

Winter 2022

IN TOUCH

**GOD IS NOT JUST
FOR CHRISTMAS**

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will never walk in
darkness, but will have the light of life'

John 8:12

St John's Lindow
www.saint-johns.org.uk

SIMON'S SCRAWL

by Simon Gales

Hopefully you are looking forward to some time off work over the Christmas period. Some time spent in the company of friends & family. A chance to switch off from the stresses and strains of the past year.

We all need such times of rest and relaxation, and yet too long doing nothing can seriously damage your health! Many will tell how difficult and demotivating a period of unemployment proved to be. As the article on the next page explains we human beings were designed for work (yes, it was there in the Garden of Eden!) and that's the theme of this magazine.

The Christmas story itself speaks of a God who has 'rolled up his sleeves' and got involved in this world. That Jesus grew up as the son of a carpenter, helping his dad in the workshop, is a divine mandate for manual labour, along with every other sort of work. Paid or unpaid, business or non-profit, it is God's good gift to us!

At this time of year we easily lose sight of that as we grumble about a return to work in the new year! And for the rest of the year many of us make the opposite mistake and give work too much devotion. We naturally think of an idol as a wooden statue, but the Bible says that an idol is anything which takes the place of God; a good thing become a God-thing. Whatever we look to for significance and security, safety and fulfilment – that is our idol!

The tragedy is that such idols promise much but fail to deliver. Work, which once held the intoxicating promise of status and security, ends up demanding ever more

'devotion', ever more 'sacrifice' of time and energy. Such a 'god' is not only demanding but unforgiving. If you build your life on your work and it fails, it won't forgive you. It will only punish you with self-loathing and regret.



How different is the One born in the stable of Bethlehem. Jesus said he had 'not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'. (Mark10:45) A ransom – the price paid to set people free. In his death, Jesus paid the price to set people free – free from the penalty of sin, free from guilt and shame, free from the treadmill of self-justification, self-security. Replaced with the security of God's forgiveness now, and a heavenly home ahead. And when work is no longer crushed under the expectation of delivering meaning and purpose, then we are set free to enjoy it as the good gift of our Creator!

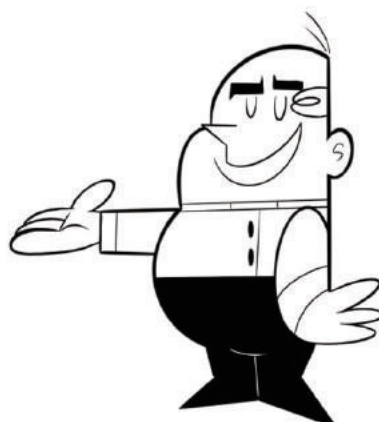
If you're ready to read more about the God who came not to demand but to forgive, then please pick up a copy of *The Ultimate Christmas Wishlist* (see page 9)

Happy Christmas!

Simon

SKETCHY THEOLOGY

BY BEN HOLLINSHEAD



Everyone was confused when the dyslexic vicar announced:
"The Dog in the manger is not just for Christmas."

THANK GOD IT'S JANUARY!

By David Watts



Jürgen Prochnow - U-boat commander in the classic film *Das Boot* - facing mortal peril in the Atlantic during WW II, looked forward with longing to Christmas back home in Germany and hearing again the account of Jesus' nativity in *Das Lukas Evangelium* - Luke's gospel. The incarnation of God's Son is indeed the most wonderful beginning of his saving intervention in world history. Rightly we celebrate with singing, feasting, exchanging gifts and family togetherness. Yet high expectations can be unrealised. These earthly blessings are pointers to our eternal home, not ends in themselves. For, in the words of C.S. Lewis: "we were made for another world".

Christmas festivities can't go on for ever. There are definite limits: for time with relatives plus consumption of box sets and Quality Street! The Bible mandates cycles of work and rest, including holiday feasts and recreation. So why should we joyfully embrace the arrival of the New Year? – observed globally in January; but Chinese New Year starts a bit later: January 22 in 2023.

New Year is an integral aspect of the created seasons: In Genesis 8:22, God affirms:

***"As long as the earth endures,
seed-time and harvest,
cold and heat, summer and winter,
day and night will never cease".***

This annual cycle – understood scientifically as due to the tilt of the earth's axis, in its elliptical motion around the sun – manifests the reliability and faithfulness of God. But time and history are essentially *linear*, rather than *cyclical*. History is moving progressively closer to its consummation in the final "Day of the Lord"; to the *second* Advent of Christ. Thus, St. Paul writes: "The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed". (Romans 13:11).

By resuming work - paid or unpaid - in January, we resume deployment of our God-given gifts.

These are integral to our identity and personal fulfilment as God's image-bearers. Christian ethics enables us to distinguish between first and second things. First things concern our restored relation to God as his children, through faith in his Son. When Christians are liberated from making hopeless idols out of secondary things - including work, family and recreational activities - we are free to fully participate in them proportionately and enjoyably. We earthlings are sharers in our God-given responsibility for human flourishing upon earth. We have diversities of natural gifts. And our contributions - both large and small - are essential to the common good.

For the Christian, there is an added motivation: God is our ultimate master. We don't necessarily like our Prime Minister or the Chief Executive of any organisation we may work for. But God our Maker and Redeemer stands above them all:

***"Whatever you do,
work at it with all your heart,
as working for the Lord, not for men,
since you know you will receive an
inheritance from the Lord as a reward.
It is the Lord Christ you are serving".***

(Colossians 3: 23-24)

Alice Hutton: Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship

Hello St John's!

I am currently working as a Relay Worker for UCCF (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship). My role this year is to work alongside Northumbria University Christian Union to help them to share the gospel with students at their university. I do this by helping at outreach events they put on including their events week in March and other events throughout the year as well as their regular CU meetings. I also meet up with students one to one to read through the bible with them so that together we can grow in our knowledge and love of Christ. In addition to this I also do my own studies. This includes reading through Wayne Grudem's 'Systematic Theology' as well as reading and listening to many other essays and talks from a variety of people. The study block I am currently doing is titled 'The God who Speaks' and we are looking at how God reveals himself through His Word. I have found this really interesting, and it has helped me grow in my love for the scripture and my desire to know God more through it. Additionally, we get to choose a subject to study that interests us. The Relay Worker for Newcastle, Tom Ackroyd, our Staff Worker Pete Johnson, and I have chosen to do a biblical counselling course together, going through the book 'Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands'. I have already found this so helpful in learning how to counsel both myself and others through the Word of God.



Alice (far right) with students from Newcastle and Northumbria CU

So far there have been many joys of the job! I have loved getting to know the students of Northumbria CU and seeing their desire to share Jesus with both their friends and students they do not yet know at the university. I

have also loved the opportunity to chat through the Christian faith with people who are still exploring it. Another joy of the job is getting to know the other Relay Workers and Staff Workers in the Northeast region with our monthly Team Training days and Relay Training days. In the last couple of weeks, we have been down to Huddersfield for some

apologetics training and to Sheffield where the whole NE team gathered to have some training. These days are so valuable in helping us to lean on one another and learn from the experience of others as well as being able to grow in a specific area.

Whilst I have really enjoyed my time so far this is not to say it has been without challenges. Settling into this role

that does not have an obvious regular structure has been difficult when every week looks different! It can also be very difficult to make sure that everything I am learning is not just adding to my head knowledge but that it is affecting my heart also. So, I would greatly appreciate your prayer in that.

Best of wishes, and hopefully see you soon,
Alice Hutton



Alice with Mason and Mitz, two Northumbria CU committee members

CHAT FROM THE CHAIRS

Marc Hollinshead talks to: Martin Haywood

Marc: Where did you grow up and what brought you to this area?

Martin: I grew up in London, in the north-west suburbs. Moving to Manchester I studied Chemistry at the university. My first job was in Manchester and I lived near the church I belonged to in Sale. My Wilmslow connection was much more recent, about 2013, when I started coming to the evening services.

Marc: It's great to have you with us! What have you done for work over the years?

Martin: Before graduating I worked in hospitals in India and London. I then spent ten years working in the Science industry and conducted a lot of valuable research, with work in AstraZeneca following on. These areas included preclinical toxicology, synthetic chemistry, work in university research labs and much more!

Marc: Wow, that sounds like an interesting field of work! How did you become a Christian through all of this?

Martin: There were many influences such as family, Sunday school, teachers, an older friend, a youth club and Bible class, Bible reading and prayer to commit to God and ask for his forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' sacrificial death and Scriptural promises. So, from darkness, God in grace brought me into light.

Marc: Every Christian is a miracle! How has your faith impacted your attitude to work and life in general?

Martin: From my earliest teenage years, it has motivated me to try and give of my best to honour and serve God in all areas of my life. It has also enabled me to be generous with my time. Even the most arduous work (and there has been some!) I've been able to face positively to do the best I can, as well as be persistent with the difficult work. My faith has also helped me to get on with and accept some difficult people!



Marc: I couldn't agree more with faith being life changing. What eventually brought you to St John's and how are you finding church life?

Martin: Initially I came to St John's as my former church had to discontinue its evening services. I had the recommendation of knowing both George P and Phil E whom I had invited as preachers to our church and I'd previously met Simon as a guest at our work Christian Fellowship for which I was the programme secretary. Many people have helped me feel a part of the church. It has been especially good to be in a homegroup and to have various other opportunities for involvement. For many years I was a Church Elder and Secretary at Sale Evangelical Church and have taken part in the Northwest Partnership course. Now I am back to youth work with teens, which has been a theme from the start, and weekly commitments at two churches.

Marc: Sounds like a very fruitful life! How do you think God will challenge you going forward?

Martin: How to respond to the identity of Anglicanism and express our gospel unity with all believers. The best is yet to come!

We asked a few members of our church family about their work, and how as a Christian they had coped with some of the challenges...

Joe Wong

I migrated to the UK from Hong Kong with my wife and daughter at the end of March and we are currently living in Wilmslow.



On September 26, 1992, I was baptized as a Christian at the Church of God in Hong Kong. In my work, I was the Chief Engineer of a high-speed craft passenger company (Turbojet) between Hong Kong and Macau, being with them for 22 years. But in 2019, due to the drastic changes in Hong Kong's politics and education, for the future of our daughter, my wife and I decided to give up everything in Hong Kong and move to the UK to start a new life. We have had to face many things and difficulties, such as applying for various documents, the consignment of household items to the UK, finding a house, schools and various applications, but because I am a Christian, I have entrusted all these matters to God, and I know that as long as I trust him, God will lead my family on the right path. Thanks to God's guidance, less than two months after I came to the UK, I found a first job as a 'general operative', customizing the pallets of auto parts for car manufacturers. It is very different from my previous job in Hong Kong, which is difficult, but if my daughter can get a good education, living happily every day, and my family can breathe the air of freedom, then I think it's all worth it.



Yejing



I am a full-time homemaker and homeschooling mum, so that is cooker, cleaner, driver, tutor, cheerleader etc., but in a word 'helper' - to my husband and children in whatever way I can serve my Lord Jesus Christ.

Why did I choose to stay at home? I remember in our marriage preparation the pastor's wife said to me 'You can't serve both your family and your career wholeheartedly at the same time. You will have to sacrifice one for the other.' That had a big impact on our thoughts - I would be more helpful to Wentao if I stayed at home.

The biggest challenge with my job I have ever had was the tension in our marriage when Wentao wanted to relocate to another country and I had finally started to



feel settled after the last relocation. The conflicted opinions and hurts between us couldn't be resolved, so I chose to obey my husband in order to obey God and to keep my role as a helper to him, as I believed that was what God wanted me to do. For me personally, it was a difficult time, but through prayer, while I suffered for God, he granted me his strength to persevere, with the hope that enabled me to wait for the Lord. By God's grace, after three difficult years, we reconciled with each other and God restored and renewed our marriage with an even stronger bond, and deeper intimacy. Every time I look back, I become more and more thankful that we built our marriage on the solid rock of our Lord Jesus Christ from day one. Though life becomes more demanding, the Lord grants me enough strength, as I rely more on him.



Before I was a mum I was a Project Manager so since then I have used those skills in several volunteer roles. I was a committee member and then secretary for Wilmslow Wells for Africa for many years in 1990's, helping to organise fund raising events and replying to letters from communities in Africa requesting help. So many letters came written on typewriters with virtually no ink, so hard to read!

At The Message Trust, a mission based here in Manchester, I volunteered on a weekly basis for 5 years, working on reception, in fund raising, dressing the function room for dinners, making coffee, maintaining the database and stuffing envelopes. It was a dynamic, fast moving environment and prayerfully reliant on God. My faith was greatly encouraged when I got to meet people whose lives had been completely transformed by the gospel.

Most recently, Nick and I lead a small team of volunteers who plan, set up and run the Crossthwaite campsite to support the 3 week Keswick Convention. It's hard work, especially in wet weather but the gathering of 350 Christians in a sheep field is surely a small foretaste of heaven!? This latest role is teaching me to be servant-hearted as you clean toilets and sort rubbish put into the incorrect recycling bin! What Would Jesus DO? – smile and get on with it, I tell myself.

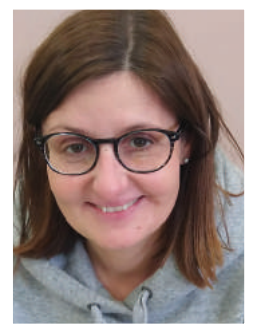


Nadine Morgan

I have worked as a Music teacher in secondary schools for about 15 years, 12 of those years around Manchester. I now work part time as I have the boys to look after. The teaching environment has changed over the past few years quite rapidly with new agendas being set by the government. Obviously technology has played a large part in this and can be seen to have a positive and



negative impact on young people and it can be hard to watch young people struggle with these ever changing environments of Tiktok, Instagram, Snapchat etc. As a Christian I do find teaching harder than before and the shifting agendas that I face. However, I know that God is with me through it all and he is the Cornerstone on



which I stand. I just pray that I can be the light he wants me to be in my school.

Lottie Behardien

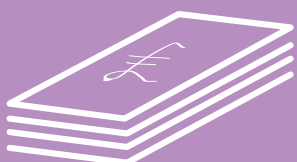
I work in Science IT at AstraZeneca where my role is to talk to scientists, understand their Digital challenges and then work with IT to deliver solutions to help. In my day to day I'm often working within a male dominated industry, and with people who are often a lot smarter than I am. It's easy to let the impostor syndrome kick in and think "do I really belong here? am I really helping to make a difference?". In these times my Christian faith reminds me that I am fearfully and wonderfully made by God's hand. And, even if this job isn't the perfect place for me, God's power can still shine through in our weaknesses. So really, in Jesus, we're all conquerors!



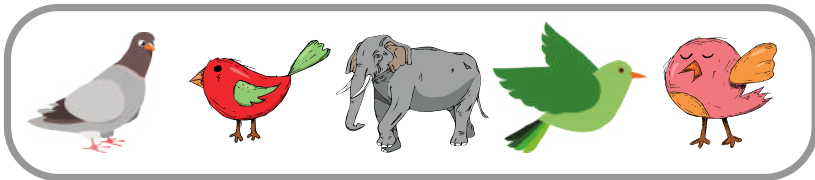
Ronnie and Iris

Relocating to the UK, we never expected a smooth transition in terms of having a job, but walking by faith, so we just asked for having enough. Ronald is doing an accounting job and I am working on animation projects. Workload could be a challenge for us, but I'd say that the work culture is the main 'surprise' for us. We used to be in a stressful working environment in HK, but we have found that here companies would rather prioritise the mental wellness of their staff. Colossians 3:23-24 says 'Whatever you do,

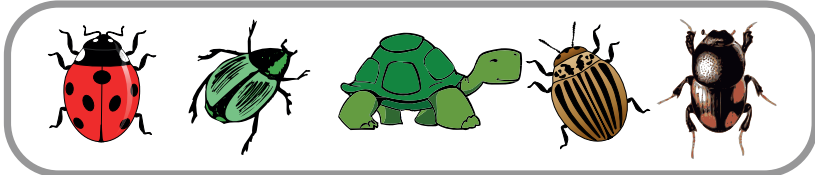
work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving'. By this we are reminded to enjoy working. Maybe it is more enjoyable if we can think more of contributing to the mental wellness of others when at work.



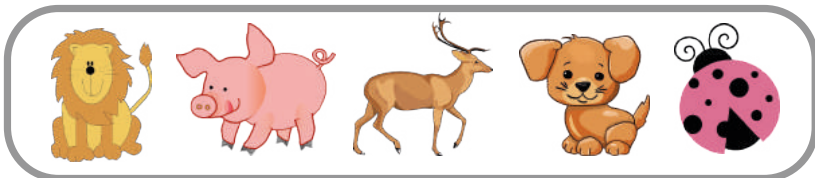
Being a Christian at School



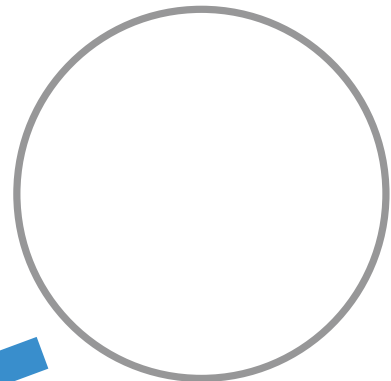
Can you circle the “odd one out” in each row?



Do you sometimes feel like the odd one out at school because you follow Jesus? How does that make you feel?



Can you draw an emoji to show this?



Read Matthew 27 verses 27-31

What were some of the awful things the soldiers did to Jesus?

M _ _ _ _ v29

S _ _ _ v30

S _ _ _ _ v30

Jesus understands that horrible feeling when you are being laughed at by others. Why not talk to him about how you feel?

Jesus teaches us to pray for our enemies and helps us to treat others better than they treat us. (Luke 23 v34)

Isaiah 43 v1 God says, “I have called you by name, you are mine.”

Remember when you see the name tag in your coat every school day that you belong to God!

This item belongs to:

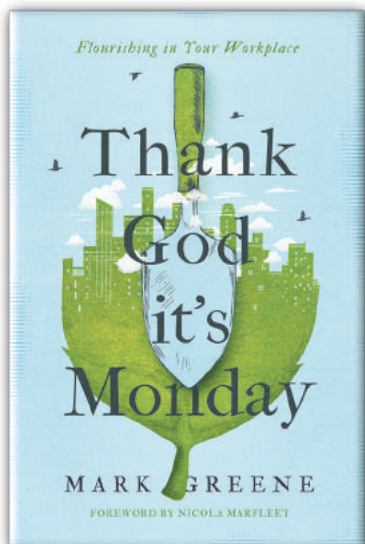
I really, really want a...

What's the thing that everybody at school wants or already has, that you want to? Can you draw it below?

Does this thing cause fights and fall-outs at school?

God sees how our world and hearts are broken. He knows that we live for what doesn't last and value things more than people. (James 4 v1-2)

BOOK REVIEWS



Thank God it's Monday – Mark Greene

Reviewed by Jonny Walsh

If, like me, you're a Christian in paid work, then you'll probably spend more time in the workplace than any other. With that in mind, it's important to have a Godly understanding of work; of where it fits into God's plan for humanity, and how our lives of faith and work interact.

The purpose of Mark Greene's book, "Thank God it's Monday" is to help Christians live an integrated life. As he puts it, "the workplace is God's place", and "God's identity and ours don't change at 9am each day". In his book he considers life as a Christian in the workplace, evangelising in the workplace, prayer for the workplace, our relationships at work – with our bosses and with our staff, and our attitudes to work; do we approach our work with a heart of service; do we see it an act of worship?

The book is very practical. Mark Greene introduces a variety of toolsets which he encourages his readers to use in order plan their approach to workplace ministry, to consider the quality of their working lives, and to assess their attitude to work. In addition, he's packed his book with real life illustrations which really bring his points to life.

It's an area of ministry that Mark Greene thinks is much neglected, because for many of us it's one of our main social communities. I've enjoyed the book; it's been a challenging but thoroughly helpful read.



The Ultimate Christmas Wishlist – Rico Tice

Reviewed by Will Hepworth

Rico Tice strikes again with another great stocking filler this Christmas!

The Ultimate Christmas Wishlist, as its name suggest, is a book about Christmas. It is surprising, therefore, that this highly readable and interest-grabbing booklet barely mentions the Nativity story. Instead, Rico looks past the manger and the stable to see the hope of Christmas through the lens of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Tice looks at four things the world desperately wants but cannot find: hope, peace, purpose, and confidence, and shows how all these things are offered in the gift of Christ on Christmas day.

This booklet is aimed for non-Christians seeking faith, and would be great for a friend, but it can just as easily be an encouragement to believers. It would

be great for anyone feeling tied down and fatigued by the endless bad news of current events, by personal troubles or lethargy.

Editor's note: Pick up a free copy from the church porch in the run up to Christmas



"A happy family starting a new life in England, going to concerts, exploring life style, school life, trains and games, and making new friends."

Frank & Josephine, with our sons Joshua and Joleyn, and our niece Jamie.

nice to meet you



Hello! We are Candy, Anthony and Daniel. We relocated from Hong Kong to Wilmslow in September 2021. Thank you, Lord, for the blessings you have bestowed on our life. You have surrounded us with kindly friends from St John's who always look out for us.

hi!

nice to meet you! **NEW FACES**

hello



Hi everyone, we are Alex and Holly, and our little son Enoch, and a baby expected in January. We arrived UK in March 2022. It's our pleasure to join the church and happy to meet you all."



Hello, I am Rosamund Nivison (Ros). I live in Wilmslow. I am enjoying the warmth and friendliness of a family church at St John's. I am looking forward, in time, in joining in with a home group.

hello



We are family!

Kit, Janice and our daughters Carly(10) and Marni(8)

welcome!

Hello, I'm Caroline and I've lived in Wilmslow most of my life. As a child I used to go to church with my grandmother, then it was for the usual births, marriages and deaths, But I always thought I would return. I have two daughters living in London whom I see regularly despite that, and I'm very involved in clubs and activities around Wilmslow.



hi!

hi

nice to meet you

What is good work?

Lessons from Scrooge

'A Christmas Carol' is perhaps the most well-known of Charles Dickens' novels (the Muppets' version is my personal favourite). Ebenezer Scrooge is a mean businessman who despises anything joyful. The story isn't primarily about work, but it does help us think about good and bad views of work (and rest and play). We instantly feel that Scrooge's focus on a soulless drive for profit, with no respect for his employees, is a wonky view of work. Just as quickly, we warm to his transformation into a generous benefactor at the end.

But why do we feel this way? Humanly speaking there is no right or wrong way to work. Without an appeal to something beyond us we have no basis for telling the cold-hearted business person that they are wrong to think the way they do. Whilst I was working in a large UK bank, one senior executive said to me that he didn't much care how money was made (e.g. from arms deals to whoever!). Protests from other bankers bounced off him like a modern-day Scrooge, because as an atheist he did not have to care.

But the good news is that our working lives (as well as our resting and playing lives) do have intrinsic meaning. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 show us a garden that needs to be tended and animals that need naming. This is good; work is good. Anyone that has experienced significant times of un- or under-employment will know this, but equally anyone that has worked at anything that has given them a real sense of satisfaction will also attest to it.

But that good work has been twisted by our rejection of our creator God. Genesis 3 is an account of us

telling God that we think we know better in all things, including how we work. Scrooges are evidence of this twisted view of work (sacrificing things including people for their work) – though equally, the person that never works isn't any better. Just because someone smiles and says: 'don't worry, be happy' doesn't mean that they have a better view of work than Scrooge – they've just undercooked it the other way.

Keep in mind also that when Jesus returns, he will renew this world; not in a way that will erase who we are or what we have done, but in a way that redeems everything, including our work. Christians won't be anonymous angelic figures floating on clouds; we'll be us, individually recognizable people in a physical world. We and our world will bear the marks of our work as well as our leisure. On one level or another not the least stroke of your pen, the least strike of your hammer or the least stitch of your needle, will be lost. Gloriously transformed (thank God!) but not lost. That's not something even the new Scrooge understood!



Gareth was Youth, Children and Families Minister at St. John's from 2010-2019 and now works as a lecturer at Cliff College. He lives in Buxton with his wife and three teenage sons. Before working at St. John's he worked in finance in London for seven years.

WINTER/EASTER PROGRAMME

	Mornings 10am	SUNDAYS	Evenings 6.30pm	HOMEGROUPS
1 Jan	Motto verse 2023 All-age special			Meeting in various homes around the parish during the week (evenings and afternoons) to study God's Word and to encourage and support one another.
8 Jan	Micah: Hope in Darkness Micah 1 Disaster is coming!	1 Thessalonians: Standing Firm 1 Thess 1:1-10 A faith that is real		
15 Jan	Micah 2 Leaders astray		1 Thess 2:1-12 A love that labours	
22 Jan	Micah 3:1 - 5:15 Ruin and restoration		1 Thess 2:13-16 A word that works	During the first half of term our homegroups are linked to our Sunday morning services. Meeting weekly the groups begin on 12 th Jan until 9 th Feb. (dates given are Thursdays but some groups meet at other times, full details on weekly notice sheet).
29 Jan	Micah 6:1 - 7:20 There is a future		1 Thess 2:17 - 3:5 A love that suffers	
5 Feb	The Secular Creed: 'Love is love'		1 Thess 3:6-13 A passion that prays	
12 Feb	All-age parade - Luke 10:25-37 Costly Love		BIG QUESTION: Aren't we better-off without religion?	In the second half of term we're running a selection of short courses (starting 1/2 March to 5/6 April, times & venues tbc): 1.How to raise your children 2.How to be an encourager 3.How to read your Bible
19 Feb	2 ½ Cheers for the Church of England: Biblical		1 Thess 4:1-12 A life that pleases	
26 Feb	2 ½ Cheers for the Church of England: Reformed		1 Thess 5:1-11 A future that is real	
5 Mar	2 ½ Cheers for the Church of England: Locally focused?		1 Thess 5:1-11 A hope that endures	In addition a men's fellowship meets at 6.30am Fridays
12 Mar	All-age parade Luke 19:11-27 All at once?		1 Thess 5:12-28 A God who will do it all	
19 Mar	The Secular Creed: 'Transgender women are women'		BIG QUESTION: Isn't Christianity homophobic?	
26 Mar	Church weekend away			MONTHLY PRAYER EVENTS (in church rooms) 7 January Prayer Breakfast 8.30-9.30am 16 February Prayer Evening 8-9pm 11 March Prayer breakfast 8.30-9.30am
2 Apr	Confirmation service: Rt Revd Mark Tanner, Bishop of Chester			
6 April	Maundy Thursday Informal communion			
7 April	Good Friday All-age service		(2pm) An hour at the Cross	
9 Apr	Easter All-age		Easter Parade	

SPECIAL EVENTS

Jan. 20

Men's Curry Night
Coach and Four

Jan. 21

10am-4.30pm

Rejoicing in the Spirit: NW Gospel Partnership annual conference, The Edge, Wigan

Jan. 29

12.15pm

Evergreens Lunch

Mar. 12

12.15pm

Evergreens Lunch

Mar. 18

10am-4pm

Youth & Children Leaders training day

CREATED – Living in God's World, St Andrews Leyland