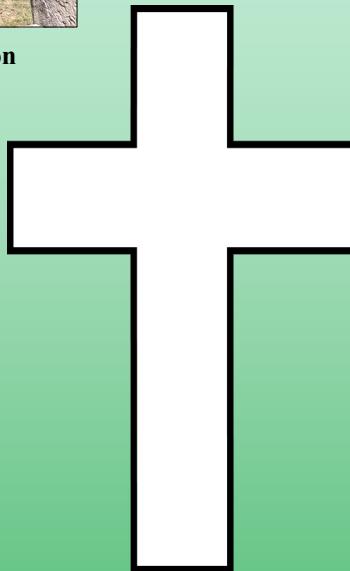




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St. John's Backworth



Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea

# CHURCH VIEWS

January  
2026

# THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

## JANUARY 2026

A very Happy New Year to all our readers. I hope you had a lovely Christmas, and wish you all the very best for 2026.

Just before Christmas, a friend came to stay. She said she'd like to walk on Hadrian's Wall. So we drove to the National Trust car park at Steel Rigg. From there, it's a just a short walk to a spectacular section of the wall. There it is, still weathering the tests of time, sitting on the already fearsome cliff of the Whin Sill.

From Steel Rigg you follow the wall through various dips and rises. In one dip lie the remains of a Roman milecastle. And in another, till recently, stood the mighty Sycamore Gap tree. We got to the top of the rise and looked down. Where once the great tree stood, there is now a cage, protecting the stump. We eased ourselves down the slippery stone path and reached the Sycamore stump. We'd heard about the shoots of new life, but hadn't seen them with our own eyes until that moment. It was inspirational to look and count them all. Eight shoots of new life, growing out of the stump at Sycamore Gap.



The tree that was so senselessly cut down had been growing for about three hundred years. So if these shoots are allowed to grow for the same length of time, none of us now living will be alive to see it in its new majesty. It's quite a thought.

But it's a future I might not live to see. Archaeologists tell us that the peoples who built certain ancient monuments would have known, when they started building, that they themselves would not live to see the finished article.

Have you made a New Year's resolution yet? If not, this thinking might sow a seed. What actions might I perform, in the here and now, the fruit of which will be enjoyed by future generations?

An example that immediately springs to mind is the climate emergency. At Morning Prayer the day I'm writing this, the prophet Isaiah warns the king, Hezekiah, of terrible events lying in the future...

*The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.*

Stern words, but the king's response is bizarre...

*'The word of the Lord you have spoken is good', Hezekiah replied. For he thought, 'There will be peace and security in my lifetime'.*

What a selfish response. If 'nimbyism' means 'you can build anywhere but not in my back yard', then Hezekiah is guilty of 'nimbyism' – 'it's OK as long as it's not in my lifetime'.

Our descendants cannot afford us to lapse into 'nimbyism'. Woe betide us if we hear all the news about climate catastrophe and lazily think 'It's OK – I won't live to see the worst effects'. Our grandchildren need us – now – to be doing everything in our power to cut damaging emissions of greenhouse gases. A simple, practical suggestion for a New Year's resolution? Eat less red meat.

Members of St Alban's reading this have an opportunity coming up to sow seeds they might not live to see come to fruition. We're in the process of relaunching Sunday children's activities. Might you feel called to spend time with young children, handing on the riches of your faith? If so, I'd love to hear from you.

Yours in the long view, and – again: HAPPY NEW YEAR.

*Rev'd Tim Mayfield*

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## An Animal Alphabet

By Rev'd Tim Mayfield.

Recently, Backworth Park Primary School asked me to do an assembly about Noah. First of all, I explained to the children that God saw people doing all kinds of bad stuff. I asked them what are some bad things that people do: 'hitting people... breaking stuff... stealing... breaking into other people's houses... killing people'.

Then I explained that there was one good person – Noah. I asked the children about the good things that people do: 'helping... talking to lonely people... sharing... stopping bad things happening... respecting each other'. I explained that Noah must have been a person like that, for God to save him from the flood.

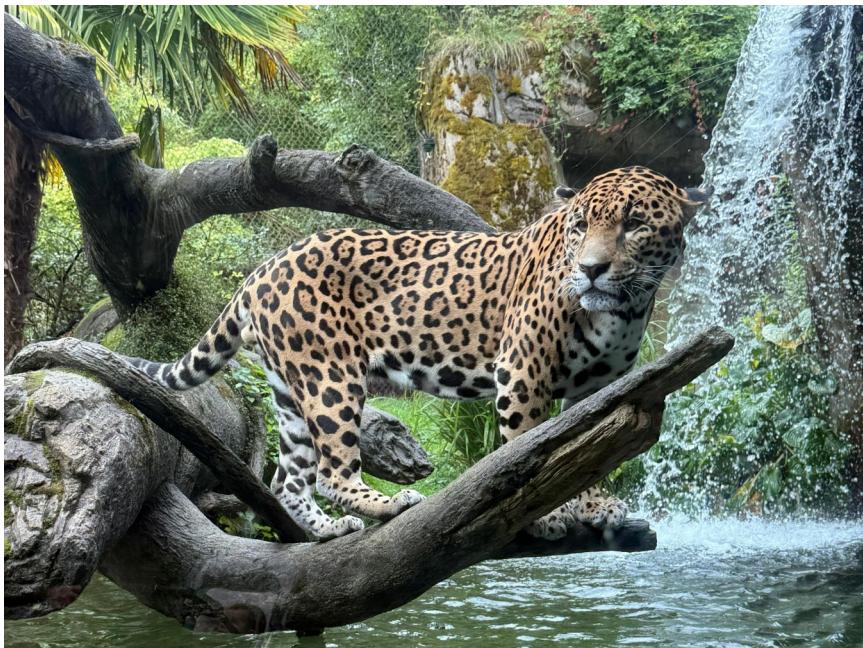
Then I asked the children if they could complete an alphabet of animals – the kind of creatures that Noah brought in two by two: 'Alpaca... Bunny... Cat... Dog... Elephant... Flamingo... Giraffe... Horse... Iguana... Jaguar... Kangaroo.

Lion... Monkey... Narwhal... Orangutan... Penguin... Queen Bee... Raccoon... Seal... Turtle... Vulture... Wombat... X-Ray Bird... Yak...'

By the time we got to 'Z' the children had really got the hang of the game. A forest of hands was in the air, arms about to be wrenched from sockets with enthusiasm. So I counted them down for an animal beginning with 'Z': 5, 4, 3, 2, 1... - and then there was the wonderful sound of two hundred children shouting 'ZEBRA!!!'

Because the counting down thing had gone so well, I thought I'd repeat it for the end of the story. 'There's a beautiful thing we see in the sky which is God's promise not to cause a massive flood again. What is it? 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...' 'RAAAIIIIINNNNBBBBOOOOWWWWW!!!!'

It's great interacting with the children in this way. Look out for news about 'Open the Book'. 'Open the Book' is one of our 'Seeds of Life'. It enables members of congregations to act out Bible stories in school assemblies.



J is for Jaguar



## Mothers' Union

As usual in December we went out for Christmas lunch, this year to The Dolphin at North Shields.

There were approximately 50 people attending, which included Mothers' Union members from The Holy Saviour's, Christ Church and St George's.

There was a lovely friendly atmosphere and a very nice lunch.  
What more can you ask to set you up for a Very Happy Christmas!

Our next meeting will be our Annual Meeting on Wednesday 21st of January at 1.45pm in the Eccles Hall, Earsdon.

Do come and join us for a cup of tea and a chat.  
Everyone welcome!

Love and Best Wishes for a Very Happy New Year.



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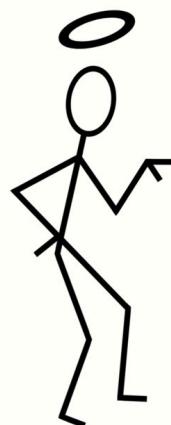
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to enquire about availability.**



St Alban's Church  
Warden, Rob Gowdy  
with his halo, cleaning  
up.

Haha, well captured,  
Cathryn.



## Seeds of Life

...and so to the second term of Earsdon and Backworth's three-year plan 'Seeds of Life'.

The first term – Autumn 2025 – saw us preaching into the re-launch of Sunday children's activities at St Alban's. We then promoted this new beginning at our busy Christingle service. Meanwhile, conversations began with the Scouts about re-establishing Church Parade. We're thinking about hosting a Parade close to St George's Day in April. The final task in term one was to display a portrait gallery in the porch. It's good to see the team's happy smiling faces. We must never forget that the church is *people*, not a building.

So here we are in Spring 2026. We plan to draw together the team that will offer Sunday children's activities once again at St Alban's. Members of that team will run a Good Friday Children's Workshop on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and re-launch Sunday children's activities from April 26<sup>th</sup>. Still with an eye on children, St John's will host the first of a new series of church tours for the pupils of Backworth Park Primary School.

All of this will be underpinned by our own home-grown Lent Course 'Seeds of Life' – five Monday evening's evenings from February 23<sup>rd</sup>; five Thursday afternoons from February 26<sup>th</sup>.

## Legacies

This month's editorial was about leaving something behind for future generations. One way we can do this is by remembering the church in our will. The splendid Netty Project at St Alban's benefited from generous legacies from **Georgina Knox, Jack Harmsworth and Margery Knott**. Georgina's legacy also enabled us to install the drop-down screen and livestreaming equipment. The ramp, toilets, simplified entrance, welcome area, kitchen, media room, screen and livestreaming equipment have all significantly improved the ways in which St Alban's can serve our community. We remember Georgina, Jack and Margery with great gratitude.

*Rev'd Tim Mayfield.*

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St Alban's Book Club enjoyed their Christmas get-together at the Beacon, Monkseaton.



Please note, there are actually books on the table!



## The Jazz Dogs entertaining at Joan's Mulled Wine Coffee Morning.



Joan adds, Note that the bust of Mozart is facing the wall because they said he might be offended by their playing. Beethoven was deaf, so he could watch them play.

Of course, they were fabulous!

## Wednesday Walkers

Following the Lewis Hill Christmas Concert, we have been able to donate £300 to Newcastle University for Bowel Cancer Research. This is in memory of Ali Griffiths, our dear friend and one of the founder members of the group.

Many thanks to all who supported this very enjoyable event. Best wishes to everyone for a Very Happy and Healthy New Year.

## Coming soon to the Eccles Hall, Earsdon...

Burns Night, 24th January at 7.00pm.

Tickets are £15 (available from Joan A or at the back of St Alban's church) which includes the traditional neeps, tatties and of course the haggis.



**The Haggis, being piped in.**

## Weather Outlook for the month of January 2026.

### Direct from the Captain's Charts.

I would like to take the opportunity to wish all readers a happy, healthy & prosperous New Year.

#### General overview.

**Yellow & Amber weather warnings for Cold, Snow & Ice are in force for the UK.**

A cold start to the New Year with dominant northerly winds bringing wintry showers (snow likely on the coast), turning milder with rain/snow at the leading-edge early to mid-month, but remaining colder in the north with below-average temperatures overall. We can expect frosty nights with the potential for icy conditions as temperatures drop significantly, with coastal areas exposed to snow, while inland spots stay drier and remain chilly. Any snow falls will likely turn to rain.

#### Early to mid-January.

A slow-moving low-pressure area to the east of the UK will produce cold northerly winds bringing snow showers to eastern coasts and some inland areas.

Cold northerly winds will be dominant across the UK in the first week of January bringing wintry showers (often snow flurries) to many coastlines including inland areas that are exposed to onshore winds. Into the new week more coherent bands of precipitation and thicker cloud will attempt to move in from the west, with a risk of further snow on the leading edge turning to rain. The forecasting confidence is low in gauging a return to a milder Atlantic air flow.

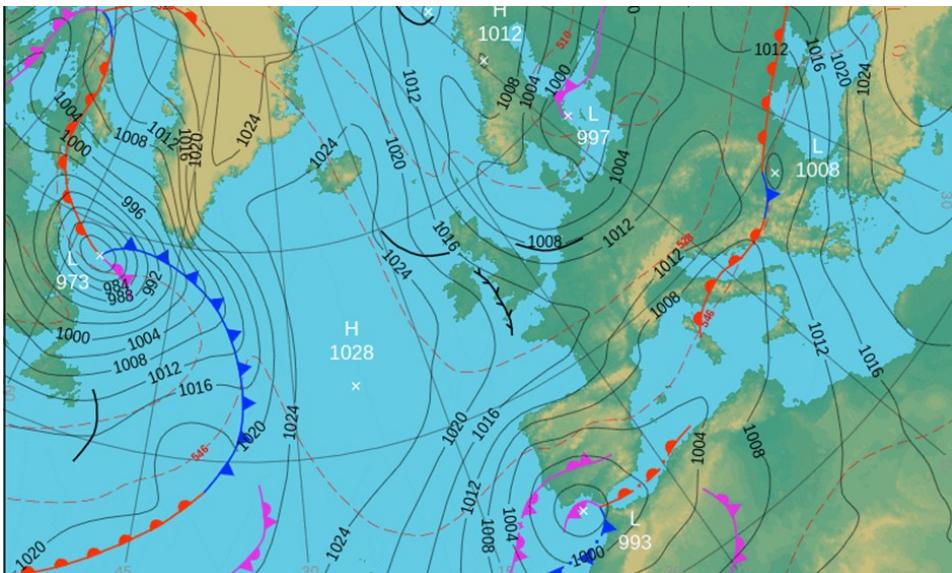
There is also a risk of further arctic airflow and associated fronts bringing more wintry showers, especially across northern areas of the UK. Temperatures may recover to just below average for a time otherwise it will remain very cold.

#### Mid to late January.

Milder air will try to push in from the west, potentially bringing rain,

however the colder weather pattern is likely to return. Whilst forecasting confidence remains low for this period, the transition back to more clement Atlantic weather systems, bringing back westerly winds into the UK, is expected during the later part of this period with temperatures recovering to or just below the seasonal average.

### North Atlantic Surface Pressure Chart Prediction for 12:00 hrs (UTC) on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January.



#### Tips to help you stay safe during adverse (cold) weather conditions.

- 1 ..... Plan your journey with respect to the weather, try to avoid routes that leave you exposed to cross winds. Sudden squalls combined with cross winds can cause you to loose control of a vehicle especially on wet or icy roads.
- 2 ..... In cold weather:- Dress in layers of warm clothing. Protect your extremities from frostbite and insulate with gloves, hat, and warm socks. When outdoors, wear shoes with good grip and avoid getting wet, as moisture increases heat loss.

More tips on next page...

Continued from previous page...

3 ..... Be aware of black ice especially when driving.

Black ice is a dangerous, virtually an invisible thin coating of transparent ice that forms on roads & pavement surfaces taking on a darker appearance of the road or pavement on which it forms and is most common during early morning and night-time hours when temperatures are at their lowest.

Black ice forms from rain, melted snow or even fog that freezes quickly and is found on untreated roads, bridges, overpasses, underpasses, tunnels and shaded areas caused by buildings & trees.

During the earlier days of motoring one could determine when encountering black ice patches as the road (tyre) noise would cease (cross ply & early radial tyres were notoriously noisy and that inadvertently assisted the detection of black ice), the cautious driver would then moderate their speed through a succession of careful gear changes thus avoiding the use of the brakes and the consequential loss of traction resulting in uncontrollable skidding.

These days, with the advent of the modern tyre and well insulated vehicles no discernible road noise changes can be heard therefore 'Ice warning' dashboard notifications should always be heeded.

*David Gibson  
1st January 2026.*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* If you have any suggestions, comments or requests  
\* regarding the magazine, or for anyone thinking of  
\* sending in their contribution for publication, please  
\* email it to **magazine@StAlbansEarsdon.org.uk**  
\* or call **Jean on 0191 2377273.**  
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## CHURCH VIEWS FOR JANUARY 2026 FROM THE PARISH OF OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA



### Thanks to everyone who made it Christmas again

It wouldn't be Christmas without the tree, but when it's this size it helps if the volunteers include two people over six feet tall and a retired fireman who thinks step-ladders are real low-level stuff. Thanks to everyone who made our churches bright and welcoming this Christmas.

Bright and beautiful certainly was – what a joy after a solemn Advent.



## **St Mary's, Cullercoats, now part of Our Lady Star of the Sea**

Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish now has three churches – St Edward's, Immaculate Heart of Mary and St Mary's. Our Lady and St Oswin's church has joined with St Cuthbert's and St Joseph's in North Shields.

A recent and welcome development at St Mary's has been the replacement of the altar as part of the refurbishment of the sanctuary.



When the Church of Our Lady's and St Edmund's in Backworth closed in 2024, great care was taken with the altar, shown here being dedicated by Bishop Seamus Cunningham in 2016.



Since St Mary's required a new altar as part of its splendid refurbishment, it was an ideal opportunity to relocate the altar to a new home where it would be of essential use.



In this closer view the fine construction of English oak can be seen, and the altar also incorporates some of the original altar rails of Our Lady's and St Edmund's from its opening in 1954. Bishop James McCormack at that event had led a procession of 55 priests to join a congregation of almost 500 – some of them sacrificing their bonuses - 'Pitmen Swap Shifts To See Church Opened' according to that week's Whitley Bay and District Weekly Guardian.

The altar beautifully complements the original panelling of the sanctuary, and appropriately a further link is that before his elevation, Bishop Seamus was parish priest at St Mary's for several years.

As the old year has drawn to a close, it is a pleasure to see that our parish is moving forward while still respecting its past. May I wish everyone a happy and more peaceful 2026.

*Gerry Latimer, Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea*

### **Parish Mass Times**

St Edward's: Sunday 9.30am, Tuesday & Friday 10.00am

Immaculate Heart of Mary: Saturday Vigil 6.00pm, Wednesday 10.00am

St Mary's: Sunday 11.00am, Thursday 10.00am, Saturday 10.00am

# Walking With Open Day



**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026**  
**11am - 3pm**

Come along to meet us all and see what we do.  
Drop-in event with refreshments. RSVP please.

<https://walkingwith.co.uk>

reception@walkingwith.co.uk

0191 6498974

Walking With Centre, Church House, Hugh Street, Wallsend. NE28 6RL  
Charity Number: 1202661



# Walking With – Donations List

## Urgently needed

### **Donations list**

#### **Food (tinned/packets)**

- ✓ Potatoes
- ✓ Peas/carrots
- ✓ Kidney beans/ mixed beans
- ✓ Chickpeas
- ✓ Pasta
- ✓ Spaghetti (Dried)
- ✓ Tea bags
- ✓ Basmati rice
- ✓ Long grain rice
- ✓ Tinned tomatoes
- ✓ Tuna
- ✓ Toilet rolls
- Tinned fruit
- Jam
- Custard
- Microwave rice
- Rice pudding
- Sweetcorn
- Pulses
- Chocolates/ biscuits
- Sardines
- Long life milk
- Noodles

#### **Extras**

- Sanitary towels
- Coffee
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- Toothpaste
- Washing up liquid
- Soap powder/ capsules (clothes)
- Sugar
- Oil
- Nappies – all sizes

We also need:

- Good quality clothes and shoes
- Young men's clothing especially
- Household goods (pots/ pans)
- Bedding
- Bikes (in good repair)

Please contact the centre prior to donating these larger items as we have limited storage space and may not always be able to accept these donations.



**Walking With** is a drop-in centre based in Wallsend; we are a charity that relies on grant funding and donations.

Established in 1999, Walking With in North Tyneside is the first port of call in North Tyneside for asylum seekers who have been dispersed by the Home Office and for people living here as refugees.

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Our website is <https://walkingwith.co.uk/>

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## Nativity Festival

Saturday December 6<sup>th</sup> 2025 was a great day in the life of St Alban's Earsdon. After a lot of hard work and careful preparation, we threw our doors open for a Nativity Festival. There were forty different nativity sets on display. Lots of them had been kindly loaned by other churches.

All day a steady stream of people (we counted about 170) came into a warm and beautiful space. The event was a splendid celebration of our new facilities. Teas and coffees were served from the kitchen hatch. The Media Room became a delicious cake shop, doing a roaring trade. And all day long the Welcome Area hosted a lovely buzz of conversation.

Visitors voted for their favourite nativity. It turned out to be a set brought back from Tanzania by Jim and Anne Appleby. We left the nativity sets in the pews for worship the next day. It was lovely to see Jim and Anne's daughter Suzanne, and great-granddaughter Sophie, sat right behind this set.



Jim and Anne Appleby's nativity set, brought back from Tanzania



...and a view from the ground floor

The Nativity Festival, viewed from the gallery



A nativity set from Paul and Kathleen Gowdy



Cathryn selling cakes like... well, like hot cakes

# St. Alban's and St. John's Diary Page for January 2026

Sunday	4th	<b><u>Epiphany</u></b>		
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Sunday	11th	<b><u>The Baptism of Christ</u></b>		
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Sunday	18th	<b><u>The Second Sunday after Epiphany</u></b>		
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Sunday	25th	<b><u>The Third Sunday after Epiphany</u></b>		
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's

## Sunday Gospel Readings for January 2026 :

**4th**

Matthew 2.1-12

**11th**

Matthew 3.13-17

**18th**

Matthew 13.31-33

**25th**

John 2.1-11

# St. Alban's and St. John's

## Sneak Previews...

On Saturday January 10<sup>th</sup> we will mount a **Zoom Prayer Event** to hold the Spring Term before God in prayer. Drop in any time from 10.15am to 11.30am.

On Wednesday January 14<sup>th</sup>, St Alban's will host a Memorial Service for our dear friend **Ali Griffiths**. The service, at 11am, will be followed by a reception in the Eccles Hall.

At 7pm on Saturday January 24<sup>th</sup> come to the Eccles Hall for **Burns Night**, complete with haggis, neeps and tatties and traditional cranachan.

Delicious cranachan rounds off a traditional



**Children's Church** celebrates the Presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple. Our latest edition is at 4pm in St John's on Sunday February 1<sup>st</sup>.

Celebrate **Valentine's Day** with pancakes and a quiz. The Eccles Hall, Saturday evening February 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Ash Wednesday** falls on February 18<sup>th</sup>. Holy Communion with ashing at St Alban's at 9.30am and at St John's at 7.30pm.



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Please note - all material for next month's magazine  
(February 2026) will need to be in before  
Monday 26th January 2026 . Thank you, Jean.



It's time to plant!



# SUDOKU

Complete the 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 blocks contains all of the digits from 1 to 9.

		6					9	
1	5		9	8				
4			6	5				8
6	4	3				9		
		7				8	3	1
5				3	2			9
				4	9		5	6
	2					3		

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## All in the month of January

*It was...*

200 years ago, on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 1826 that the Menai Suspension Bridge was first opened. It links the island of Anglesey to mainland Wales, and was the world's first major suspension bridge.

125 years ago, on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1901 that Queen Victoria died, and was succeeded by her son, Edward VII.

100 years ago, on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1926 that Scottish engineer and inventor John Logie Baird gave the first demonstration of his TV system to members of the Royal Institution.

90 years ago, on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 1936 that King George V died and was succeeded by his son Edward VIII, who abdicated that December.

80 years ago, on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1946 that William Joyce, Lord Haw-Haw, British fascist politician died. He had broadcasted Nazi propaganda from Germany during WW2.  
(Hanged for treason)

Also 80 years ago, on 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1946 that the United Nations General Assembly convened for the first time, in Westminster Central Hall, London.

60 years ago, on 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 1966 that the album *Sounds of Silence* by Simon and Garfunkel, was released.

50 years ago, on 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 1976 that Dame Agatha Christie, crime novelist, short story writer and playwright died. Best known for creating the character Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, and for the world's longest running play, *The Mousetrap*.

40 years ago, on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 1986 that the US space shuttle Challenger exploded after lift-off from Cape Canaveral, Florida. All seven astronauts were killed, including the first teacher in space, Christa McAuliffe.

10 years ago, on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2016 that Terry Wogan, Irish radio and TV broadcaster, died. Known for his BBC Radio 2 show, and for presenting TV's Wogan, Blankety Blank, Come Dancing, Children in Need, and for his commentaries on the Eurovision Song Contest.

# WORDSEARCH

## January 2026

### Wordsearch clues & answers - Epiphany

6<sup>th</sup> January brings Epiphany - the visit of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus. Matthew calls them 'Magi', the name of an ancient priestly caste from Persia. Early church tradition says there were three: Balthasar, Caspar and Melchior. As for their gifts? Gold is a symbol of wisdom and wealth, incense is a symbol of worship and sacrifice, and myrrh is a symbol of healing - and even embalming. Jesus challenged and set aright the way in which the world handled all three of these things.

Epiphany

Visit

Wise

Men

Magi

Priestly

Persia

Balthasar

Caspar

Melchior

Gold

Wealth

wisdom

Incense

Worship

sacrifice

Myrrh

Symbol

Healing

Embalming

Ancient

Gifts

Tradition

Challenged

world



# Church Contacts

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