

St Thomas', Trowbridge and St John's, West Ashton Monthly News February 2025

St Thomas
Trowbridge

St John's
West Ashton

Kingfisher



Holy Trinity
Trowbridge



"In February, nature reminds us that even in the coldest moments, beauty can still flourish."
– **Gabriela Alemán**

Churchwarden's Letter

Dear friends,

There are no prizes for guessing the main subject for this month's churchwardens' letter! It was a great joy to be able to announce to the church recently the news of the appointment of Rev Simon Pope as our next vicar, and I hope you all saw the announcement that we sent out with a few details of the appointment and with a picture of Simon and his family.

At the time of writing this we don't have any further news about when Simon will be licensed and begin his ministry in our two parishes, but we'll let everyone know as soon as we do.

It may be helpful to share just a little information about Simon at this stage, with the hope that there will be opportunities to learn more as we get closer to the licensing and as we welcome Simon and Elle among us.

Simon came into ministry after a career in software and information analysis, with one of his jobs being here in Trowbridge. He trained for ministry at Trinity College in Bristol, and since 2022 has been in a curacy post within the Avon River team, which is just north of Amesbury. He will be coming to us as his first incumbency following completion of his curacy.

Simon is married to Elle, and they have two sons, Ben and Tom, who are both currently at university. Before he began his curacy, Simon, Elle and the boys were members for about 15 years at Christ Church in Warminster, and Simon has plenty of experience of church life from a lay perspective as well as now from a ministerial perspective.

I'm not going to reproduce Simon's entire CV here! And anyway, we want to let him tell his own story in his own time. But maybe I can just highlight a few examples of his experience that may give us a flavour. In Warminster, he led an ecumenical men's ministry, which is still

flourishing; he was also a Lay Worship Leader; in Avon River he has been closely involved in ministry to primary schools (including collective worship and being a governor); he has led the setup and running of a community hub (after-school family hub) in the largest primary school; he has led 'small groups' and also Alpha; he has been active in various other forms of community engagement; he has been a director of Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team, and still advises them; he is committed to overseas missions; and he has coached youth football teams!

As I said in the announcement of Simon's appointment, your Parish Reps and the whole interview panel believe that Simon's experience and the things that he is passionate about fit in well with what is important to us in the lives and mission of our two parishes, and we are excited about his appointment.

Most of all, we want to thank God for the way that he brought Simon and our churches together in a common sense of calling, and for helping the process to go smoothly. Thank you to everyone for your prayers, encouragement and input during the process. We are also grateful to CPAS (our patron) and the representatives of the Diocese for their support in the process. Do keep praying for Simon, Elle, Ben and Tom as they prepare to leave one place and begin something new, and for ourselves as we prepare to welcome them.

Meanwhile, life in the church continues, and I just want to mention a couple of other things before finishing. The first is to say that we have now planned dates and a theme for the lent studies. We plan to follow the 'Lectio Course' published by 24-7 Prayer. Full details are in a separate article in this newsletter – do put the dates in your diaries.

And finally, have you put the date of the Church Weekend Away in your diaries? It's booked for 21st to 23rd November (a bit later than in previous years) at Hill House near Bridgewater. This will be a great opportunity to spend quality time together as a whole church family, and it doesn't involve driving round Newport on the M4 on a Friday afternoon!

Paul E

St John's Update

Well whatever happened in January at St John's has been outshined by the thrilling news of the appointment of a new vicar - Revd. Simon Pope.

Paul E wrote "Yes, that's right, a new vicar has been appointed! We are excited about Simon's appointment and believe that Simon's experience and the things that he is passionate about fit in well with what is important to us in the lives and mission of our two parishes". Such a true statement.

When Simon visited St John's, he mentioned that it was very similar to one of the churches in his group (The Avon River Team have 7 churches in total) and he recognised the requirements needed for a rural church and ministry.

Final detail of when Simon's licensing and move to Trowbridge has to be finalised. We pray that Simon and his family have a peaceful transition to our area and that he settles well in his new role as St Thomas' and St John's Vicar.

As Romans Ch.12 V.6-8:

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully". Amen.

You would be more than welcome to the following services at St John's:

Sunday, 2 February.. Service of the Word - 10.30am

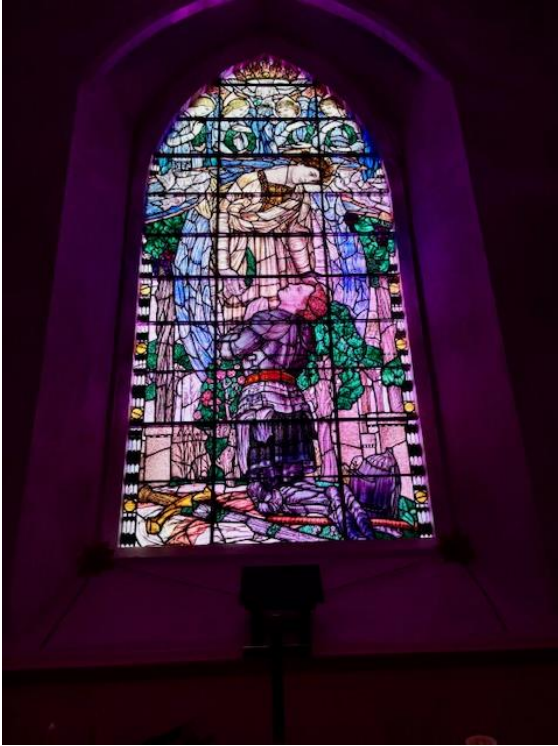
Sunday, 16 February - Holy Communion - 10.30am

Jean R

Christmas Concert at St John's.

(Missed from last month's magazine)

Outside illuminations captured the east window in its full glory.



The Songbirds Choir provided an evening with excellent festive entertainment.



Bishop's February Letter

At the west end of your cathedral, on the south wall nearest the main entrance, is a large slate stone which records all the names of the Bishops of Salisbury. Mine is the most recent to have been inscribed. I am number 79.

Someone else will follow. It serves to make one feel small rather than important.

The first name is that of Herman, whose day falls this month on 20th February. A native of Lorraine (in north-eastern France), Herman was made Bishop of Ramsbury in 1045. He resigned in 1055 when King Edward the Confessor refused to allow the transfer of the see to Malmesbury. He became a monk at Saint-Omer (in northern France), returning to England in 1058 to become Bishop of Sherborne while at the same time being restored to the bishopric of Ramsbury. By 1071, Herman was old and infirm and wished to resign but Archbishop Lanfranc urged him to stay on. There was a plan. Approval of the transfer of the see was given at the Council of London in 1075, thus creating the new diocese of Salisbury, to which you belong. Herman oversaw the initial construction of the Cathedral at Old Sarum but died before its completion, on 20th February in 1078. Herman would have known where you live and known and cared for your patch of the diocese. A diocese is only the sum total of its parts, and whilst it is the Anglican model of apostolic local leadership, the real strength of mission and ministry is to be found in the local, just as Jesus' ministry was locally based and exercised. We all follow in the footsteps of those who have carried the flame of faith before us in each place. It is that faithfulness, mirroring the fact that God is faithful, that has sustained our communities down the ages, however much the times and the names change. And God will continue to do so, because He is faithful.



Stephen, Bishop of Salisbury

Appointment of new finance team

At the January PCC we formally appointed Lyndsey W and Esther B to take over the role of treasurer from Pat K. Pat's role has now been split into two main parts:

- Treasurer (Lyndsey W) – overall financial accountability to PCC; budgets; day-to-day banking; checking invoices to users of premises; end-of-year accounts
- Finance Assistant (Esther B) – salaries; obtaining approvals for outgoing payments; gift aid; VAT

These are not complete job descriptions, but give an idea of the tasks that Lyndsey and Esther will each be handling.

To support this change, a new e-mail address has been created: treasurer@stthomastrowbridge.org. Please use this for any matters that are specifically to do with finance (e.g. expenses claims, invoices for payment, questions about giving to the church). Lyndsey and Esther can still be contacted on their personal e-mails for other non-finance matters.

We are very grateful to both Lyndsey and Esther for agreeing to take on these important roles in the life of the church. Please keep them in your prayers as they pick up these new responsibilities.

And of course we are hugely grateful to Pat, who has undertaken the role of treasurer with such diligence and commitment over these recent years. We will say 'thank you' to Pat properly when she and Geoff get close to moving.

Paul

Summary of PCC meeting

21 January 2025 (Full minutes available from office upon request once approved at our next meeting).

The meeting opened with worship based on Ephesians 2 with praise for the sense of unity in the church.

The Parish Reps and all those who took part in the visit were thanked for their part in recruiting our new vicar, Simon Pope; it was really felt by the Parish Reps that they were of one mind in the decision making. Thanks also to those involved in preparing the Parish Profile which was very positively received. There will be a pre-occupancy meeting with the Diocese, Jake Eggerton (Rural Dean), Church wardens and Simon and Ellie to discuss practicalities. A small group will meet to reflect on the Caring for Ministers document previously shared and how to put measures in place to make sure Simon and his family are fully supported.

Advertising for a new youth worker has yielded no candidates. It was agreed that we will wait to discuss with our new vicar before re-advertising.

The 2025 budget was approved and praises given to God that our finances are in a good position. Pat Kerbey was thanked for all her hard work. She explained that, as our income was £230k in 2024, she was proposing a £3k increase to our 2024 giving to maintain our tithe of 10%. It was agreed that the £3k should be split evenly and proportionately across the groups that we supported as they will all be facing increased costs. The budget was agreed with a possible deficit of £9k, but that includes the sum of £9k for new entrance door to rooms and new windows in the rooms. This budget includes just 3 months use by On Track as we don't know how long the booking will last – any extra months would help to reduce the deficit.

We are pleased to be making connections with local schools. Castlemead and Paxcroft Mead primary schools really appreciated the Living Nativity services and would welcome more input. Gwen K is doing assemblies at Walwayne Court and after she and John Chettleburgh met the Head at Bellefield school, she is now taking assemblies there too. Natasha B is Governor and Mentor at West Ashton in addition to assisting on school trips and confirms they are keen to have links with our new vicar.

We also discussed the forthcoming Lent Course, Social Programme, Safeguarding and appointed Esther B and Lyndsey W as treasurers in Pat K's place. There will be separate information regarding these.

As PCC secretary, I would like to thank all church members for your prayers. It has been wonderful to see the church working together during this period of interregnum. We thank God for answering our prayers in providing us with a Vicar in the first round of interviews and we are very excited for the future of our church. I also want to express special thanks to Paul E, John C and Pat K for their huge sacrifice of time – we are very blessed to have them. Their tireless work is very much appreciated. Finally thank you to Frankie S who has been managing the office so well during this time.

Easter Opportunities on Paxcroft & Castle Meads

In last month's magazine, I wrote about the Living Nativity presentations to The Mead School and to Castle Mead School. Both schools have told us how grateful they were and how much staff and children enjoyed the experience.

We are now planning to take our Easter Experience into the schools towards the end of March, just before they break up for Easter. This presentation looks at four key aspects of the Easter story: Palm Sunday, washing the disciples' feet, the crucifixion and the resurrection. We use a different format: interviewing just four key characters and involving the children in four activities.

Once we have arranged a date, we will be asking for volunteers to help bring the Easter story to life for the two schools.



We are also hoping to run our Easter Egg trail on Easter Monday: in previous years, this has started and ended at the Red Admiral pub on the Paxcroft Mead estate, with families going out to find 20 wooden decorated Easter eggs nearby and returning to claim a chocolate prize.

We also meet every Sunday evening to pray for these estates – anyone is welcome to join us.

Please get in touch if you would like to know more.

Stephen and Alice B

Lent Studies 2025

During lent we are planning to run a series of studies for the whole church gathered together. This is similar to what we have done for the last few years, and is a valuable opportunity to share in fellowship round God's word, and to study and pray together. We are encouraging the small groups to take a pause from their own groups during lent, where this is practical, and to join together at the church on Thursday evenings.

The course will last 5 weeks, and we plan to use 'The Lectio Course', produced by the 24-7 Prayer movement. The course is subtitled 'How to Hear God by Praying the Bible', and aims to help us to explore the practice of 'Lectio Divina', looking at questions such as: "How can I grow in my prayer life?", "What on earth is God saying?", "How do I make sense of the Bible?". Many of you will already be familiar with resources produced by 24-7 Prayer, and this course comes highly recommended by those who have already done it.

The key dates that you need to be aware of in lent are as follows (all evenings):

- Wednesday 5th March: Ash Wednesday service
- Thursday 13th March – Thursday 10th April inclusive: Lent studies (5 weeks)
- Thursday 17th April – Tenebrae (Maundy Thursday)

Because of the course, there will be no separate monthly prayer meetings in March or April. However, we do plan to incorporate prayer in some of the study evenings. There will be normal prayer meetings on 6th/7th Feb and 1st/2nd May.

Paul, John

Burn's Night at St Thomas'



When a celebration for Burns Night was first mooted at St. Thomas' we did wonder whether this was a "step too far"! However, nothing daunted we went ahead and decided that we needed a minimum of 25-30 people to show an interest to make this a viable proposition.

In the event 41 people gathered in the Hall for a traditional Burns Night Supper which opened with the traditional Selkirk Grace

*"Some hae meat and canna eat
And some wad eat that want it:
But we hae meat and we can eat,
And sae the Lord be thankit."*

....quickly followed by cock-a-leekie soup; haggis, neeps and tatties; and Cranachan. These 41 (despite their reservations I'm sure!) readily embraced the evening and we had a really fun time.

In between courses we were entertained by our lively Quiz Master who, to our untrained ears, sounded incredibly "Scottish" asking us questions about Scotland. The Haggis entered in the time honoured manner to the accompaniment of Scotland the Brave and was toasted with the traditional words delivered by Geoff Tate resplendent in tartan, and we all responded with a tot of whisky.



The evening ended with a "lively" rendition of Auld Lang Syne and we all headed for home surprised at how much we had enjoyed our traditional Scottish food, some of us a little saddened at our lack of knowledge about Scotland, but all really glad that we had joined in this new venture at St. Thomas'.

Keep an eye on the Weekly Sheet for details of future social events to make sure you don't miss out.



Overseas Mission support at St Thomas'

As it is the start of a new year, it seems a good time to outline how St Thomas' encourages support for overseas mission. The missions we support and the programme for the year is attached. During each mission slot we usually invite a guest speaker from the particular mission to the Sunday service. So far the following speakers have been confirmed:

9 February	Gareth Davies	Bible Society
9 March	Paul Tester	Church Mission Society
11 May	Steve and Helen Edwards	Ugandaid

We have a mission awareness group, made up of the mission reps, who meet bimonthly to plan and pray. The group aims to introduce and encourage support for world mission. The main way this is done is through the focus slots. We would also love to hear if anyone is considering doing any form of overseas mission. Our reps who are listed below, would be happy to answer any questions and share information on their mission.

Flame International	Andrew S
Bible Society	Celia R
Church Mission Society	Robert J
Ugandaid	Jane B and Pauline B
Mercy Ships	Caroline F
Arab World	Ed G

Andrew S

Overseas Mission

St Thomas' Church supports the following missions and focusses on each outlined in the programme below.

2025

Jan-Feb	Bible Society
Mar-Apr	CMS
May-June	Ugandaid
July-Aug	
Sept-mid Oct	Mercy Ships
mid Oct-Nov	Arab World

Jan-Feb 2026 Flame International

In addition we also support Tearfund and the Deanery Link with the Diocese of Kadugli in Sudan

Further details on the missions we support are given in the Mission Leaflet available at the back of the church building

Day of Prayer

The service this year is prepared by Christian women from the Cook Islands and is entitled 'I made you wonderful' based on Psalm 139.

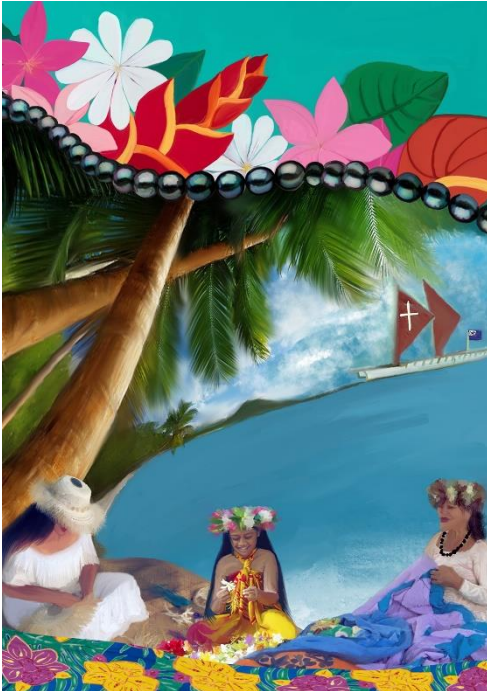
The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 120 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world — through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later.

You can join this Worldwide Wave of Prayer on

Friday 7th March

10.30am in St James' Church

Everyone welcome



Tarani and Tevairangi Napa (mother and daughter) created the artwork for the service this year and it depicts how their islands have been blessed by God - the abundant flora and fauna and the coconut tree, every part of which is used, and stands for health and well-being.



Some facts about the Cook Islands:

- The 15 islands lie between Tonga and Samoa in the South Pacific. The islands are small and are only 91sq miles in total.
- They are a self-governing island nation, which is in free association with New Zealand
- The population is approx. 17,500.
- Most of the population speak a version of Maori. '*Kia orana*' is a typical greeting meaning '*May you live a long and wonderful life*'.
- The main source of income is tourism.
- The national flower is the Tahitian gardenia.

Please join us at the service where everyone is welcome to find out more about the lives of the women on these islands and to thank God that we are **all** 'fearfully and wonderfully made'



Kadugli Newsletter and Prayer Diary

“Please do not grow tired of praying for Sudan” (Archbishop Ezekiel)

Recent News on Sudan.

Gradually the world seems to be waking up to the serious situation in Sudan. AFRECS (American Friends of the Episcopal Church of the Sudans) report that in the USA, the State Department has termed it “the worst humanitarian crisis in the world” and the outgoing Biden Administration declared that the Rapid Support Forces and allied militias had committed genocide in Sudan. Sanctions were imposed on RSF commander Mohammad Dagalo (Hemedti) for his role in systematic atrocities, particularly in West Darfur. The US also sanctioned seven RSF-owned companies in the United Arab Emirates. Then the US Government announced that the Sudan Armed Forces had used chemical weapons at least twice against the RSF in remote areas of the country. It expressed fears that could happen again in densely populated areas. It announced sanctions against Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan for documented atrocities by his troops, including indiscriminate bombing of civilians and use of starvation as a weapon of war.

Much more could be said, but the BBC reports that on 24 January the British Foreign Secretary David Lammy visited the western border of Sudan, which it shares with Chad, and saw for himself the impact of Sudan’s civil war as evidenced by the families streaming over the border. Clearly shaken, he said "It's some of the most horrific things I've ever heard and seen in my life. Overwhelmingly, what I've seen here in Chad, on the border with Sudan, are women and children fleeing for their lives - telling stories of widespread slaughter, mutilation, burning, sexual violence against them, their children. And amongst it all, famine, hunger - such unbelievable plight.”

The foreign minister saw the dozens of women wrapped in light, multicoloured shawls and holding children of different ages crossing over on horse-drawn carts. They looked weary sitting on bags holding the few belongings they could bring with them in the long journey to safety.

After meeting some of the refugees, he told the BBC: "All of these people have stories - very, very desperate stories of fleeing violence, of murder in their families, of rape, of torture, of mutilation. I just sat with one woman who showed me burn marks. She had been burned by soldiers up and down her arms, she had been beaten and she had been raped. This is desperate, and we must bring the world's attention to it and bring the suffering to an end.”

But he decried what he described as a "hierarchy of conflict" that has seemingly placed Sudan's at the bottom, even though it is currently the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

In November last year, the UK foreign secretary spearheaded a resolution calling for a ceasefire at the UN Security Council, which Russia vetoed. Now he plans to convene, in London, a meeting of Sudan's neighbours like Chad and Egypt and other "international partners to broker the peace". Let us pray for God's blessing on this initiative.

And What of the Church in Sudan?

For the first time in nearly two years, Archbishop Ezekiel was able to visit Khartoum, where he joined in the celebration of Christmas. He was unable to visit the cathedral there, as it is still occupied by the RSF, but his visit was welcome to the church there. He also took the opportunity to visit the newly appointed governor of the state and to advance the needs of the church. Generally there are signs that the RSF is losing ground in the area, and there are slight signs of a return to normality, though there is still much hardship. During his visit Archbishop Ezekiel confirmed 338 candidates at three services. The congregation at just one of these was over 500 people. Despite the great hardship the church in the area has endured, it is not altogether surprising that the report of the visit could say "It was a joy to sing and dance for the Lord".

What about Kadugli?

Kadugli has not featured in recent news reports. We know our aid has been gratefully received and used to bring much needed relief, as evidenced by the photo below. We have received the following message from Bishop Hassan:



**Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord.
Peace and grace to you all in the name of
our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope you are well
and healthy.**

Some prayer requests for you.

- 1 Praying for the very dangerous security and humanitarian situation in our country Sudan..**
- 2 Praying for the family who were displaced in different regions and in Sudan, especially the family who lost their relatives in recent times.**
- 3 Praying for the human situation is very difficult.**
- 4 Praying for peace and stability in Sudan.**

5 Praying for the church and its mission in the midst of these circumstances is very, very difficult to be light and salt with a message of love and hope for the people of Sudan, especially the fighting areas.

6 Praying for my family and children and may God protect them by meeting their school needs.

7 Praying for the training of leaders in the last week of January in the Toboa area.

Your brother in God,

Bishop Hassan Othman James Inqlo

Reading back from these requests, we can infer that:

- The situation remains dangerous in Kadugli as well as in the rest of Sudan
- There is concern for displaced people, whether still in Sudan or not, and families have been split or bereaved
- Wisdom and God's guidance and sensitivity is needed in praying for the people in their different circumstances
- As always, all parts of Sudan need to return to peace and stability
- The church needs encouragement, strength and empowerment to bear witness to the Lord Jesus and to bring his love and hope to the whole people
- Training of future leaders is being undertaken
- On a personal note, Bishop Hassan's children need both the facilities for their education and the means to pay for it. No doubt other families face the same problem.

Yet in the face of such difficulties, Christians cling to their faith, and maintain remarkable cheerfulness. They are encouraged by the knowledge of our support in prayer, and also in the money we are able to send to buy food. Across Bradford Deanery there has been a continuous warm and generous response to this need; thank you all. Please continue to give via your church if you can, or directly. The account details are:

Bank: Lloyds Bank Trowbridge

Name of Account: Bradford Deanery

Sort Code: 30-98-75

Account No. 00710285

Reference Kadugli. (N.B. This is important)

Please also consider ways of raising funds for Kadugli.

And as always, we ask you to pray.

Prayer Diary

“Please do not grow tired of praying for Sudan” (Archbishop Ezekiel)

Bishop Hassan’s prayer requests:

1. Pray for protection in the dangerous security and humanitarian situation in Sudan..
2. Pray for wisdom and God’s guidance and sensitivity for those praying for people in their different circumstances
- 3 Pray for displaced people, whether still in Sudan or not, and families which have been split or bereaved
- 4 Pray for peace and stability throughout Sudan.
- 5 Pray that God will encourage the church, and strengthen and empower it to bear witness to the Lord Jesus and to bring his love and hope to the whole people
6. Pray for the training of future leaders
7. For Bishop Hassan personally, but also for others with similar concerns, Pray for his family and children, that the children will have both the facilities for their education and the means to pay for it.

Outside the church in Dilling.



GRAND PARENTS

An opportunity to meet
with other Grandparents
to think about being a
Christian Grandparent

Saturday 8th March
2.30 - 4.00pm
St James' Church

Afternoon Tea



Contact Nick Lambert to book
nick@stjamestrowbridge.co.uk
Or scan the QR code



ST JAMES' CHURCH
TROWBRIDGE

An opportunity to meet with other Grandparents from local churches to think and talk about what it means to be a Christian Grandparent and what that might look like in reality.

WORDSEARCH

Look up, down, forwards, backwards and diagonally on the grid to find these words associated with hope

Y	I	K	M	Y	D	P	P	Q	B	F	Z	E	P	W	X	F	I
N	C	J	W	F	D	P	T	D	S	P	Q	A	R	G	E	L	U
P	V	N	A	S	P	I	R	A	T	I	O	N	E	I	E	G	D
T	L	S	A	Q	E	E	T	H	P	Z	O	Z	L	S	H	G	W
R	T	H	N	T	A	C	Z	T	K	I	E	E	I	V	C	U	Q
E	A	D	B	M	C	N	O	I	T	I	B	M	A	Q	A	J	U
V	X	T	N	E	M	E	G	A	R	U	O	C	N	E	O	G	B
J	X	J	Z	Q	Z	D	P	F	P	R	G	W	C	K	P	L	L
B	Q	G	F	E	M	I	W	X	P	O	J	Z	E	B	M	F	B
Y	B	X	W	R	C	F	T	C	E	P	S	O	R	P	V	P	D
Y	P	A	T	I	E	N	C	E	Y	T	Z	H	I	F	Y	Q	D
Q	Z	F	T	S	O	O	A	V	G	I	Q	C	N	S	Z	Y	G
T	C	N	L	E	U	C	N	R	Q	M	L	Z	A	I	D	D	G
D	A	Z	P	D	N	R	L	N	U	I	D	O	X	K	E	V	S
N	X	F	H	X	E	Q	T	Z	R	S	D	F	C	S	F	K	X
J	Q	B	P	H	O	A	W	U	Q	M	S	V	E	W	Q	X	L
N	Z	T	N	I	J	O	Z	M	T	D	G	A	Q	N	G	K	F
J	Z	M	Z	B	D	R	A	W	E	R	W	X	B	K	B	W	Z

AMBITION

ANTICIPATION

ASPIRATION

ASSURANCE

BELIEF

CONFIDENCE

DESIRE

DREAM

ENCOURAGEMENT

EXPECTANCY

FAITH

OPTIMISM

PATIENCE

PROMISE

PROSPECT

RELIANCE

REWARD

TRUST

GOD IS...



...NEVER BORING

Roy Mitchell