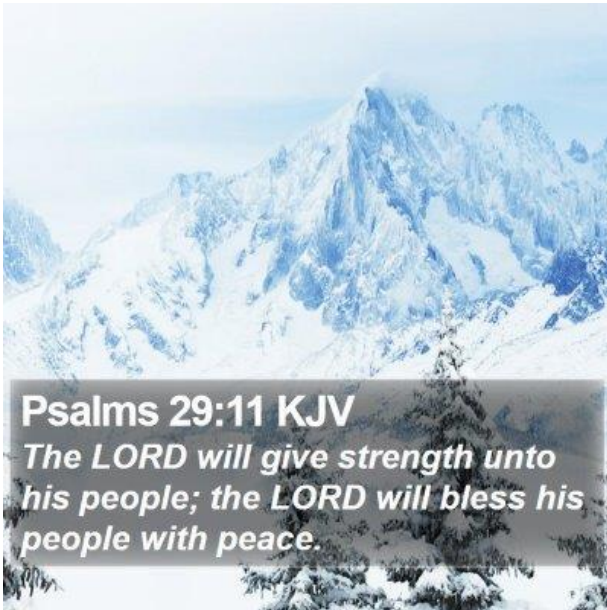
"But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the LORD. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

The old covenant, broken by the people, would be replaced by a new covenant. The foundation of this new covenant is Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:6). The old covenant did not have the power to transform people's hearts or give them the ability to obey. The new covenant has revolutionary power, involving not only Israel and Judah, but even the Gentiles. It offers a unique personal relationship with God himself, with his laws written on individuals' hearts instead of on stone tablets. Jeremiah looked forward to the day when Jesus would come to establish this covenant and through his forgiveness all sins would be forgotten. For us today, this new covenant is here. We have the wonderful opportunity to have a fresh start and establish a permanent, personal relationship with God. Have a blessed day.

7th January



10th January



11th January – Rev Rosemary Wakelin

I love God's divine sense of humour, so gentle yet what a punch it packs! We have just enjoyed again his Christmas jokes on our pomposity and power games. They were looking for a warrior King, so he sends a baby. They looked to centres of power, so he chooses an unmarried teenager as mother. She was in danger of being stoned to death for being pregnant outside marriage, so he organises the most powerful Emperor to order a census to get her safely out of Nazareth and on to Bethlehem. The announcement of the great event by a heavenly host ignores the centres of power and goes to outcast shepherds on night duty. They thought God was Israel's private property and they alone understood theology, so he speaks to some foreign scholars - shock horror - astrologers! who then come to honour the new King. And so it goes on. Are we any better? I sometimes wonder, when I see grand processions of the great and good proceeding down the aisle of a cathedral, lavish copes, splendid mitres, jewelled croziers, and so on - where is Jesus in all this? Is he leading the procession or waiting at the altar - ? Or is he sitting with Sarah in a quiet corner, because she is heartbroken because her husband has died - or with Jim in a doorway because he has lost his home and family and is living on the street? Our Covenant relationship reminds us that we are family, God's family, sisters and brothers to Christ carrying on the family business, which may take us to places of honour and respectability or to the opposite. Either way Jesus is there already, so be prepared!

13th January – Rev Anne Richardson

The low sun shining through my windows is so welcome in January. It can be blinding when driving, almost as bad as an oncoming driver with full beams. It lifts my spirits to see it and yet it also shows up the dust on the surfaces and windows. I really must get around to some housework.

Then I remember the story of Baboushka. She was a widow, whose only child had died in infancy - so she was someone who knew deep sadness. She met the Wise Men on their journey, and they invited her to come with them, to find the new-born King. She had too much to do. She had to clear up after their visit, and clean and tidy her house. Then she was tired and had to sleep. The next morning, in her quiet and clean and tidy house, she realised the missed opportunity. The moral of the tale is of course to get our priorities right. A clean and tidy house is all very well, but there are more important things! Is this the excuse I need to leave the cleaning for another day?

The rest of the story sees Baboushka hurrying after the Wise Men - but she never catches them up or sees the Christ child. As she travels, she gives out gifts to babies and children, and helps wherever she can. Perhaps, like us, she doesn't need to physically see the baby Jesus to worship and serve Him as Lord.

Perhaps this other message in the story is equally important: that even if we miss the boat, even if we feel we are too late, in God's kingdom it is never too late to seek and find, never too late to help and serve, and never too late to worship.

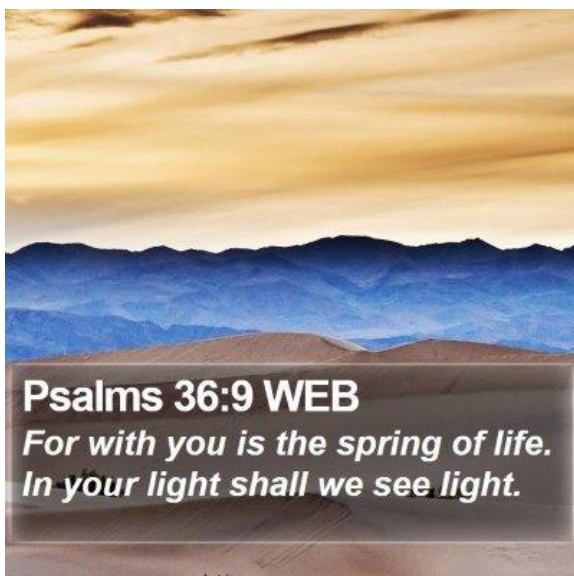
Also, maybe never too late to wash the windows and clean the house..... I'll do it tomorrow.



14th January



17th January



18th January – Deacon Jen Woodfin



I tried to find something the other day – a common occurrence in this household! I was looking for a blue file with information I needed inside. Try as I would, I couldn't find it until, that is, when I had the revelation that perhaps the file was a different colour. Once I had this train of thought I looked again and, lo and behold, there it was in a striking green colour. The problem, quite simply, was that I had the wrong image in my head, that I was too narrow in my vision.

It seems to me that we can sometimes be like that when we are looking for a sign from God in our lives. We look with blinkered eyes, with a preconception of what that sign might be. We listen with ears that are closed. When we pray, we expect we will get the answers that we have already thought about. But God has always surprised us. No

more so than when Jesus, a tiny vulnerable baby, came to change the world in ways that no-one could possibly have expected. There are so many other times in the Bible that God worked in unexpected ways. – Which ways do you recall?

Let us be ready to be surprised by God, to be led to places beyond our imagination, and have our lives changed according to God's will, however unexpected that may be.

19th January – Sam Parfitt

One of the things I enjoy watching that is on television at this time of year is The World's Strongest Man competition. It features men who have worked on their bodies to the point where they can lift huge amounts of weight, some of the competitors lifting easily 30 stones plus. When they are at this level of their sport, they are able to lift, push and pull more than the tendons and ligaments of their bodies can withstand, making injuries to these parts commonplace.



Although the competition does rank them, and the accolade of being the world's strongest man is a desirable thing in the sport, the competitors are really competing against their own bodies, pushing themselves to the limit. There is also a high level of camaraderie, if one man falls another rushes in to help him up. If one man is struggling, others encourage him along. On the face of it, being a strongman competitor and a Christian might seem like two disparate things, but it seems to me that both are trying to journey along a road that sets challenges within communities that offer support and friendship. When we are faced with more than we can stand, God will be there as our point man, watching out for us.

20th January – Rev Cliff Shanganya

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. . . . Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. (Philippians 4:6-8)

Trying to keep a positive attitude is not a new idea. It is found clearly in the first-century writing of Paul the apostle. He encouraged the church at Philippi to pray about problems rather than worry about them. Why? Because worry leads to anxiety and negativity, while prayer leads to peace and a more positive outlook. Then Paul revealed the key to having a positive attitude: think about positive things—things that are “excellent and worthy of praise.”

We are responsible for the way we think. Even in the worst situation, we choose our attitude. Maintaining a positive attitude requires prayer. As Paul said, we can bring our requests to God. We can tell him what we need and be thankful for what he has already done. Will God always do what we ask? No, but what does happen is that as we release worry and express gratitude, God's peace descends on our minds and hearts. God calms our emotions and directs our thoughts.

When we find ourselves struggling with an aspect of our life, let's try to develop a more optimistic perspective. With a positive attitude, we become a part of the solution, rather than a part of the problem.



Prayer for the day: *Father, thank you for letting us bring anything to you in prayer. Help me to release my worries to you, knowing that you are in control. When I thank you for what you have already done, I'm reminded of how you have acted for me in the past, and I can be more positive about the future. Please encourage the right attitude in me. Amen.*

21st January

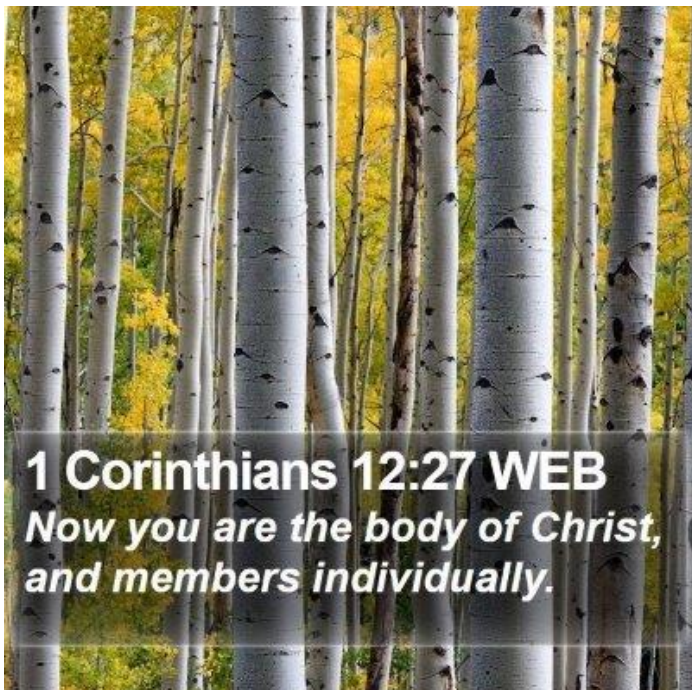


May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace.

ROMANS 15:13



24th January



1 Corinthians 12:27 WEB
*Now you are the body of Christ,
and members individually.*

25th January – Rev Jacqui Horton



I have just been looking back at things that were happening in January 2020. Jen and I had been in our new positions for 4 months, we had survived the first Christmas, Covenant services were taking place in many of the new section's churches. I was beginning to think about the new year and what initiatives might be taken as well as us continuing to get to know the members of 8 churches, their communities, and their ecumenical connections. It seems a different world now! None of us would have dreamt that there would be a pandemic, lockdowns, social distancing, masks, new ways of working, as well as us seeing our homes, work, nature

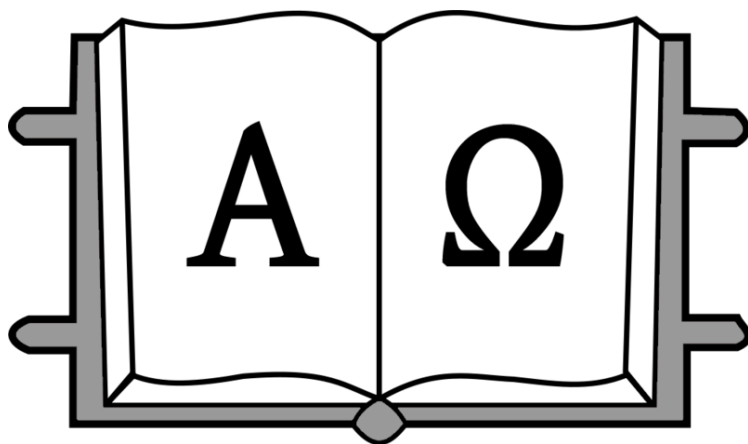
and life – all in a different way. It has been an interesting two and a half years in a new job – so many things have been concentrated and accelerated and fruitful, as well as being very hard work, sometimes very difficult, sometimes very stressful.

In January 2022, I have again been thinking about another new year, another 12 months of challenges, opportunities and seeking God's purposes through them. Who knows what is going to happen?! But, as an old song goes: 'I do not know what lies ahead, the way I cannot see; yet one stands near to be my guide; he'll show the way to me.'

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26th January – Rev Rosemary Wakelin

Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. We also use it as description of a certain sort of man - strong, initiating, dominating, and there are times when those characteristics are useful. But what about Omega characteristics? Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet, bringing it to its fulfilment. The natural world is overflowing with theology. Think of childbirth. An alpha initiative kick starts the process, and the potential father can disappear (sadly some do) while the mother, the Omega participant, has 9 months of accommodating, nurturing and protecting until her hour comes and the painful conclusion is reached, and the miracle of a new life appears. A whole new set of essential characteristics have come into play. On the whole human history prefers the Alpha. Of course, the reality is that all of us carry both. On the whole men have more Alpha and women more Omega, with extremes of both sorts, but I have known gentle, space making men, and dominating, initiating women. Does it matter? We are made in God's image. God is both Alpha and Omega. Jesus knew this, and he was both. He could be amazingly Alpha when necessary, or amazingly gentle and space making. At the end of his ministry he talks of his hour coming, of his soul being in "travail", (the old term for labour) and his work accomplished as he reaches the Omega conclusion on the Cross. The birth of the Church follows. What matters is what we do with that image of God that we carry, both Alpha and Omega, and which is appropriate in a given situation. That requires that special sort of love we see in Jesus, grace. Whatever our orientation we are called to be like him.



27th January – Rev Anne Richardson

Today is Holocaust Memorial Day - a day when we remember and learn about the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and the genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. Although it's difficult to understand and reflect on such awful events, we must do so.

This year, the theme is "One Day". People who have survived Holocaust and Genocide often talk about the One Day that everything changed.

"You didn't think about yesterday, and tomorrow may not happen. It was only today that you had to cope with and you got through it as best you could." (Iby Knill, survivor of the Holocaust)



Find out more by clicking here: <https://www.hmd.org.uk/what-is-holocaust-memorial-day/this-years-theme/>

Today, on this One Day, let us all stand in solidarity with those who have suffered, and stand against all those who would seek to do similar acts in the future.

Let us stand together, in the name of Jesus, who, on One Day, stood with sinful humanity on the cross, bearing all our sins and defeating the power of evil. One Day, he will come again. Until that day, Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

28th January



31st January

