

Hello everyone! Welcome to February! What a hot month it's been. We start the issue with the recognition of three birthdays – Barbara Hill and Barbara Wood celebrated on Sunday 16 February, and of course Reverend Cathy's birthday was celebrated on Sunday 23 February with an amazingly generous array of cake and wraps and fruit for all to enjoy. Happy Birthday to all three and here are some photographs of the joy we shared.



**Barbara Hill (left) with Barbara Wood**

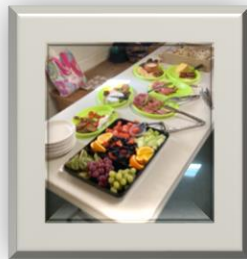
(photos taken and submitted by Greg Trenowden)



**Reverend Cathy and husband Ian**



**Here is a shot of Cathy's stunning cake**



**Here is a shot of the delicious food we shared**

## Greg's Recipe of the Month

Just for something different, here is the recipe for Greg's recent Vegan Fruit Bake that was enjoyed for morning tea one Sunday in February

- 1 x cup of self-raising flour
- 1 x cup of sugar
- 1 x teaspoon of baking powder
- Mix well but gently with wooden spoon
- Add 1 cup of diced fruit (including juices) to mixture above
- Stir gently until well combined
- Pour into greased baking bowl
- Bake at 175 degrees Celsius until brown and bouncy
- Let cool - Best if served warm with ice cream but just as yummy served cold with cream or yoghurt.

Note you can add diced apple for extra flavour or crushed pineapple but this was delicious.

## **Bible content: Old Testament**

Source: <https://www.christianity.org.uk/article/bible-content-old-testament>

The first 39 books of the Bible are known as the Old Testament, and tell the story of the Jewish people.

## **The Old Testament**

The Bible is not one book but a collection of 66 books. The first 39 books are known as the Old Testament. Most of it is about the story of the Hebrew people of the Middle East – the Jews – until about 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Each book is divided into chapters and verses. The Old Testament is sacred to Jewish people as well as Christians. The first five books are known to Jewish people as the Torah. The writings were in Hebrew and were brought together around 200 to 500 years before Jesus was born. But many of the manuscripts were much older. The Old Testament is complex and contains a range of writing styles including timeless stories, historical accounts, songs, poetry, wise sayings, prophetic writings about the future, laws and regulations. But there is a clear structure. Put simply, after a short series of timeless stories, the narrative focuses on Abraham and the story of one branch of his descendants, the Hebrews or Jews. Seventeen books follow their history. The next five are poetic writings and the final 17 are prophetic writings, mostly warnings to the Jewish people urging them to trust God and change the way their society was behaving. Many events and people in the Old Testament are well-known in modern culture including Moses who led the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt and later received the Ten Commandments; Joseph (and his multi-coloured coat) sold into slavery by his brothers; and King David who defeated Goliath and went on to rule Israel.

## **Timeless stories**

The opening book of the Bible is Genesis. Its first chapters contain timeless stories – tales that the Nomadic people of the time would have told around campfires for generations before they were written down. This style of writing is known as 'myths'. It contains profound truth but is expressed in a way that is different from conventional writing. Genesis opens with a dazzling homage to the creativity of God, showing him to be all-powerful and eternal. The message is that all matter, from dust to DNA, is the consequence of God's good plan. The account of Adam and Eve charts the slip from a perfect world to one where humans cause and endure suffering. Then there is the story of Noah building a huge ship, or ark, to save his family and animals from an enormous flood. Some Christians take these accounts literally, while others understand them in the spirit in which they were written.

## **The history of the Jewish people**

The rest of Genesis and the next 16 books tell the history of the Hebrew or Jewish people. It is a rollercoaster ride starting with Abraham who is revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Uniquely for his time, he believed there was only one God. Inspired by God, he and his family left their

home in what's now Iraq and travelled hundreds of miles to the land where Jesus Christ would be born centuries later. In old age he had a son, Isaac. Isaac's son, Jacob, was given the name Israel. Jewish people recognise him as their common ancestor. Years later, Jacob and his family fled south to Egypt to escape famine. But they became enslaved. They were led to freedom by Moses, dramatically crossing the Red Sea in an event called the Exodus. This escape, which defined them as a nation and has inspired other freedom movements, is still commemorated every year by Jewish people around the world. Their destination, Canaan, was known as the Promised Land. It was where Abraham had lived. God's intention was that the Jews would be a 'light' to all other peoples – demonstrating to them what he was like. But they were not always successful at this. Disobeying God meant that the Jews spent 40 years in the Sinai desert before finally reaching Canaan. In the desert God gave them hundreds of laws including the Ten Commandments, which Christians see as the foundation of their moral values. This was also where the Jews built a vast, highly-decorated tent, or tabernacle, where they worshipped God. Once in Canaan, the Jews conquered it and consolidated power, eventually establishing a monarchy. About a thousand years before the birth of Jesus, the most famous king of the Jewish people, David, made Jerusalem his capital. He was devoted to God but also deeply flawed. These traits are clearly seen in the Psalms that David wrote. The reign of David's son, Solomon, was a time of peace and prosperity when a temple was built in Jerusalem for the people to worship God. But then things began to go wrong. Solomon's successors were oppressive rulers. A civil war divided the nation into two – Israel and Judah. The northern area of Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722BC and its people dispersed forever. Just over a century later the Jews of the southern kingdom were conquered and taken into exile by the Babylonians. Unexpectedly, the time in captivity provided a chance to prosper. The Jews began to worship in synagogues and to gather their ancient writings into what would become the Old Testament. And the expectation grew that a compassionate and just leader would arise to restore their fortunes – the Messiah. After 70 years, the Jews were repatriated. The final historical writings describe their return and the reconstruction of the temple under new leaders: Nehemiah, Ezra and Zerubbabel. This is where the historical story of the Jewish people in the Old Testament ends. The story resumes 400 years later with the birth of Jesus Christ, as described in the New Testament.

### **Songs, poems and wise sayings**

These were all written during the time described in the historical accounts. They fit the style of the time: they don't rhyme but there is rhythm between lines. The book of Psalms was written by King David and others. It contains 150 songs which were used by the Hebrew people to

worship. They contain a wide range of human emotions including anger, love, joy, doubt and a desire for justice. Psalm 51 tells of David's deep remorse after he committed adultery. *'Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love,'* it says, *'...wash away all my iniquity'.* At another time, when fearing rejection by God, he wrote in Psalm 22 *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'.* These were among the last words spoken by Jesus Christ before his death by crucifixion a thousand years later. The book of Job is presented like a play in verse and concerns whether it is possible to believe in a loving God when there is so much suffering in the world. Song of Songs is a surprisingly tender and erotic poem; Ecclesiastes and Proverbs are known as wisdom literature – short textbooks on how to live. Many of the sayings survive to this day: *'there is nothing new under the sun'* says the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. *'Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it'* says Proverbs chapter 22. *'Pride comes before a fall'* says Proverbs 16.

### **Prophetic writings**

Seventeen books of the Old Testament record the words of prophets. These were people called by God to speak for him to the Jewish people. Their role was not so much to predict the future but to proclaim insights into the present. They reminded the people what God had done for them and pointed to where they were going wrong. The prophets wrote, spoke and even acted out dramatic scenes between 500 and 900 years before Jesus was born. Many of the prophetic writings relate to the times when the lands of Israel and Judah were under threat from foreign powers. They anticipated the catastrophes which would hit the Jewish people if they did not change their ways and return to worshipping God as they had before. One of the most serious criticisms was that the people were ignoring their responsibilities to seek justice for the poor. Some of the writings are angry, some are tender. But they were not without hope. Repeatedly they speak of God's plan to send a Messiah to be the saviour of his people by establishing a kingdom of love and justice. This points ahead to the birth of Jesus. The book of Isaiah contains many prophecies about the coming of Jesus, his life and death.

*(No author was given credit for the writing of this article)*

### **Parish Council**

For updates on activities please speak to one of your friendly Councillors.

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