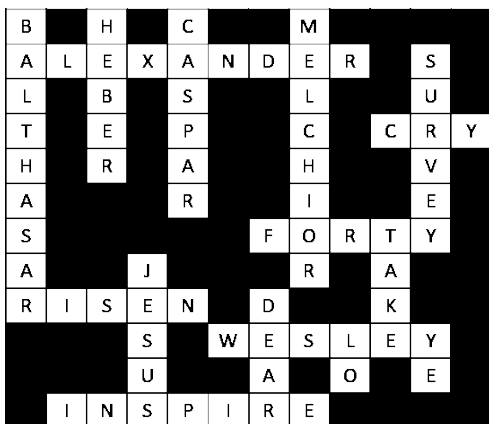


- Across**
- 9 There's a special service for them this month (4)
 - 3 Priestly king (11)
 - 7 Moses was found on it (4)
 - 6 ___ is my washpot (4)
 - 8 ___, Father (4)

- Down**
- 1 Sainly Oxford cardinal (6)
 - 2 Bishop in Longwood window (7)
 - 4 Martyred king (7)
 - 5 C of E's Settlement (11)
 - 9 Bishop of Rome (4)
 - 10 Magi who "knew their onions"? (5)
 - 12 Jonah's means of transport (4)

Answers to last month's crossword



Answers in next month's issue.

From Fr Simon: a Gift Day sermon

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

It is well known that money causes problems. We cannot live without it. Yet the importance of money, of wealth and material possessions is too high. And it causes us to stumble.

The Kingdom of Bhutan used to be the happiest place in the world. Until fairly recently they did not allow TV or internet – I think this is not a coincidence. The media bombards us with images of the perfect lifestyle. This is obvious in advertising, but in other programmes as well, we watch other people's lives and receive the message that we should be having those cars, those holidays, those houses. We are taught to be discontented with what we have, to want more.

A well known mega-rich businessman was once asked, "How much money do you want?"

And he replied, "More."

Compared with much of the world, we live in a right-wing country. Much more so than Scandinavian countries for example, who have much higher taxes, greater welfare state, and generally come out higher on happy and healthy places to live.

However, we need money to live. It is our economy, our way of showing what and who is important to us.

Which brings me on to the church. The church needs money to function. This is fairly inescapable. Love is what makes us who we are. But as James' letter reminds us, love needs action.

I'm now going to tell you how much money we, here at St Mark's, need to function. In complete disregard to the advice that you shouldn't discuss religion or money, I'm going to do both!

To start with, we have to pay "The Parish Share". This money covers employing and training priests, and some central support from the diocese.

[continued on page 2]

From Fr Simon [continued from page 1]

It does not pay for bishops or cathedrals. **Our Parish Share is £22 000.** This pays for half a vicar, and is adjusted according to local area deprivation and congregation size.

On top of this, we have many bills and expenses of ministry. These including heating, repairs, maintenance, insurance and come to about **£12 000.** Large building works we try to fund with grants, but they often require some outlay from us.

The Parish Centre largely pays for itself, and in the couple of years before COVID was making a helpful profit.

So, **in total, £34 000** is the amount of money we need to find each year (discounting the parish centre).

We can raise a bit of this by fundraising. We can raise a bit from the Parish Centre. But the bulk of it really needs to come from you.

I'm now going to look at this in two different ways. Firstly, to see how much each person (or rather, household) on average needs to pay. Secondly, to look at how much we spend on other things.

If this makes for difficult listening, then think back to the gospel reading. It tells us we need to be honest, even ruthless if we are to survive, if we are to continue, even should we stumble.

We need £34 000 per year, that is £2833 per month. We have 28 households on our electoral roll. By simple calculation, this means that each household needs to give an average of just over £100. Some households will give more and others less. But on average we need £100 per month per household from each of the households on the electoral roll.

Now to look at things another way.

How much do you earn? How much money do you receive each month? How much of that should you give away? The Old Testament speaks of tithing, that is giving one tenth of your income away each month. This is too much for someone on a very low wage, and too low for someone on a much higher wage. But it is a starting point. You might not give away all 10% to the church, there are many other good causes to consider. But it's worth working out 10% of your income (maybe after taxes) to think about how much to give; a useful starting point.

[continued on Page 3—opposite if you are reading this in print]

Notices

Sunday 10th October: Pet Blessing Service at 3pm. This is a good service to invite your friends and neighbours to. If you can't bring your pet, then bring a picture of them. Otherwise just come along and enjoy the animals that other people bring.

Open the Book is a group which tells bible stories in local schools. We could always do with more people. Speak with Fr Simon for more information.

Our next monthly **bible study** is on **18th October at 7.30pm via Zoom.** Meeting ID: 821 7505 2779

All are welcome, no experience necessary. It usually lasts one hour.

The **gardening** teams at both churches do a tremendous job. Volunteers are welcome to join in. **Wednesdays 2-4pm.**

Church cleaning takes place on the **second Saturday of the month, 10am-12noon.** The next one is **11th October.** The more the merrier!

Simon and Sam's charity, ACross Country, is taking a group of vulnerable people away on 22nd-24th October. Many thanks for all who have raised money in support of these projects. Please pray that those who come will find healing in one way or another.

All Saints' is being celebrated as a **joint benefice service on Sunday 31st October, 10.30am at St Mark's Longwood.**

On the same day, **All Souls'** another **joint benefice service, 6pm at St John's Golcar.** This is a service especially to remember our friends and family who have died.

Fr Simon would like to thank everyone for their sponsorship of him in the Great North Run, raising about £800 for Water Aid.

Morning prayer is said on weekdays at 9am:-

- Mondays and Wednesdays: at St Mark's Longwood
- Tuesdays and Thursdays: at St John's Golcar.
- Fridays: online only, live-streamed from home by Rev'd Mtr Jan Sargent

All these services are live-streamed and you are welcome to join in with them in church or online.

Have you got some Notices that you'd like us to print? If so, let the Vicar know!

For All the Saints

by Mother Janet, Associate Priest

On 18th October we celebrate Luke, traditionally identified as the writer of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

He was of Greek origin and may have been either a Jew or even possibly a Gentile. He was an educated man and is often described as the first Christian historian. Tradition describes him as the beloved physician identified in Paul's letters, and as a painter.

He accompanied St Paul on some of his missionary journeys and according to Paul's second letter to Timothy, Luke was with Paul in Rome shortly before Paul's death.

Both the Gospel and Acts are dedicated to a Roman called Theophilus and are written to give a truthful and clear account of what happened. Theophilus may have been Luke's patron and a high ranking Roman with an interest in Christianity, whose name means "friend of God" in Greek.

Luke's Gospel was written for Gentiles and is perhaps the most supportive of women and people on the margins of society. Here we find the angel's visit to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the visit of the marginalised shepherds to the infant Christ.

Luke's humanity shines through his writings and, perhaps more than any other of the other New Testament writers, he paints a picture of Jesus showing His love and concern for all. Luke gives us the clearest picture of Jesus the human being. The stories that Luke selects reflect his own warm-hearted concern for people especially the sick and the helpless, the poor, women, and children. Luke shows us Jesus the compassionate, the carer and the healer. No wonder St Luke is the patron saint of doctors and healing (and also of artists).

There is often a period of a few days of warm sunny pleasant weather in mid-October. This is called St Luke's Little Summer and was traditionally seen in country districts as a gift from the kindly saint to cheer everyone before the winter.

I don't suggest you do what a group of monks used to do. They would gather up all their income for the month onto a blanket, each take a corner, and throw the money up in the air, catching it again as it landed. Someone saw them doing this one month and asked what it was all about. "Well," the abbot said, "we give the money up to God, who keeps what he wants, the rest of it he gives back to us!"

Moving on. What do you spend money on? How much do you spend on a night out? A night in? A casual take-away coffee? A game of golf, a ticket to the cinema? A gadget? Another luxury? How does your giving to the church compare with your other spending? Does your giving reflect your belief and faith in Jesus?

These are hard questions to consider. But we shouldn't shy away from them, especially as we have a large shortfall this year.

So, what can you do?

1. If you currently put cash in the collection plate, then please try to start **planned giving**. Pay by standing order, or ask Phil for a set of envelopes. This way of giving is really helpful to us.
2. If you are a tax payer, sign up to **Gift Aid**. This means if you give £100, the church receives £125. The government pay the extra.
3. **Review your giving**. If you are giving the same amount as you did 5 or 10 years ago, please re-evaluate and consider if you can increase it.
4. **Make a will**, and leave some money to church.
5. We are having a **Gift Day** on our Harvest Festival, on **Sunday 10th October**. Please consider making a one-off donation to church, as well as donating dry goods for the Welcome Centre food bank.
6. It's not all about money. **Can you help at church** in any way? We need cleaners, CD operators, readers, intercessors, people with technical skills, gardeners, sides-people, stewards, bakers. In fact, we need you!
7. **Pray!** Pray that God will give us what we need. Ask God to guide your giving. And pray that we are good stewards of all that is entrusted to us as individuals and as a church.

And finally, a prayer that might be familiar to you: All things come from you, O Lord, and of your own do we give you. **Amen**.

Living in Love & Faith, part 5

by Fr Simon

Today we begin looking at specific Bible texts.

Genesis 1.26-27

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Question: Does this passage show that male and female humans are created completely distinctively, and that there is no cross-over between them? This is the view that some people take. It is not my reading of the text, let me explain why...

Firstly, we look at the wider text. In this first chapter of Genesis, God creates the world. As part of this he creates the sun and the moon, to rule by day and by night. This does not mean that there is nothing in between (just because it wasn't mentioned explicitly in the text). There is, for example, twilight, dusk, artificial light. Sometimes the moon shines during the day, sometimes the sun is eclipsed. Similarly, in this creation story, God separates the waters into the sky and on the ground. But there are all sorts of ways and states in which water exists, ebbs and flows. I'm thinking particularly of high clouds, low clouds, and a mist hovering low; it's hard to say where one ends and the other begins.

If we extend this to humans (Adam and Eve), we can also see that two poles are described in the text, male and female, but this doesn't exclude all sorts of possibilities in between.

Secondly, this creation account is not a science text book. It is a story showing us that God brings all things into existence, and continually gives us life. It shows that we reflect God's image, and have a particular place and role in creation (which we should protect and nurture as its stewards). It shows that it is good to have a structure and rhythm to our week. It shows how important it is to reflect on our work, and that rest is necessary. It shows the creativity of God in the most beautiful story.

Finally, we look at medical matters. People who are intersex used to be unheard of; this doesn't mean that they didn't exist, but that they were ignored, or assigned a sex as the midwives or doctors decided. Intersex people are born with bodies (including genitals) which do fit the typical binary notions of male or female bodies. This happens and always has. It is only recently that intersex people are widely recognised, not hidden away, and not made to feel ashamed because of the way that they have been made.

For me, creation is full of wonderful, God-given wonder and variety. This includes sex, gender and sexuality. We are continually discovering more about the natural world, about sub-atomic particles, about new species, about medicine, and about sex, gender and sexuality. This is part of our on-going relation with God, with our world, with others and with ourselves.

Let me know if you want me to look any particular biblical text next month, and I will do my best.