

St John's Church

serving Stanborough, Lemsford, Cromer Hyde



February / March 2026

£1



Photos from Christingle



Learning to Sit with the Uncomfortable

The forty days of Lent — which begin on 18th February this year — take us back to the time Jesus spent in the wilderness after his baptism. For forty days, Jesus experiences hunger, temptation, isolation, and his own human limits. It's far from pleasant. But he stays.

If I'm honest, I know that if I were in Jesus' situation, my response would look very different. On a bad day, my first instinct would be to run away, or to have a long rant at God for putting me there. I'd probably also have a good old moan at the rocks, snakes, or birds — anything that would listen, really. On a good day, I'd want the difficult bits over as quickly as possible. And if that didn't happen, I'd likely spend a good deal of time imagining worst-case scenarios, often somewhere between 2am and 4am!

But that's not what happens in the wilderness story. The hunger doesn't stop. The testing doesn't disappear. There's no quick fix.



Jesus faces what is hard, and somehow emerges steadier, clearer, and ready for what lies ahead.

I wonder if this has something to do with Jesus' acceptance of his challenges. I don't know about you, but so often I find the most draining part of a difficult experience isn't the situation itself, but the energy

(Continued on page 2)

Opposite - Photos from our Christingle Service:

Christingle making (top), the Service (middle) and Pizza Party (bottom)

Cover Photo: The Lent Lily (Narcissus - aka Daffodil) is a quiet herald of spring, lifting pale yellow heads just as winter loosens its grip

Vicar's Message - *continued*

(Continued from page 1)

we spend either fighting the reality of it, or trying to flee from it.

This Lent, perhaps we might try stopping all this fighting and fleeing, and instead take our cue from Jesus' response to his challenges. We could use this reflective season to slow down, notice what we might otherwise push away, and be honest with ourselves and God about what we're finding difficult.

That might begin very simply: pausing long enough to say, "Yes, this is hard," or "This is making me anxious."

Not to wallow, but to stop running.

Because when we do that, something often shifts. In simply accepting what is, we somehow find space to pray, to see God at work, to think more clearly, and to begin to glimpse the way ahead.

For Jesus, the wilderness was a literal place. For us, it might be illness, uncertainty about work, grief, or a situation we wish we could control more easily. Whatever form the wilderness takes for you, perhaps these forty days could be a chance to discover that gently facing it might just be the beginning of something good and new.

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New Cartoon from Andy Chapman of Lemsford Local History Group



Andy writes: "For 2026 I have introduced a new feature for this copy of the Parish Mag. If you like it I will continue for the rest of the year. The new feature is on the inside back cover. Aimed for the younger reader (and young at heart) Based on the 1960s golden ages of comics."

This month we have 'The History of Lemsford Café' - enjoy.

Sound Bath Therapy Launches at Stanborough Lodge



Before Christmas, Stanborough Lodge Care Home welcomed the Mayor and community guests to celebrate a new wellbeing initiative.

Visitors experienced a demonstration of Sound Bath Therapy, using gentle vibrations from calming instruments.

The event highlighted the home's commitment to innovative, holistic care for residents, including those living with dementia. See Hansi's article on page 9.

Christingle



On the inside front cover you'll see photos from our Christingle service run very ably, again, by Jo. This is one of our most popular services of the year. We start by making Christingles (and well frankly eating quite a few of the sweets). The interactive service takes a look into what the Christingle is about: basically a way of saying:

Jesus is the light of the world, God loves everyone, and the world is

(Continued on page 5)



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News and People - *concluded*

precious — all summed up with an orange, sweets, a ribbon and a candle.
The Pizza party? Well who doesn't love pizza? - and community!

100 Club November & December Results

Thanks to everyone, parishioners and friends, who are supporting the '100 Club'. If you'd like to join contact Nigel Johnson - see directory

Month	1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
November	Number 104 - £91.80	Number 78 - £55.08	Number 56 - £36.72
December	Number 42 - £91.80	Number 10 - £55.08	Number 38 - £36.72

ASH WEDNESDAY

18th February 2026

10am

St John's Church, Lemsford

7pm

St Michael's Church, Birchwood

**A Reflective service of
Holy Communion,
with imposition of ashes**

A quiet space to begin Lent





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Holy Week & Easter 2026

22nd March (Sunday)

3pm - St John's@3 Easter Journey for all ages*

29th March (Palm Sunday)

8am - BCP Quiet Communion

11am - Parish Holy Communion

1st April (Holy Wednesday)

7 pm - Night prayer

3rd April (Good Friday)

2 pm - An hour at the cross with readings, reflections & music

5th April (Easter Sunday)

8am - BCP Quiet Communion

11am - 'All Together' Holy Communion
with Easter egg hunt!*

*Children are welcome at all our services, but these services are particularly suitable for young people!

Services

February 2026

1st	The Presentation of Christ in the Temple - Candlemas	8 am	Quiet Communion (CW)
		11 am	All-Together Communion for Candlemas*
8th	2nd before Lent	11 am	Holy Communion with Sunday Club*
15th	Next before Lent	8 am	Quiet Communion (BCP)
		11 am	Reflective Worship
18th	Ash Wednesday	10 am	Ash Wednesday HC Service
22nd	Lent 1	11 am	Holy Communion

March 2026

1st	Lent 2	8 am	Quiet Communion (CW)
		11 am	Reflective Worship
8th	Lent 3	11 am	Holy Communion with Sunday Club*
15th	Mothering Sunday	8 am	Quiet Communion (BCP)
		11 am	All-Together Communion for Mothers Day*
22nd	Lent 5	11 am	Holy Communion
		3 pm	St John's@3 - Easter Journey for All Ages*
29th	Palm Sunday	8 am	Quiet Communion (BCP)
		11 am	Holy Communion

Stanborough Lodge Care Home by Hansi

Before Christmas, Stanborough Lodge Care Home hosted a community event where we welcomed the Mayor, Cllr. Lynn Chesterman, along with other special guests and members of the community.



(Continued on page 15)

** Children are welcome at all our services, but these services and events are especially suitable for families and children (as well as people of all other ages!). BCP Book of Common Prayer; CW Common Worship. NB Kathryn's day off is Friday each week*



SUNDAY CLUB

at

St John's Church Lemsford

For children of all ages
Bible stories, crafts, friendship, fun
and snacks!

Every 2nd Sunday of the month
during the 11am service



St John's Church Lemsford

ALL TOGETHER COMMUNION

Sunday 1st February, 11am

When we stay, we see
Candlemas at St John's

A service for everyone aged 0-100+

Children and Young People at St John's *by Jo Brooks*

It feels a long time from Christmas to Easter sometimes (not sure any vicar would agree though!) It's dark and cold and there's a distinct lack of chocolate, particular once Lent gets going. But God has not left us in the dark – these months are full of light and hope, in our services and events at St John's, and in all the signs of life springing up around us.



It's been a busy and exciting January, including a brilliant St John's@3 **Christingle**, celebrating the never-ending light and hope we have in Jesus, and accompanied by a lot of sweets and pizza. Earlier in January **Sunday Club** explored the story of Jesus' baptism, with a dramatic reenactment assisted by Spiderman and Ironman (both good guys, but we all know it's actually Jesus who saves the world!)

Coming up in February and March

All Together Worship is on the **February 1st** and **March 1st** with Candlemas in February, remembering Jesus presented in the temple and the joy of those who had been waiting for him.

Sunday Club is on the **8th February** and **8th March** at 11am during the morning service. We're exploring Jesus's teaching – what does it mean to be salt or to be light? And who or what is living water? We'll be crafting, acting, playing together. All ages, all backgrounds welcome.

And we have two special services this term:

15th March is Mothering Sunday – a time in the middle of Lent to celebrate with God's whole family. And on

22nd March St John's@3 will be going on an Easter Journey, all are welcome to come and find some space to meet with God and each other.

And not forgetting **Friendship Tea** too – in the annexe on the **second Sunday of the month from 2.30**. All ages welcome – why not drop in after school?

If you've not tried Sunday Club, or St John's@3, and would like to know a bit more about it, or to chat to someone who comes along, do drop us a line: joholifield@gmail.com.





HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope you all had a lovely Christmas and have had a great start to 2026! As always, we have had a busy start to the term.

We began the year with an INSET day in which the teachers went to the Rothamsted Conference Centre in Harpenden to attend training focusing on Effective Assessment, Adaptive Teaching & Quality Education. There were over 300 delegates at the event and the day consisted of workshops and keynote speakers. It was great to have time together as a team to consider further development of good practice, as a bonus the lunch was lovely! We have also had a visit from teachers from four other schools to look at the way we deliver mixed age Maths teaching. After observing Maths lessons at St John's the visitors and our own teachers spent the afternoon exploring aspects of Maths pedagogy.

We have continued to develop the themes that centre our Collective Worship over the last year. Last term we journeyed through the Old Testament exploring the story of God's people and looking at how those key events and characters relate to our own lives, making it our story



as well. This term, once again with the invaluable expertise of Revd Kathryn, we are using the four gospels as our focus, exploring particularly the different viewpoints of the writers and the ways in which Jesus is portrayed.

We are pushing ahead with our fundraising mission, the aim of which is to raise £26,000 by the end of 2026. We are planning to replace the playground equipment, which is worn and tired and has definitely come to the end of its 'best before' date! Faye and the Lemsford School Association (LSA) have been working hard to arrange fundraising events for which we are very grateful. So far an impressive £6000 has been raised. If anyone knows of local companies and businesses who might contribute to the

(Continued on page 14)

Opposite - St John's School: Top: Nativity and Christmas Shopping,
Lower middle: Rock Steady Concert, Bottom Left: Christmas Carols,
Bottom Right: Christmas Dinner

News from St John's School - Feb 2026 - Continued

(Continued from page 13)

project, please do let us know.

We have lots of exciting events and themes planned for this term. We will be taking part in our annual Feeling Good and Safer Internet weeks in February. The school council is organising a biscuit bake to raise funds for our 26:26 mission. March will bring us the

annual World Book Day celebration, a performance by the Christian drama group Saltmine Theatre and a disco organised by the LSA.

We have so much to look forward to.

Michelle Boylan

Head teacher at St John's

LENT COURSE 2026

Many Paths, One Way

Exploring different Christian spiritual traditions
and how they can deepen our everyday faith

Join us on the journey



Five Wednesdays - starting 25th February

9.45am - Coffee

10.00-11.00am - Course

St Michael's Church, Birchwood

OR

A half-day Lent retreat

Saturday 7th March, 9:30am - 12:30pm

St John's Church, Lemsford (Annexe)

Stanborough Lodge Care Home - Continued

(Continued from page 9)

Visitors were given a tour of the home and a demonstration of the newly introduced Sound Bath Therapy which uses the gentle vibrations from instruments such as crystal bowls, chimes and other relaxing instruments.



(Continued on page 16)

Lent Course Many Paths, One Way

This Lent, you're invited to explore different Christian spiritual traditions and how they can deepen our everyday faith — including Celtic, Franciscan, Charismatic and Ignatian spirituality, alongside the words of the Book of Common Prayer.

Everyone is welcome whether you attend church regularly or are exploring faith. There are two ways to take part: Wednesdays over 5 weeks, or a Half-Day Lent Retreat . See the poster on the left for details.

Stanborough Lodge Care Home - Concluded

(Continued from page 15)

The therapy is shown that these sensory experiences can benefit the emotional and cognitive wellbeing of individuals, particularly those living with



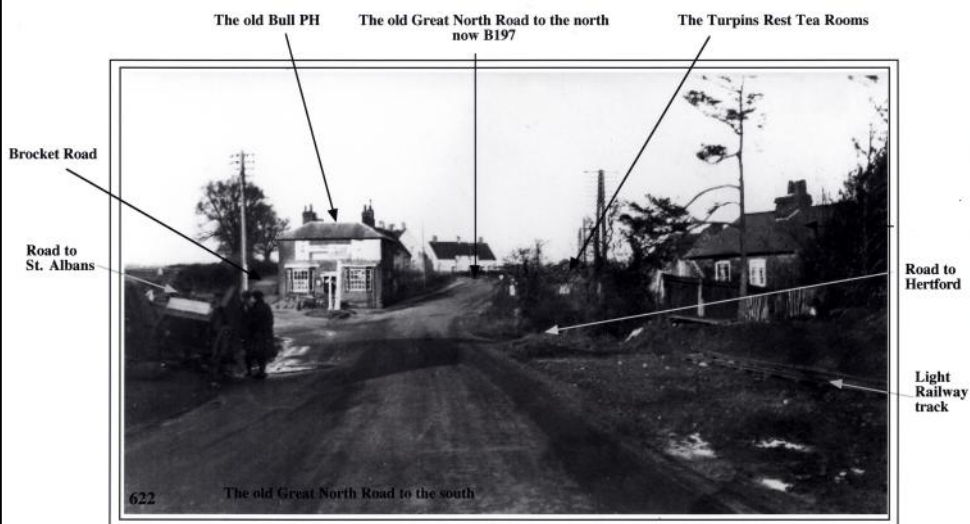
dementia. Reported effects include reduced anxiety, improved sleep, enhanced relaxation and a stimulation of positive interactions.

The event celebrated the launch of this therapeutic programme and highlighted the home's commitment to innovative and holistic care.

As we enter the New Year of 2026, I look for an event with the magic number of 100 years ago.

In 1926 major improvements were made to the Great North Road between Hatfield and Welwyn. The road was widened from 18 feet to 30 feet, bends were smoothed or even completely straightened and the road resurfaced. Drains were installed and edges were defined with kerbstones. Pedestrians were not forgotten and all weather footpaths were made. The double telephone poles which lined the route were replaced with single poles. The old quiet lane was transformed into a major trunk road worthy of the name 'Great North Road'.

The two images below show the changes.



The Crossroads at Stanborough before the improvements to the Great North Road (A1) of 1926/7

(Continued on page 19)

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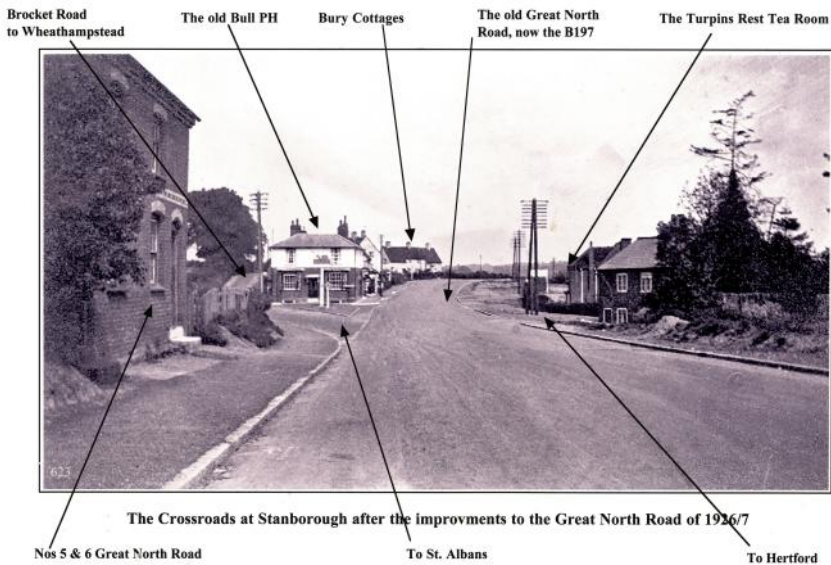
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Lemsford Local History Group - Continued

(Continued from page 17)



Over the coming year, I will serialise the history of 'The Great North Road' in the six copies of the parish magazine.

The first chapter asks the question 'What did the Romans do for us?'

10,000 miles of Roman roads were built in Britain between AD43 and AD150. Before the invading Roman army arrived in AD43, there were already some long-distance track ways across Britain. The Romans are famous for the straight, hard-surfaced roads they built all across their empire. In London, a network of roads radiated from the city, and some modern streets still follow the same path. The Great North Road was awarded the accolade of 'A1' when Britain introduced a road numbering system in 1923.

The naming (or numbering) of roads starts to give an arbitrary route across the country a significance greater than the individual places it connects. That practice goes back a long way, but those roads gaining such a reference were unusual.

(Continued on page 21)



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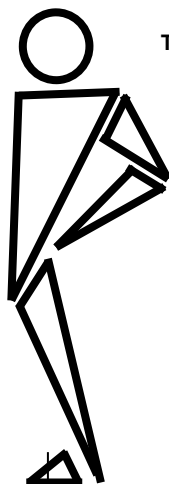

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(Continued from page 19)

The first recorded identification of the ‘great’ roads of England dates back to medieval writers such as Henry of Huntingdon: in the mid-12th century he refers to Ermine Street, Icknield Way, Watling Street and Fosse Way. With the emergence of postal services in the early 17th century the primary highways, still recognised in our single digit road numbers, began to crystallise. John Ogilby’s *Britannia*, published in 1675, described 14 numbered routes radiating from London. The ensuing 150 years of coaching and turn piking (more about the golden age of Lemsford in the next edition) saw roads develop their own stories and character. Some were best known by their primary destination, for example, Dover, Bath and Holyhead. The north road to Edinburgh became the Great North Road.

The Great North Road went through Lemsford. It entered the Parish at the Old Bull Inn, Stanborough, followed Brocket Road, turned right at the spot where the Church would be built years later. Down the hill into the village turning left pass the old Long and Short and onward to The Waggoners. The Romans crossed the River Lea in the village at a low point (ford). When the route was first used, Lemsford village did not exist. A settlement was emerging where the soldiers crossed the river. In 1500 David Spence’s maps in the LLHG archives shows a name for the first time. That name was Lemysforth used until 1600 when it was called Lemsford Mill which was replaced in 1925 with just Lemsford. In the next Parish Magazine chapter 2 will explore ‘The New Cut in 1833’, ‘The A1’ and the ‘Great North Road’.

I like writing about people more than facts and I found a wonderful memory from the son of Percy and Rhoda Pugh who erected the Lemsford café in 1926.

‘In 1926 my father procured a plot of land next to Lemsford garage. With help he erected two wooden structures one of which was the original Lemsford café and the other was to be our family accommodation for some long time. At that time there were no other houses or buildings of any kind looking south except the cottages that are opposite the existing Jaguar showrooms in other words the surrounding formed by Ephraim Taylor. No services were available at all – no electric or gas – no mains water or drainage consequently

(Continued on page 23)

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Lemsford Local History Group - Concluded

(Continued from page 21)

we had a pump for water and paraffin lamps and candles for lighting and coal for heating and cooking.

Luckily the business prospered (due to much hard work) and about eighteen months later we were able to move into a nice little house that had been constructed close by. This was followed by a brick built café and kitchen. I would like to add that this café was well known the length of the country for its wonderful cooking etc.'

I can add my own memories, and I imagine many people in the parish will relate to this.

'My memories of the Lemsford Café were formed in the mid to late 70s. It had a large car park accommodating lorries and cars as it was a classic greasy spoon establishment. The interior was large with a counter facing the door where you ordered your food and you could see part of the kitchen and if lucky see the endless bean pot. The rumour was that the beans were cooked in a saucepan cleaned once a month as the café to my knowledge was open 24 hours a day. The tables seated about 8 people and made of Formica. I also recollect a pinball machine and a large bowl on the counter full of sugar with a teaspoon on a chain next to it.

I visited the café on a regular basis when I was an apprentice for the GPO (Now BT).

In the mid-1970s, cafés were plentiful and frequented by employees of the nationalised utilities. Every morning for breakfast, at lunchtime and again for afternoon tea, you would find a table for the GPO, another for the gas board, the electricity board, the water board and the council workers. It was also very popular with the youth of the area, at midnight for a bacon sandwich and coffee after the pubs turned out. It was so popular the queue to the counter would be out the door. My memories of the Lemmy Café are fond, and when it closed - and was later knocked down - it was a sad day for me.'

I wish everybody a very Happy New Year. We are happy to share LLHG archive and research with the community and provide walks and talks to groups. For more information, contact us on info@lemsfordhistory.co.uk. The same email address is available if you want to share memories.



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There are very few people who are generally admired; David Attenborough is certainly one of them. At age 99 he is still going strong, as can be seen from his latest film, *Wild London*, which I thoroughly recommend (on BBC iPlayer).

He demonstrates with brilliant photography the diversity of wildlife in London. A memorable moment in an allotment in

Tottenham is when he comes face to face with a fox, each inspecting the other quizzically. Another is at the top of the Houses of Parliament when, like a proud father, he holds a Peregrine Falcon chick while it is being ringed.

His thesis is that London despite being a major city is one of the greenest in the world by virtue of its numerous large open spaces and thousands of gardens which sustain nature. It made me reflect on our good fortune in living in Welwyn Hatfield. Welwyn Garden City was designed around its founder's ideal of combining habitations with green spaces. Hatfield and all the other post-war New Towns had similar objectives. Our conurbation has two large estates – Broomfield and Hatfield House - open spaces, woods, golf courses, and of course gardens galore. Despite the encroachment of



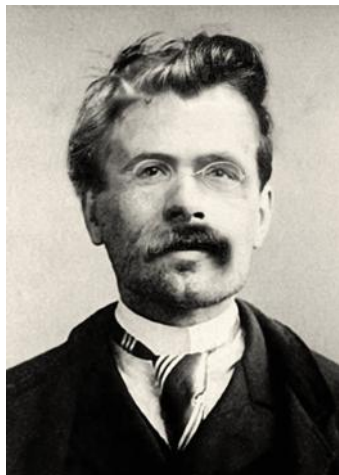
houses there is still plenty of green belt in and around the two towns at its core.

Generally its inhabitants value nature and take active steps to encourage it. There is the odd blip, like the cull of herons in Broomfield Park when Lord Broomfield lived there (see my Nature Note #27), but this is very much the exception. Much more inspiring is Pat, one of my neighbours, who has given over her house to sustaining injured or abandoned hedgehogs and looks after 20 or so at any one time.

So, let's start the New Year by giving thanks for the wildlife around us, and make a Resolution to do our best to help it thrive.

You can read all Geoffrey's Nature Notes at
geoffreyhollis.com/nature-notes

Nietzsche and the God-Shaped Gap - *Editor*



Most people have heard the phrase “God is dead”, but far fewer know the man behind it. Friedrich Nietzsche was a 19th-century German philosopher, writing at the tail end of the Age of Enlightenment, when science and reason were steadily replacing religion as the organising force of society. He wasn’t a cosy, armchair thinker — he was sharp, provocative, and deeply worried about where Western culture was heading.

When Nietzsche said “God is dead”, he wasn’t celebrating it. He wasn’t gloating, and he certainly wasn’t saying God had literally stopped existing. What he meant

was that belief in God no longer held real authority in everyday life. People still talked in moral terms shaped by Christianity, but the faith that once underpinned those values was quietly ebbing away. Nietzsche saw this as a problem, not a victory.

His fear was simple but profound: if we abandon God and replace Him with nothing meaningful, we slide into nihilism — a world where comfort, power, money, and identity politics become poor substitutes for purpose. [Doesn’t this sound familiar?] And, Life becomes shallow, anxious, and oddly joyless, even amid plenty.

Nietzsche is often (and lazily) linked to Nazism, but the truth is the opposite. He despised antisemitism, nationalism, and mass movements. The Nazis later hijacked his work, cherry-picked phrases, and bent his ideas into something he would have utterly rejected.

Today, we might ask whether Nietzsche’s warning has landed. We are richer, more connected, and more comfortable than ever — yet also more restless, divided, and unsatisfied. We chased materialism expecting fulfilment, and instead found distraction.

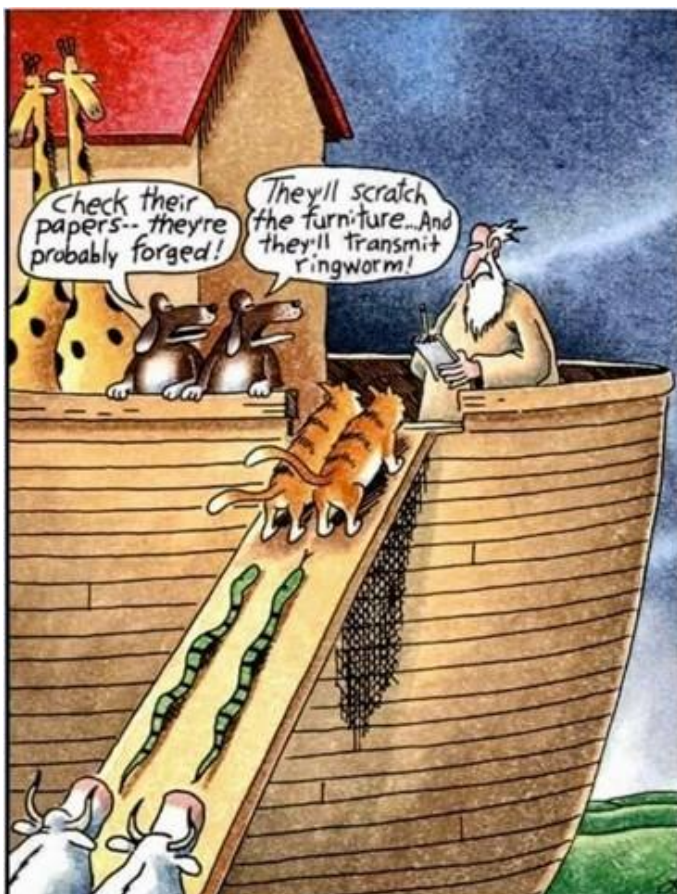
Perhaps, then, the uncomfortable question is not whether belief in God once failed us — but whether life without God is now failing us instead. Nietzsche warned that if God died, something demanding and meaningful would need to take His place. If we’re honest, we never really filled the gap. Looking at the state of the world currently - it’s time to come back to God. ‘He’ never went away!

Prayer for the Frustration of Evil & Oppressive Leaders

Isaiah 10:1-2 – “Woe to those who make unjust laws... depriving the poor of their rights...”

Righteous Father, we pray for relief from leaders who use their power to oppress, deceive, and harm the innocent. Strengthen the hands of those who stand for righteousness. May Your light expose every hidden work of darkness, and may Your justice bring peace and freedom to our world
Amen

And finally



The History of Lemsford Cafe

The History of LEMS福德 CAFE



THE ORIGINAL LEMS福德 CAFE TAKEN IN 1926.



PERCY AND RHODA PUGH FOUNDERS OF THE LEMS福德 CAFE, TAKEN IN 1930'S.



Lorry outside Lemsford cafe about 1930. Those aboard are Frank Pugh and Norma Ranchman



LEMS福德 CAFE HOUSE BEFORE ALTERATIONS TO GARDEN TO INCREASE AREA FOR LORRY PARKING.



PERCY WAS SHREWED BUSINESS MAN WHEN THE YEAR HE BUILT THE CAFE THE GREAT NORTH ROAD WAS UPGRADED AND BECAME A BUSY HIGHWAY.



AFTER WW2 the Lemsford cafe is improved and services the increased traffic going North and south



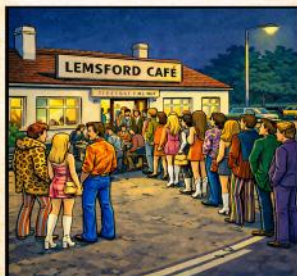
TRAFFIC INCREASES IN THE 1960S AND LEMS福德 CAFE STARTS ITS GOLDEN YEARS.



1973 A1(M) OPENED BY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT CUTTING RIBBON



IN THE 1970s AND 1980s the CAFE WAS A POPULAR HAUNT FOR LOCAL WORKERS FOR BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND AFTERNOON TEA (NOT MANY WORKED PAST



IN THE 1970s LEMS福德 CAFE THE PLACE TO GO AFTER THE PUBS CLOSE ON A FRIDAY NIGHT



LATE 1990 THE DECLINE OF LEMS福德 CAFE LEADS THE SITE BEING SOLD FOR DEVELOPMENT



HOUSES BUILT ON OLD SITE WITH THE VOLVO GARAGE NEXT DOOR. THE OWNER STILL DIGS UP KNIFE, SPOONS, AND STILL LOOKING FOR THE LEGENDARY 'TENSIDEAN POT' LEMS福德 CAFE - THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

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