

# THE THREE DECKER

## CHURCH NEWS

FEBRUARY 2022

Price £1

VOL. 140 No. 2



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|                                                                                |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Vicar:</b> FATHER GRAHAM ADAMSON, Berkswich Vicarage, 97 Baswich Lane ..... | 251057       |
| <b>Associate Priest:</b> The Rev'd Joy BISHOP, 21 Farndown Road .....          | 603074       |
| <b>Curate:</b> The Rev'd David CLARK .....                                     | 07999 596590 |
| <b>Lay Reader:</b> Henry Birtley .....                                         | 07512 204653 |

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**Parish Office: Holy Trinity Church, Baswich Lane, ST17 0BY .....** 253111

**Churchwardens:** Mrs. JUDITH RENNARD .. [wardenjudith@berkswich.org.uk](mailto:wardenjudith@berkswich.org.uk)  
Mr. CHRIS BOWEN .. [wardenchris@berkswich.org.uk](mailto:wardenchris@berkswich.org.uk)

**Congregational Wardens:** Holy Trinity – Mrs. B. FOSTER ..... 246433  
St. Thomas' – Mr. B. GILSON ..... 660010  
All Saints – Mr. B. GILSON ..... 660010

**P.C.C. Officers:** Vice-Chairman – Mrs. M. JOHNSON ..... 662581  
Secretary – Mrs. S. HATTON ..... 661767  
Treasurer – Mr. A. MORRISON ..... 223228

**Other Officers:** Parish Coordinator – Ms. P. ASTON ..... 253111  
Planned Giving Officer – Mrs. J. MORRISON ..... 223228  
Electoral Roll Officer – Mrs. S. DANIEL ..... 664777

**Stewardship Recorders:** Holy Trinity – Mrs. J. MORRISON ..... 223228  
St. Thomas' – Mr. C. JONES ..... 663883  
All Saints – Mr. R. MOORE ..... 664302  
Trinity Ark: Parish Office ..... 253111

**Drop-in:** Mr. John SABERTON ..... 662355

**Safeguarding Officer:** Miss M. MOSS ..... 249390

**Church Flowers:** Holy Trinity – Mrs. B. FOSTER ..... 246433  
St. Thomas' – Mrs. J. JONES ..... 663883  
All Saints – Mrs. S. HODGENS ..... 661685

**Churchyard Maintenance:** Holy Trinity – Mr. N. McCORMACK ..... 604433  
St. Thomas' – Mr. M. J. SPENCER ..... 614532

**Parish Magazine:** Co-ordinator – Mrs. M. JOHNSON ..... 662581  
Treasurer – Mrs. C. DREDGE ..... 665167  
Advertisements - Mr. K. KELLY  
Distribution – Mr. K. SNEDDON ..... 660887  
[kvnsned@aol.com](mailto:kvnsned@aol.com)

## **Berkswich C.E.(C)**

**Primary School:** Head Teacher – Ms. S. JACKSON ..... 337360

**Mothers' Union:** Leader – Mrs. A. PARKES ..... 661546  
Secretary – Mrs J MYATT .....

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## **Berkswich Methodist Church:**

**Circuit Office:** ..... 229973

**St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church:** Lynton Avenue ..... 661012

**Wildwood Church: MARKUS WEBER - Elder** The Gateway, 2 Wildwood Gate Stafford,  
ST17 4RA (Meetings held in Barnfields School) ..... 01785 665062

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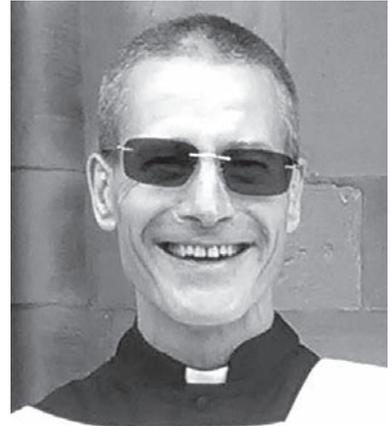
# The Three Decker

*Berkswich Parish Magazine*

www.berkswich.org.uk

February

## *A Letter from our Curate Rev'd David Clark*



Dear Friends,

For many people Christmas is a distant memory. Even those who keep their decorations up until twelfth night have long since packed everything away in boxes for another year. Except...in the church. The forty days of our Christmas season end with Candlemas, or The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, to give it its full title. This takes place on 2nd February. Our crib scenes will be removed, and our focus will turn from Jesus in the manger to Christ on the cross. That place of pain and suffering, of redemption and salvation, was the destination of the Christmas babe, the Word made flesh, God incarnate.

Simeon, in the words of the Nunc Dimittis, recognised Jesus as the source of salvation for all people. He was also given insight to be able to tell Mary that this salvation would come at a great price, both for Jesus and for Mary herself. In many ways the cross, foreshadowed in Simeon's words, is the true message of Christmas.

Of course, it is not just at Candlemas that we look to the cross and the events of Good Friday and Easter Day. Week by week, as we share in the

Eucharist, the great thanksgiving, we recall the night before Jesus died; the sharing of bread and wine at the last supper, the one perfect sacrifice and the promise of new life in the resurrection. The way the Eucharist is offered involves all the senses. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and speaking, as well as engaging our emotional and spiritual self. During February, at each of our Sunday Eucharists we will be exploring just how the senses are involved as we share in the liturgy. Do join us as we develop our discipleship in this way.

It is our intention to continue to provide opportunities for everyone to be refreshed by prayer, word and sacrament in each church building every week. There are two Eucharists on Sundays and two other Eucharists during the week, (details can be found elsewhere in this edition). You are warmly invited to join us at any of these celebrations, which are at the heart of our Christian life and inform all that we do.

May you know the presence of God in your lives as we follow Jesus from cradle to cross.

*David*



**PARISH OFFICE:** For Baptisms, Marriages and other enquiries, please telephone the Parish Office on 01785 253111 (Weekdays 10 am to 12 pm except Bank Holidays) or email: parishoffice@berkswich.org.uk Berkswich Parish Website: www.berkswich.org.uk **(Closed at the present time.)**

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# SERVICES FEBRUARY 2022

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|                                                     |                                |                                                                                                                                                         |                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2nd February</b>                                 | 12.00 noon<br>8.00 pm          | Said Eucharist<br>Compline                                                                                                                              | All Saints'<br>On Line                           |
| <b>3rd February<br/>Anskar</b>                      | 10.30 am                       | Sung MU Eucharist                                                                                                                                       | St. Thomas'                                      |
| <b>6th February<br/>4th Sunday<br/>before Lent</b>  | T.B.C.<br>6.30 pm              | Parish Eucharist<br>Evening Prayer<br>followed by discussion group<br><i>Sermon theme: Embodying Christ together in our shape</i>                       | Holy Trinity & On Line<br>On Line                |
| <b>9th February</b>                                 | 12.00 noon<br>8.00 pm          | Said Eucharist<br>Compline                                                                                                                              | All Saints'<br>On Line                           |
| <b>10th February<br/>Scholastica</b>                | 10.30 am                       | Sung Eucharist<br>and Discussion Group                                                                                                                  | St. Thomas'                                      |
| <b>13th February<br/>3rd Sunday<br/>before Lent</b> | 8.45 am<br>10.45 am<br>6.30 pm | Sung Eucharist<br>Sung Eucharist<br>Evening Prayer<br>followed by discussion group<br><i>Sermon theme: Embodying Christ together in our sound</i>       | All Saints'<br>Holy Trinity & On Line<br>On Line |
| <b>16th February</b>                                | 12.00 noon<br>8.00 pm          | Said Eucharist<br>Compline                                                                                                                              | All Saints'<br>On Line                           |
| <b>17th February<br/>Janani Luwum</b>               | 10.30 am                       | Sung Eucharist<br>followed by discussion group                                                                                                          | St. Thomas'                                      |
| <b>20th February<br/>2nd Sunday<br/>before Lent</b> | 8.45 am<br>10.45 am<br>6.30 pm | Sung Eucharist<br>Sung Eucharist<br>Evening Prayer<br>followed by discussion group<br><i>Sermon theme: Embodying Christ together in our physicality</i> | All Saints'<br>Holy Trinity & On Line<br>On Line |
| <b>23rd February<br/>Polycarp</b>                   | 12.00 noon<br>8.00 pm          | Said Eucharist<br>Compline                                                                                                                              | All Saints'<br>On Line                           |
| <b>24th February</b>                                | 10.30 am                       | Sung Eucharist<br>followed by discussion group                                                                                                          | St. Thomas'                                      |
| <b>27th February<br/>1st Sunday<br/>Before Lent</b> | 8.45 am<br>10.45 am<br>6.30 pm | Sung Eucharist<br>Sung Eucharist<br>Evening Prayer<br>followed by discussion group<br><i>Sermon theme: Embodying Christ together in our rhythms</i>     | All Saints'<br>Holy Trinity & On Line<br>On Line |

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### THREE DECKER DISTRIBUTION

In response to our plea in the January magazine a person has very kindly volunteered to deliver magazines in Bideford Avenue.

In April we are looking for a volunteer to take on Sue Hawkins' round of 12 magazines which includes addresses in Lodge Gardens, Brocton Rd as far as Dora Rose and Broc Hill Way.

If you feel you could help please ring Kevin Sneddon on 660887.

We thank Sue for her help and support over the last few years.

*MJ/KS*

### Farewell to

#### NAOMI GAME-BLACKMOOR

After well over a decade playing the organ and piano for the parish Naomi has made the sad decision to leave us. She is now working full time and finding it difficult to juggle her time between work and family life, weekends becoming precious to her. We are extremely indebted to her for the time and service she has given to our parish. Playing the organ virtually every week at the All Saints' Eucharist, each month she would rush off to St. Thomas to accompany either the Sunday Live service or Matins, and another week double up at Holy Trinity for the Family Eucharists. Also occasionally playing at Evensong and other evening services, including an evening singers practice where we learnt new and modern hymns. All Saints congregations will miss her gentle playing of hymns and spiritual music as they prepare for the service. Please, Naomi accept our grateful thanks, we wish you well and keep in touch. We shall miss you.

#### REPLACEMENT ORGANIST FOR ALL SAINTS

If any readers know of an organist or pianist who may be able and willing to accompany hymns and other church music please let us know. Initially we are looking for someone to join us at All Saints, Brocton on a Sunday at the 8.45am Eucharist.

*Mary Moss*

### THREE DECKER COLLECTION OF FEES FOR 2022

#### Important Information for Distributors and Subscribers

The Magazine Team would like to offer some guidance as to the payment of the annual fee.

#### Changes

The Parish Office is closed due to Covid and fees should no longer be pushed through the letterbox at Holy Trinity.

#### To our Distributors we suggest:

##### Either

Placing a note in each copy of the magazine, giving your name and address, and asking the subscriber to deliver their payment, either cash or cheque, in a clearly marked envelope with their name, to your address.

##### Or

Door to door collection

When the majority of fees have been collected please pass on the payments to Carol Dredge the Three Decker Treasurer – her address can be found below.

#### To our Subscribers

The Treasurer cannot accept payment from individuals as this makes it very difficult to match name to a round and for distributors to know who has paid.

Please pay your distributor, either cash or cheque, placed in a clearly marked envelope with your name. If possible pay either at the door or by delivering to the distributor's address.

#### Cheques should be made payable to Berkswich PCC

We hope that this will clarify some of the issues we have been experiencing recently.

The Team thank you for your support and hard work; without you there would be no Three Decker.

**Treasurer: Carol Dredge  
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# Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

The Mothers' Union Eucharist (all welcome) will be held at St. Thomas' Church, on Thursday, 3rd February, at 10.30 am.

Our first group meeting of 2022 also takes place at St. Thomas' Church on 23 February at 2.00 pm. We will be pleased to welcome Linda Downward from the Stafford branch of the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army is one of the largest most diverse providers of social services in the UK and Ireland. Founded in East London in 1885 it now works in 120 countries worldwide. This promises to be a most interesting talk, so please come along.

Papua New Guinea is a small independent nation in the south-western Pacific Ocean. The central part of the main island is high and rugged with jagged mountain peaks separating broad high valleys. Much of the island is covered with dense tropical rainforests and few roads. Mothers' Union was first established there in 1949 and has 22,000 members who are very active in their local communities. This includes campaigning against gender-based violence, prison ministry and adult literacy. Please pray for our members as they further the work of the Mothers' Union under very difficult conditions.

For more information about Mothers' Union please browse the website –

[www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org)

*Christine Gilson*



## God's Love

*'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'* (John 3:16)

This month, as we mark St Valentines' Day, we focus on the importance of love. In understanding the way God loves us, this verse shows us how we should love others.

**God's love is unconditional:** God demonstrated His unconditional love for us by sending His Son into this world, to show us how we should love others, especially when it is undeserved! *'There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. There is nothing we can do to make God love us less.'* (Philip Yancey).

**God's love is sacrificial:** God's love is not selfish or self-seeking, but selfless and self-sacrificial, putting the needs of others first. This is demonstrated by the cross, which is the supreme demonstration of God's love. He died for our sins to give us access to God's love, which is made real in our lives by the Holy Spirit.

**God's love is forgiving:** According to the film Love Story, 'Love means never having to say you're sorry.' Yet Jesus' love for us enables us to forgive others, as we find His forgiveness through the gift of eternal life, available to all who put their trust in Him.

In this World Cup Year, we remember Bobby Moore describing the terror of receiving the World Cup from the Queen in 1966: *"I noticed that the Queen was wearing some beautiful white gloves. I looked down at my hands and they were completely covered with mud!"*

Although we approach God with dirty and spoilt lives, because of His love, we can shake hands with a holy God and share that love with others.

*Editor: Dr Peter Brierley considers what 2022 may hold for us. Dr Peter Brierley is a church statistician and may be contacted on [peter@brierleyres.com](mailto:peter@brierleyres.com).*

## **The World Ahead**

Towards the end of every year The Economist publishes a comprehensive paperback looking at the year to come. For 2022, The World Ahead looks at 10 main issues, and while of course these reflect a commercial and financial viewpoint, they are also areas of concern to Christians also. They are:

1) **Democracy v autocracy** – the tensions between the rival political systems of America and China will continue to involve trade, tech regulations, vaccinations, and space stations.

2) **Pandemic to endemic** – new treatments are coming, but unless more people can be vaccinated globally, Covid-19 will become yet another endemic disease, affecting the poor more than the rich.

3) **Inflation worries** – the supply-chain interruptions and increased energy demands have pushed up prices. Will that affect charity and church finances? The UK also has an acute labour shortage.

4) **The future of work** – the work-from-home syndrome will probably mean more ‘hybrid’ workstations. Women are keener to work from home. Could this impact church life, and, if so, in what ways?

5) **The new techlash** – American and European governments have been trying to rein in the tech giants. Meanwhile, China is demanding they focus on geostrategic advantage, not “frivolities like games and shopping.”

6) **Crypto grows up** – the new crypto-currencies are being domesticated. Where will the future standard of finance fall? The central banks or somewhere else? It is still to be determined. Such issues may affect the Church Commissioners, but probably not the local church!

7) **Climate crunch** – this affects us all but still “a striking lack of urgency prevails among policymakers.” And global success, if it can be achieved, will require co-operation between the West and China.

8) **Travel trouble** – the transition to an endemic from a zero-Covid suppression (as in Australasia) may be difficult. Future business travel is likely to be much less (zoom taking over), so holiday travel could cost more. What will this mean for international Christian gatherings?

9) **Space races** – “2022 will be the first year in which more people go into space as paying passengers than government employees.” China will finish its new space station; NASA is crashing a probe into an asteroid.

10) **Political footballs** – the Beijing Winter Olympics and the football World Cup in Qatar will show just how far sport can bring nations together.

Such is the global perspective, as seen by economists. What difference would Christian leaders bring to the table? Church planting would be an obvious candidate, but there is also a need to encourage dispirited Christian people, to strengthen and empower youth work, to decide the best way forward for congregations whose churches are no longer viable, to develop a vision to meet national spiritual need, to enable leadership to focus on the top priorities without distraction on lesser things, and finally, to revitalise faith in the inspiration, authority and power of God’s Word.

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## **Global food crisis worsens**

An estimated billion people worldwide are facing malnutrition as the global food crisis worsens, with 45 million already on the brink of famine.

Of these billion people, 239 million are African. Countries such as Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are among the worst affected.

Recent studies also show that, globally, 22% of children under the age of five are ‘stunted’ due to lack of nourishment, and that many of these – an estimated 14 million babies and young children – are suffering acute and severe malnutrition.

Nearly a third of the world’s population – more than two and a half billion people – lack

an adequate supply of food. Millions of people are going to bed hungry, every single day.

In Madagascar famine has followed years of drought and other environmental disasters. Many people have been reduced to trying to eat bark from trees or cactus leaves, and many have already died.

While famine is an issue that affects all people, Christians who are already persecuted and impoverished are often among the worst affected.

Reports also indicate that famine and food insecurity only increases the likelihood of violence and conflict, which includes the anti-Christian violence experienced by believers across Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

To try and help, Barnabas Fund has launched a new initiative, food.gives. If you would like to join others who are filling up their food boxes in their homes and churches, please visit—  
**<https://www.food.gives/>**



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## PATHWAYS – HELPING TO FIND YOUR WAY...

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I can honestly say that the greatest privilege of my job as the Diocesan Training Coordinator is being involved with Pathways. I love it.

Pathways is our course that has the tagline of ‘a year of vocational reflection’. It’s for anyone who is wondering about their calling/vocation/role/work (whichever word you want to use!)

and who would like to spend some time thinking about this. It is truly humbling to hear people’s stories and to encourage people to learn more about themselves and to embrace who they are!

We provide a space for you to ask questions, to discuss ideas and views, alongside talking about potential routes people could take after Pathways. Whilst we do look at ordination and reader training this course IS NOT just for people thinking about those paths. I always say to the groups that if someone gets to the end of the course and says ‘Do you know what, I really feel I’m in the right place being a cleaner/teacher/shop assistant/CEO/stay at home parent/carer’ then that’s awesome and we’ve done our job right!

Pathways is for everyone – whether you are from the centre of the diocese, or the edge, whether you have never studied before or have a doctorate, whether you are theologically conservative or liberal – and everyone in between.

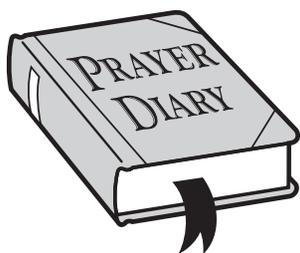
We run local groups across the diocese (numbers allowing) and an online Zoom group. The course consists of five evenings per term and three Saturday sessions. More information, including a video sharing comments from people who have previously done the course can be found on the diocesan website. You can also contact me via email at **[helen.scheven@lichfield.anglican.org](mailto:helen.scheven@lichfield.anglican.org)**

**Helen Scheven is Lichfield Diocese’s  
Training Coordinator**

Read more about Pathways on the  
diocesan website:

**[lichfield.anglican.org/pathways-to-  
ministry](https://lichfield.anglican.org/pathways-to-ministry)**





### Prayer Diary

**M**erciful God, we pray for those who are sick in hospital or at home during this global Coronavirus pandemic. Surround the frightened with your protecting presence and give strength to those in pain. Hold the weak in your loving arms, give hope and patience to those who are recovering. Bless people who are in a caring role to fulfil their vocation and treat patients in their care with tenderness and compassion. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**The holy God of Israel** sets his faithful people free - his name is the Lord Almighty. Praise and thanksgiving to God. **Amen**

**Lead us, Lord,** to do your work every day. Guide our feet to bring people to faith and to love thy neighbour as thy self. Help and strengthen us, loving Father, to proclaim the message of faith and salvation of our soul.

**May the God of hope** fill you with joy and peace in 2022 as you believe and trust in him, so that you may be filled with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Gracious God,** may the gentleness of your spirit lead me each day and my life restore I pray. **Amen**

### PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS:

Teach us, good Lord, to serve thee as thou deserve,  
To give and not to expect return,  
To fight and not to heed the wounds,  
To work and not to seek for rest,  
To labour and not to ask for any reward,  
Save that of knowing we do thy holy will.

**Amen**

*Madeleine Dudek*

Wherever we are, in light or darkness, joy or pain, God is with us. May we know the comfort of His presence, today and always. **Amen**

‘This is my comfort in my distress, that your promise gives me life.’

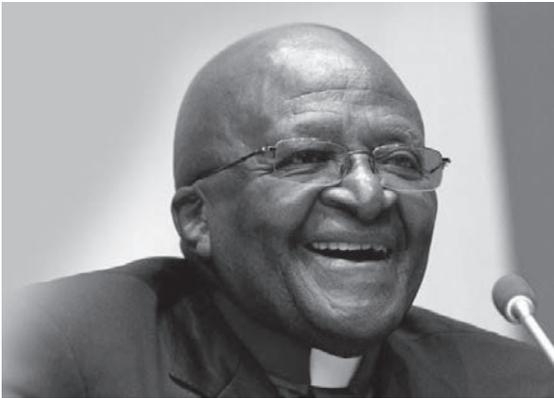
*Psalm 119: 50*

### Gracious God,

When the clouds hide your light,  
And the darkness unsteadies our faith with fear,  
Help us to hold on to you  
By the thread of one thankful prayer at a time:  
Thankful for air to breathe, for memories of goodness,  
for people who care, for the promises you have made  
and for the plans you have for us  
to give us a future and a hope. **Amen**



## Five famous quotes from Desmond Tutu



The recent death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu was mourned around the world. Here are five of his more famous quotes, which show why he was so especially honoured for his justice and reconciliation work in South Africa.

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”

“Don’t raise your voice, improve your argument. Good sense does not always lie with the loudest shouters, nor can we say that a large, unruly crowd is always the best arbiter of what is right.”

“Forgiving is not forgetting; it’s actually remembering - remembering and not using your right to hit back. It’s a second chance for a new beginning. And the remembering part is particularly important. Especially if you don’t want to repeat what happened.”

“Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realise our need of one another.”

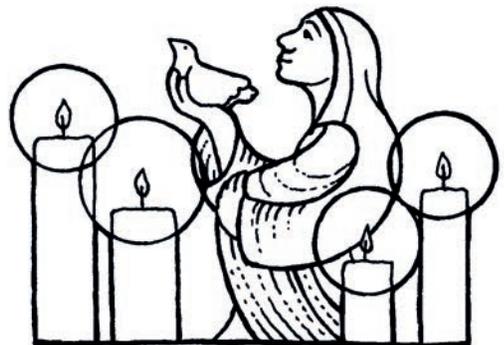
## 2nd Feb: Candlemas The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

In bygone centuries, Christians said their last farewells to the Christmas season on Candlemas, 2nd February. This is exactly 40 days after Christmas Day itself.

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first ‘public appearance’. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to ‘present Him to the Lord’. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was ‘purified’. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

So, where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year’s supply of candles for the church on this day - hence the name, Candlemas.

The story of how Candlemas began can be found in Luke 2:22-40. Simeon’s great declaration of faith and recognition of who Jesus was is of course found in the Nunc Dimittis, which is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer in the West. But in medieval times, the Nunc Dimittis was mostly used just on this day, during the distribution of candles before the Eucharist. Only gradually did it win a place in the daily prayer life of the Church.



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## A Sermon preached by Fr. Graham on Baptism of Christ Sunday

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“I have called you by name, you are mine”

Jemima is new to the school – they’ve moved across the country for her mother’s work and now she’s having to find her way half-way through the year. She queues for her school lunch, then looks around the hall wondering where to sit – what group she should join; how she will be received.

George walks down the hall in his empty house to look at his daughter’s bedroom. Pictures and souvenirs from her childhood and secondary school festoon the walls, books and scarves sit piled on the desk, left behind when this, his youngest daughter, set off for her first year at Uni. He wonders what lies ahead – what this next chapter of life will look like.

It’s last Thursday, the first anniversary of the storming of the US Capitol: Gillian looks at her social media pages, friends and family members sharing posts from Q-Anon sources suggesting the building was stormed as part of a Jewish cabal, all part of the plan by an international organisation to use the riots and the Covid vaccinations to bring about a new world order. She’s incredulous at the flaws in their logic, but wonders what’s happened to the friends she grew up with, to her country.

John groans in his sick bed. Retirement had not been difficult, but now he’s been felled with a chronic illness that leaves him lethargic, with nothing to show for his days. He feels worthless.

Julian hears the door shut behind him and walks away, heading home. He’s been in a minimum-security prison for two years for his part in a white-collar crime, and his time in prison has ended – but he can’t help but wonder whether the true penalty he’ll bear for his wrongdoing will be a life-time sentence.

- Who am I?
- Where do I belong?
- What makes me worthy?

Questions which, while they might come to the foreground in our adolescence and young adulthood, never really go away. Whether we’re asking them explicitly, or whether we’re

only subconsciously mulling them over, we often look for the answers in the wrong places – in our roles, our work, our peer groups, our country, our accomplishments and acquisitions. But ultimately, we have to acknowledge we will not find the answer there – none of them can deliver what we need.

Instead, what we need, Isaiah argues here, what we long to hear, long to hold on to, is the news of how God gives us identity and value.

In this chapter of Isaiah, the prophet is speaking to a people bloodied, bruised and beleaguered. As punishment for their arrogance and disobedience, they have been exiled – conquered by the Babylonians and thrown into another country. Before this passage, Isaiah had been throwing out words of judgment, words that virtually said “I told you so!”. Now though, he brings words that are desperately needed - words of comfort, words of hope. Tender words, reminding the exiles who they are and whose they are – despite their sins, despite what’s happened.

- The central verse of our passage is at the centre of the prophet’s message – “because you are precious in my sight, and honoured and I love you”. The commentator Claus Westermann when writing about this passage noted that, if the exiles had taken an honest look at themselves, they would see a “tiny, miserable, and insignificant band of uprooted men and women” standing on the margins of a hostile empire. An irrelevant, unimportant group of people who history should have forgotten – but instead, they are people with a new and different identity – a people valued and honoured by God.
- They are a people who belong to God – “I have called you by name, you are mine” – Israel’s comfort and hope is the one who claims them and who holds onto them – just as sheep belong to its shepherd, Israel need not fear because they are God’s
- And God holds on to them despite their sins - despite what they’ve done, God still holds on to them. They’re not given carte-blanche

to do what they like; they don't have divine licence to behave as they wish; God's love isn't permission to self-indulge and focus only on self-interest; no - they're loved despite those actions – the previous chapter in Isaiah makes it clear that God despises those actions.

It is in both the wrath of Isaiah 42 and in the grace of this chapter that “faith recognises the presence of the God who wills only to love and be loved in return”.

Who are we? Where do we belong? What makes us worthy? Whether new school joiners; whether empty nesters; whether worrying about what's happening in our world; whether dying; whether ex-prisoners – whoever we are, whatever we are, we are God's beloved. We are loved by God. That is who we are, and that is enough for us.

Our core identity as a community and as individuals lies in that fact – it doesn't lie in who we are and what we've done; it doesn't lie in our roles as individuals; it doesn't lie in whether we have influence or not; it doesn't lie in our size or wealth as a congregation and parish; - it lies in the fact that we are God's beloved – that we are loved by him, desired by him. Our sense of belonging comes not from the acceptance of our peers, not from any status our community assigns to us as a trust, but from the One who has claimed us and never let us go. From the one who has called us; the one who has redeemed us. What makes us worthy is not our individual or collective achievements – God doesn't care about that, it's irrelevant – what makes us worthy is God's gracious love for us....

God calls Israel precious in God's sight despite Israel's sins – God calls us precious in God's sight despite our sins; despite our flaws, regardless of our faults, in spite of our unimportance...

We, you, I, are God's beloved. You, we, I can trust and hope in the God who is with us, the God who will claim us. You, we, I can trust and hope in the God who will protect us, even in the midst of the floods of chaos caused by our own irresponsibility as individuals or communities.

We, you, I, are God's beloved – have been claimed by him through the waters of our baptisms; have been marked through the waters of baptism as God's children, God's beloved–sealed through those waters by God's love; cleansed by those waters no matter what we might have done and what might have happened. We, you, I, are God's beloved – God's children, with whom he is well pleased.

You are God's beloved – that is the message of our baptism – but it is also the work of our baptism. To know, and to help others know, that they too are “God's beloved”. They are words that people will struggle to hear and believe – believe me, sometimes I struggle to hear and believe them – I suspect you do too – but they are words which are desperately needed; words which the world has a hunger for, thirsts for. Words this good – love this uncommon – takes time to be believed and absorbed.

You are God's beloved – when you pass through the waters, God will be with you; for God has redeemed you; God has called you by name.

How much the world, how much we, need to know that. Epiphany is always a time when the church – and by church I mean you and I - makes a promise to look outwards into our world; when I, when you, when we all, promise to reflect God's light into our world; when we all make a promise to tell the world of God's love.

This Epiphany, let's all make a special point of doing that – of reminding those around us that they are God's beloved; that God has claimed them; that they belong to God – no matter who they are or what they've done. This Epiphany whether we're in church, whether we're at home; whether we're in the golf-course; the pub; school; work; wherever let's let those words that we are all God's beloved, that God has called us and loved us never be far from our lips.

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine – my beloved – God's beloved, that is who we are; God's beloved, that is where we belong; God's beloved, that is what makes us worthy. Praise God **Amen**

## God in the Arts

*Editor: The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a famous masterpiece by Rembrandt.*

### NUNC DIMITTIS

Waiting is a common human experience. Our lives are made up of waiting that leads to encounter, and the waiting requires patience and humility. Milton wrote in his blindness, 'They also serve who only stand and wait' as he wondered what he could do for God's kingdom now that his sight had gone.

Simeon in this month's painting of the 'Presentation of Christ' had been waiting. He belonged to a people who had been waiting for centuries. He was heir to the hopes and dreams of a nation waiting for a better world now that the holy city was in the hands of Roman

invaders. With his people he clung to the hope that God would come to bring freedom and a new life. God's chosen one, the Messiah, would bring this about. When it came, there was no fanfare, no warning, just an ordinary family from faraway Nazareth in the Temple, performing the religious duties for the firstborn son. But the waiting led to encounter, and the sight of the new-born child led to insight as Simeon recognised that light and salvation had at last come.

Rembrandt has captured all this in his painting, 'Simeon with the Christ Child in the Temple': the faith and patience, the hope and humility of an old man, a priest, who takes the babe into his arms and blesses God. It was the artist's last painting and left unfinished at his death in 1669. The figure of Mary by Simeon's side may



*Picture reprinted by kind permission of the National Museum, Stockholm.*

have been painted by another artist at a later stage. It is the aged priest and the new-born babe that impress us as we look: Simeon with his venerable beard and eyes half closed, and the tiny child cradled in his strong arms, looking up intently with his eyes open.

As Rembrandt painted this canvas, was he saying something about his own life? He had not been afraid to paint his portrait at various stages - at 21, at 35, at 53 - a total of 60 portraits covering the span of years.

In this final painting the years have moved on as we see Simeon, mouthing 'Nunc dimittis' with his eyes half closed. Is the waiting over and the journey coming to an end, so that his eyes will fully close? Or will he open them to see that with the babe in his arms, God has more in store: the promise of a future as they step out together on a new journey?



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# Parish Poet



## Another Ditty from our Roving Poet Caroline Evans

### LOOK-OUT!

T'was on the way to Wolsley Bridge  
I spied a Pill Box 'neath the ridge  
It was built in World War Two  
Around the county, quite a few

This pill box it did guard the Trent  
To the soldiers heaven sent  
Made of bricks and some cement  
A mini fort it did present.

Outlook posts to point the guns  
Helps the battles to be won  
Clad in Nature's Verdant Green  
Much of the year remains unseen

A pill box – why was this so called?  
It was the shape the story told  
The soldiers got their medication  
In fort like boxes at their station

Not all these shelters still remain  
Some were ruined by the rain  
Many now kept for the nation  
Always such a fascination

### THE CURRENT CONSUMER SOCIETY

Bigger, better faster!  
Is this the way to live?  
Always wanting more and more  
with little left to give.

Things we need to fill our homes  
Food we like to eat  
Clothes to wear for special times  
And JUST that extra treat.

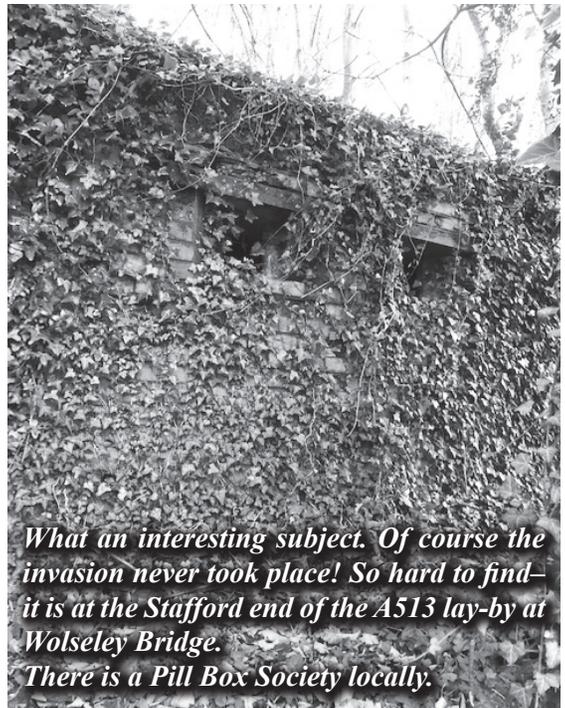
Lost in self-indulgence  
We often fail to show  
Love, compassion, kindness  
Which will help the world to grow.

So much pain and suffering  
Starvation, hate and greed  
We who have so much in life  
Must help this special need.

We enter life with nothing  
And all we take away  
Are gifts of love and kindness  
We have shown along life's way.

So let us share our blessings  
To help the human race  
With love, the one creative force  
And the blessing of God's grace.

*Poet: Cynthia Shum*



*What an interesting subject. Of course the  
invasion never took place! So hard to find—  
it is at the Stafford end of the A513 lay-by at  
Wolsley Bridge.  
There is a Pill Box Society locally.*

## More Jokes from Mark Dudek...

The poor chap who was eaten by a shark while on his honeymoon didn't suffer for long.

He was only married for ten days.

I set up a business making ironing boards but it folded.

I found this on the menu at my local cafe - idemx rilgl.

I asked the waitress: "What is it?"  
She said: "Mixed grill".

I've just checked my home insurance policy and apparently if my duvet is stolen in the middle of the night, I'm not covered.

So I said to the girl at the checkout, "Can you do this any cheaper, it's got today's date on it?"

She said: "Look, do you want the newspaper or not?"

I've decided to sell my vacuum cleaner. It was only gathering dust.

I remember the first time I saw a universal remote control. I thought "This changes everything!"

The world's worst ventriloquist just became a dad!

His wife gave girth to a gouncing gagy goy.

When our daughter was being born, the midwife suggested Epidural Anaesthesia.

I said "Thanks, but we've already chosen a name."

Airport police say they are doing their best to stop people smuggling helium balloons in their luggage, but cases continue to rise.

I called the Police when I found a shell while walking on the beach recently.

"What's unusual about that?" They asked... "Well," I said, "It's ticking loudly..."

I'm currently reading "No Trespassers" by Barb Dwyer.

I was on holiday driving through Wales and stopped in Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrob-wlllantysiliogogoch for lunch.

I asked the waitress, "Please would you pronounce where I am very slowly?"

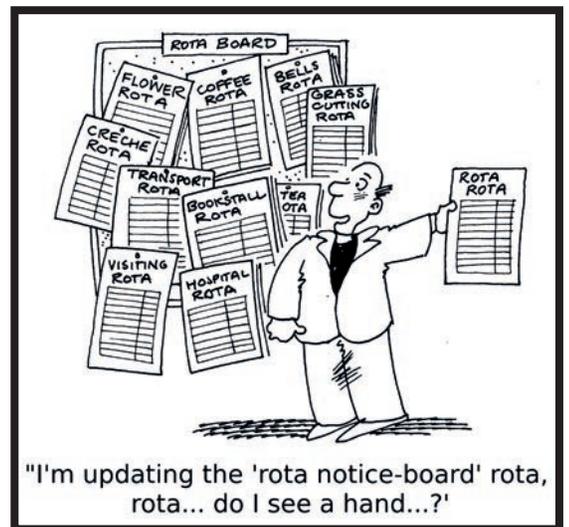
She leaned over and said, "Burr... gurr...king."

I got a rejection letter from the Origami Society today.

I'm not sure what to make of it...

A policeman knocked on my door the other day, and told me he was looking for a suspect with one eye. I told him that if he used both eyes, he'd probably have better luck finding him.

I used to be apathetic, but now I just can't be bothered.



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# PARISH SUMMER FETE

1.30pm Sunday 19th June 2022 - Milford Hall Cricket Ground



Only 20 weeks to go! It seems to be rearing its head very quickly this year- probably because last year's was delayed until 12th September due to the Coronavirus. Let's hope and pray that we are not put back again – June is the 'right month' for the Fete.

Our first planning meeting (24th Jan) has not yet taken place - more on that in the March Three Decker. So, for now, I shall just mention some of our ever-present components.

Let's start with our main attraction the GRAND DRAW with its usual tax free £600 First prize (anon donor) with another 20/25 excellent prizes which are all also kindly donated. This leads me very nicely onto my seemingly endless Fete function, viz unashamed 'BEGGING' as I ask you for anything, or treat or service which you could possibly offer as a prize. If you are able to, please ring Mary Moss (the Grand Draw promoter) on 249390 or me and we shall be delighted to discuss/collect it. If you prefer, you can bring it to the Parish Office or to church. I thank you now for any prizes you can provide. Our objective is to have Grand Draw tickets available in our 3 churches at the end of March, in the May Three Decker and, naturally at the Fete itself - it will be impossible to avoid them. You have always been extremely generous in donating prizes and buying tickets - we give you grateful thanks for that and pray that we can benefit from your good will again this year.

This year Easter Sunday falls on 17th April,

meaning that Lent begins on 2nd March. That signals the start of our 'SERIOUS BEGGING' when we produce our much loved 'LENT BOXES' in all three churches in the hope that you will deposit therein some of the 'Naughties' you are going without for Lent, such as biscuits, chocolate, alcohol, sweets etc. which are the prime requirements for our GIANT TOMBOLA STALL. Your response to this appeal has been amazing in the past for which we thank you - please keep up the good work this year. If you are uncomfortable about leaving such items in the boxes, please ring me and I shall gladly collect from you.

Any party or function or Fete would be a very dull affair without guests so we have already started the ball rolling by inviting the Mayor & Mayoress of Stafford Borough to be our principal guests and 'open' our Fete on June 19th. But for the party to 'swing' we need lots of guests so I hereby formally invite all of you, your families, friends & neighbours to join us for a relaxing afternoon of nostalgia, pleasure, traditional stalls/ refreshments/games, lively entertainment and, most importantly, warm fellowship. All of this we promise you with confidence: the weather we cannot control - we can only hope and pray that our 'Good Friend' upstairs will send us a 'good day'. Please do come along and see!

If you have any queries, please call me.

Bye for now.

**Bob Moore (664302)**



Recitals of Recorded Music  
at Walton Village Hall on  
the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays  
of the month commencing  
at 7.15pm.

**Tuesday 8th February, 2022**  
**“Music to contemplate”**  
*presented by Harry Farmer*

**Tuesday 22nd February, 2022**  
**““Nearly new”**  
*presented by Mike Jones*

*Visitors and new members will  
always receive a warm welcome  
to our meetings.*

*For further information please  
contact our Secretary Michael Jones  
Phone Stafford (01785) 661622  
for further information.*

**Chaseside Flower Club**  
**Our next meeting will be  
on Friday, 11th February**

Our Demonstrator will be  
**Penelope Harrison**  
the title will be  
**Nature's Bounty**

**We now start at 7.00 pm**  
**We look forward to seeing Members & Visitors**

*Chaseside Flower Club meets on the second Friday  
of each month. If you would like any further  
information about the Club please ring:*

*Mrs Anita Wright*

*Tel: 01785 661182*

*Email: anitawright1@yahoo.co.uk*

*Looking forward to seeing you  
at the start of a Great New Year.*



**Some of our buildings are  
included in the Domesday book -  
can you help us maintain them?**

The building and churchyard group are looking for people with knowledge/experience of buildings and services (i.e., wi-fi, audio-visual, gas, water, sewage, electricity, decorating etc) to advise on various projects. If you have such experience and would like to help with the physical development/maintenance of the parish then please contact Fr. Graham.

## What a tree can do for you

Trees can help prevent you getting depressed. At least, you are less likely to be on antidepressants if you live on a tree-lined street.

That is the finding of a survey by the Forestry Commission, which looked for the first time at the mental health value of our forests and woodlands. Apparently, they save the NHS something like £185million in antidepressants each year.

A spokesman at Mind, the mental health charity, said: “Although many of us feel like hibernating in winter, getting outside in green spaces and making the most of the little daylight we get can really benefit both your physical and mental health.”

## BERKSWICH WI

Our first meeting of 2022 was held on January 5th in the Village Hall. Our President, Ann Lee, welcomed everyone, including a new member, and thanked them for their kindness and support over recent weeks.

Despite masks being worn and doors and windows being kept open, a good time was had by all. This is traditionally a 'members' meeting' when games are played and everyone has the chance to chat and to catch up after the festive period.

There were 28 members who attended and played 'Snowman Drive', followed by refreshments and a quiz based on the 12 Days of Christmas. (Who knew that Three French Hens signifies gold, frankincense and myrrh?)

There was a brief discussion of the 5 Resolutions for 2022, voting will take place at the next meeting in February.

Following the overwhelming number of donations, a message has been received from Sarah Parry, Community Partnership Consultant for Staffordshire's Women's Aid to express her thanks and to say that 'It really does make a difference to our families'.

The committee has been working hard to find new activities for members to enjoy. There will be a visit and lunch at Stafford College in February, a talk, tour and tea at Bishton Hall in March and a possible barge trip with fish and chips in April.

Please join us for our next meeting in Walton Village Hall at 7.15 on Wednesday February 2nd. The speaker will be Jennifer Johnson who

will be talking about Women in Prison. Visitors are always welcome.

*For any further information please contact Di Hinton - Secretary - ring 620938*

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## BROCTON WI

In December our secretary informed members, who had access to email, of the sad news of the passing of one of our longest and most supportive members. She will be greatly missed by her friends at Brocton WI. Condolences on behalf of the members have been expressed to her family.

The Village Hall was the venue for our Christmas party. A supper with wine was enjoyed by members, along with seasonal music provided by Nicky Morgan and his charming wife. A quiz, and a raffle, which raised over £130, was donated to The House of Bread (a Stafford charity that helps those in need) was also part of the evening.

The speaker for our next meeting will be Rachel Hawkins whose talk will be entitled "British Red Cross". Monthly meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month and take place at Brocton Village Hall, Old Acre Lane, Brocton ST17 0TN.

Dates for activities and any changes in dates for our WI meetings will be announced, as necessitated by government guidelines. Ladies are welcome to attend any meetings as visitors.

For further information, please contact Elizabeth on **01785 663198**.

*Ann Burford*

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## WEEPING CROSS TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD

Members enjoyed a 'Life Can Be Fun' with their speaker Pat Hall in December. She gave us some funny stories, jokes and tales and had members laughing. The January meeting was cancelled due to the Omicron outbreak. Our February meeting sees Jo Howard making us 'feel fabulous'. We are always looking for

new members and anyone wishing to join us may do so at The Library at Baswich starting at 2.00pm the first Tuesday of the month. We have interesting speakers, go on outings where we increase our knowledge of places where we visit.

*Jean Jones*  
*Sec. Stafford Weeping Cross Guild*



## A Diet of Ants

There are three woodpeckers native to the UK, Great Spotted, the rare Lesser Spotted and the largest of the three, the Green Woodpecker. Although they look similar, Green Woodpeckers are not closely related to the other two woodpeckers and most importantly they don't peck wood! Where other woodpeckers drum on hollow wood to advertise their presence, Green Woodpeckers have a loud, laughing call or 'yaffle'. Yaffle, Laughing Betsey and Yaffingale are all traditional names for this magnificent bird.



Green Woodpeckers can be seen in churchyards all year round and give a splash of colour in the winter months when there may not be much to be seen. They are bright green in colour with a yellow rump and red cap: look out for their swooping flight as they come to feed in churchyards.

The main food of Green Woodpeckers are ants, and they have an extraordinary tongue for pulling ants and ant larvae out of anthills.



**R.I.P.**

**A THANK YOU  
FROM ANNE PARKES**

Anne, Susanna and Rosanna would like to thank all the people of the parish for their kind thoughts and prayers on the sudden deaths of Guy and Colin, a loving husband, son, father and brother. Special thanks to Father Graham who has been such a support at this sad time.

*Anne Parkes*

Their tongues are extremely long and sticky, for probing deep into the anthill and sucking up ants. Green Woodpeckers' tongues measure about 10cm, a third the length of the whole bird! When not feeding this long thin tongue is coiled within the birds' skull, resting behind their eyes and around their brains.

The yellow meadow ant which builds anthills in grassland is common in churchyards, so Green Woodpeckers have a year-round source of food. These anthills are a sign of ancient, traditionally managed meadow so, although hard to mow around, they are really special, please look after them. As well as feeding the woodpeckers they often have different plants growing on them, so look out for the flash of green and red followed by the laughing 'yaffle' and then, in the spring and summer see what plants you can find on your anthills too.

*All the best, Harriet Carty*

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##### **Baswich Library, Lynton Avenue 663355**

Monday: 2.00 - 7.00 p.m.

Wednesday and Friday: 9.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.

Thursday: 2.00 - 7.00 p.m.

Saturday: 9.00 a.m. - 2.00 p.m.

##### **Mobile Library- 01785 278369**

Visits: Brocton - Monday 9.30 - 9.45 a.m. fortnightly.

##### **Christian Audio Magazine-**

Hannah Morris - info@thebeaconchurch.com

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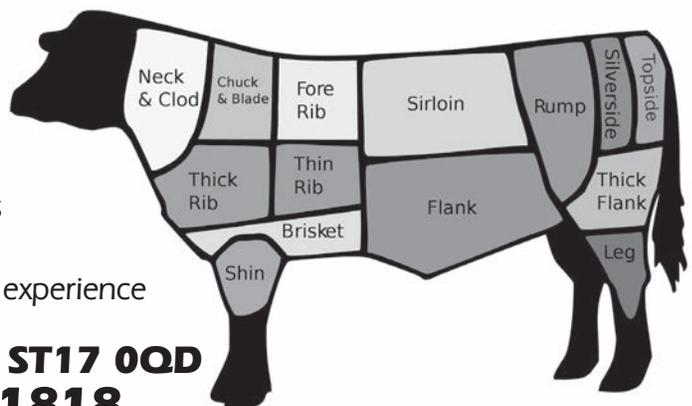
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