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Online Edition

ST PETER'S CHURCH BRACKLEY



ST PETER'S

**"LOVING GOD,
LOVING EACH OTHER,
LOVING BRACKLEY"**



Lent



**MOTHERING
SUNDAY**



Rev'd Rob Woods writes.....



Being Equipped

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12)

I hope that you will soon get fed up with how many times I say 'thank you' during this sabbatical season. So many have stepped up in various ways to keep St. Peter's flourishing. So again, thank you!

Seeing this happen has caused me to reflect on one of my favourite verses on leadership in the Bible. Christ established various offices in his church. This includes the office of pastor-teacher (think vicars, curates, etc.).

I wonder if you have ever had a job with lots to do but no overarching vision as to what the priority should be. Well, that's not what happens in this vocation. Wonderfully, the teachers and pastors are given clear priorities to focus on through their teaching and pastoring. What is their aim? Well, thankfully it's not to do everything – hurrah! Their aim is to be equippers, not just doers.

They are *to equip his people for works of service*

I love these verses because they show us that everyone in the church family has a role to play.

Now, my guess is that the average church magazine reader is an ardent MMA (mixed martial arts) or boxing fan. Or maybe I've misunderstood the readership? Either way, the vision for church leadership given here is almost akin to that of a boxing coach/ padman. The trainers are there to equip the athletes to put their skills into practice. Spiritually speaking, church leaders are equippers. They are the ones holding the pads who are there to enable church members to flourish in their personal box office events – whatever that calling from Monday-Sunday might be.

Recently, we've seen various works of service at St. Peter's. Two growth groups ran our last two church prayer meetings. They served the church brilliantly in those meetings. Members of our church family have taken on a leadership role in our seeker's courses. Other clergy in

our church family have served on Sundays. For this season, I've been able to hand over leadership of our morning growth group. A married couple in our church family helped run our marriage preparation course. Our church warden organised our first ever St Peter's men's breakfast. The list could go on, and I'm sorry to miss other examples.

Stepping back and watching others do their own works of service fills me with joy. That's not because I get to put my feet up (I promise!). It's because I'm seeing St Peter's live out this biblical vision that we're called to follow. It releases clergy to be more effective and productive. Also, I have been able to see people do things better than I would have done them!

Alongside works of service in the church's life, there are the good works God has prepared for us all to do in the world. In our Growth Groups, we have been going through a course called 'Fruitfulness on the Frontline'. It reminds us that we are all on a frontline, and we are all called to show the love of Jesus on it.

For your encouragement, do you notice what happens when we live this vision out? The body of Christ, the Church, is built up. I think that's because it is so often through our service that we see growth. It's when we step out and take risks that our faith strengthens and our dependence on God grows.

So, thank you again for stepping up in various ways. If you'd like to serve in any capacity, let me know.

I dare say that this vision of church life shouldn't be shelved when our vicar returns. Rather, let's lean into it even more.

Bless you,
Rob

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VISION MISSION

A NEW CHURCH VISION FOR ST PETER'S

Many will be aware of our vicar Rich's recent calls for us to seek to employ a new associate minister. Someone tasked to help equip us all to extend our influence for the Gospel in Brackley and beyond.

For this to be possible our regular giving would need to increase by more than £40,000 each year to cover the additional costs. We have been challenged to pray and consider whether we should increase the amount of our regular giving, or to begin giving regularly for the first time, then act in faith and obedience. The plan is to begin publicising the role in late Spring with a view to employing someone in the months that follow.

Today it's a few people in the 'older' age group that pay most of the bills who won't always be here! We need more people, of all ages, to roll up their sleeves and pledge their support so that the mission can thrive in the years ahead.

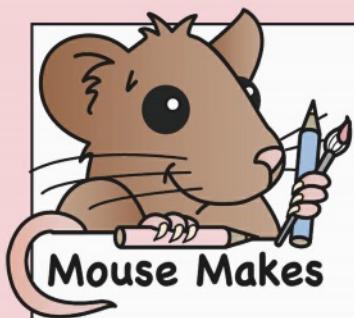
The outcome, we believe, will see the church community continuing to grow, disciples are being made, all ages are being reached and served, particularly younger people, and God glorified.

So, our challenge:

Where does God's work come in our list of priorities for our time, talent and treasure?

Will we engage in this new Vision for the future?

There are a number of ways to become a regular giver. Please visit www.stpetersbrackley.org.uk/giving

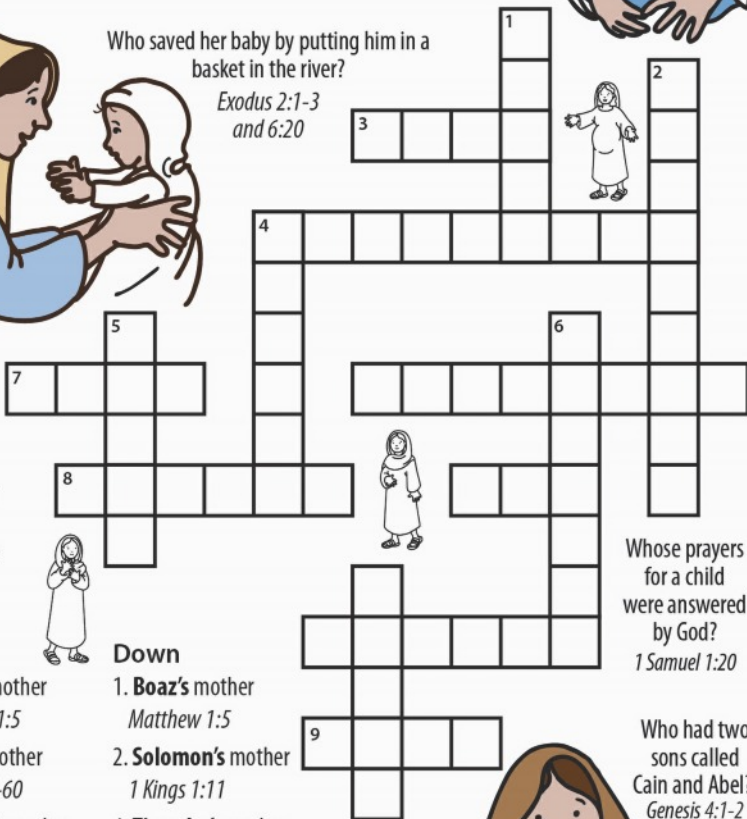


The Bible has many stories of mothers who had great faith in God. With their love, care, encouragement and prayers their children grew up to be great people of God.



Who saved her baby by putting him in a basket in the river?

Exodus 2:1-3 and 6:20



Who was 90 years old when she had her son Isaac?
Genesis 17:19



Whose prayers for a child were answered by God?
1 Samuel 1:20

Who had two sons called Cain and Abel?
Genesis 4:1-2

Across

- 3. **Obed's** mother
Matthew 1:5
- 4. **John's** mother
Luke 1:57-60
- 7. **Reuben's** mother
Genesis 29:32
- 8. **Joseph's** mother
Genesis 30:22-24
- 9. **Jesus'** mother
Acts 1:14

Down

- 1. **Boaz's** mother
Matthew 1:5
- 2. **Solomon's** mother
1 Kings 1:11
- 4. **Timothy's** mother
2 Timothy 1:5
- 5. **Ishmael's** mother
Genesis 16:15
- 6. **Jacob and Esau's** mother
Genesis 25:21-26



An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Song of Songs

The title of this book, '*Solomon's Song of Song*' (1:1), claims to be written by Solomon, and while his name is mentioned seven times and several verses speak of the '*king*', the book may be more about Solomon rather than written by him. However, it is



reasonable to assume that Song of Songs was written in the tenth century BC, during Solomon's reign (971-931 BC).

The focus of the Song is God's choicest gifts of love and the voice of this love belongs to a woman, the beloved. It is her experience of love, both as the one who loves and as the one who is loved, that is most clearly expressed. The Song begins with her wish for her lover's kiss and ends with an invitation for intimate love. It describes the intimacies of married love as God intends it to be. She speaks profoundly of love; of its beauty and delight; its exclusiveness (2:16); its spontaneity (2:7) and its overwhelming power: *'Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.'* (8:6,7)

God created man and woman, and established marriage as His purpose for society (Genesis 1:27; 2:20-24). This Song is part of the wisdom literature and shows us how to receive and live the gift of God's love with thanksgiving and celebration. However, the Song also speaks symbolically of the experience of intimacy to be found in our relationship with Christ: *'My lover is mine and I am his...and his banner over me is love.'* (2:16,4).

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Why we should be like donkeys



Are you a pet-lover? Many people own a dog, a cat or a budgie, but most of us don't own a donkey! Yet in Bible times, donkeys were essential to daily life. They did everything from helping to grind corn, to ploughing, to carrying people, to transporting their belongings. Despite their small frame, donkeys are surprisingly tough. They are content with poor fodder

like thistles and can travel an average of 20 miles a day.

There are two occasions in the Christian calendar where donkeys walk into the picture. At Christmas, Mary travelled the 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem on a donkey. And although a donkey doesn't get a specific mention in the manger story, that same one that transported her was probably there at the birth; where else would it have been?

On Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Jesus deliberately chose this animal rather than a horse. Why? In Bible times, the horse was associated with war, conquest and worldly might. But the donkey was a symbol of peace and humility. Jesus used this animal to show that He had come with the dignity of the King of peace. His entry into the Holy City also fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Messiah.

Donkeys are hardworking and undemanding. They wait for their master to put them to the work he has chosen for them. And, remarkably, each one bears the mark of the Cross on their backs!

Introducing Dame Sarah Mullally - the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury

The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE officially became Archbishop of Canterbury on 28th January 2026, when she was legally confirmed at St Paul's Cathedral.

Most people know that she had been Bishop of London for several years, and that she is the first woman to ever become Archbishop of Canterbury.



But what else do you know about her?

She was born in Woking in 1962, and is one of four children, with two sisters and one brother.

She attended Winston Churchill Comprehensive School and Woking Sixth Form College. She went on to South Bank Polytechnic and Heythrop College, University of London

She worked as a nurse in the National Health Service, which she has described as "an opportunity to reflect the love of God". She specialised as a cancer nurse and became a ward sister at Westminster Hospital, before being made Director of Nursing at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

In 1999, at the age of 37, she was appointed the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England in the Department of Health. She was the youngest person ever to be appointed to the post. Bishop Sarah was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 2005 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing.

She had become a Christian at the age of 16. While working as the Chief Nursing Officer for England, she discerned a call to ordination and entered training ministry at the South East Institute for Theological Education.

She was ordained in 2001 and served her curacy in St Saviour's Battersea Fields, initially as a self-supporting minister, before leaving her government post in 2004, which she has described at the time as "the biggest decision I have ever made".

In 2012 she was installed as Canon Treasurer at Salisbury Cathedral and three years later took the role as Suffragan Bishop of

Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter, the fourth woman to become a Bishop in the Church of England.

On 12th May 2018, Bishop Sarah was installed as the 133rd Bishop of London at St Paul's Cathedral, the first woman to hold the role.

Bishop Sarah sits in the House of Lords as one of the Lords Spirituals, having been introduced on 24th May 2018. Her maiden speech paid tribute to the NHS on its 70th anniversary, telling the Lords: "I am the Bishop I am today because of that first vocation to nursing, and compassion and healing are constants at the heart of who I am."

She was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council in March 2018 and became Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal in July 2019.

As Bishop of London, she led the Church of England's Living in Love and Faith process from 2020 to 2023. This included the formative stages of discernment and decision making which saw the introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith for same-sex couples.

She has served on the Church's National Safeguarding Steering Group and is also Lead Bishop for Health and Social Care issues.

As a Lord Spiritual, she has drawn from both her pastoral experience and her background in nursing and healthcare and has played a key role in the ongoing debates on assisted dying.

This year, she chaired the Triennium Funding Working Group that developed the Church of England's three-year spending plan that led to significant investments in local churches and parish clergy.

Archbishop Sarah is married to Eamonn, an Irish-born IT and Enterprise Architect who enjoys beekeeping and volunteering as a London tourist guide.

The couple have two grown-up children, Liam and Grace.

Archbishop Sarah has continued her interest in the health service having been a non-executive director at the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust then at Salisbury NHS Foundation Hospital.

She is Chair of Christian Aid.

She has spoken openly about her dyslexia, describing her difficulties with writing and reading.

In her spare time, she loves cooking, walking and pottery.

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