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in a

NUTSHELL

news, views, ideas from your local church 2025 Sep / Oct

What is 'real'?

In May this year, over 21 days of talking with an on-line 'chat-bot', an otherwise sane man in Toronto, Canada, became convinced he was a real-life superhero. The computer 'voice' convinced him that he had somehow uncovered a flaw in orthodox maths that could earn him millions. Finally, after some 300 hours of chats with the 'voice', his friends got him to talk to experts, and he realised it was all an illusion.

A lucky one

The man's experience wasn't unique, but he was one of the lucky ones. Thousands of users of programs like ChatGPT have become addicted to delusional fantasies causing anxiety, depression, sometimes even suicide and murder. (*Check this yourself on-line.*)

Frustrated

Chat-bots are built on AI (Artificial Intelligence) but you don't have to open a 'chat-bot' to encounter AI. It's everywhere. Have you been frustrated by the 'chat to us' invitations (on our computers) to which we resort in desperation when



tired of waiting for a phone to be answered – perhaps in online banking. Then, after a few minutes it dawns on us that we're not talking to a real person at all! Reassuringly, however, these on-line chats are designed to guide us within strict limits and often end by opening a link to a real person!

Vulnerable

Chat-bots are different, and are causing great concern amongst doctors and psychologists. Chat-bots can easily trap the vulnerable into an alternative 'reality', where normal rules of logic are suspended. The man in Toronto wasn't the victim of a scam. The programme was not trying to con him out of his life savings.

concluded overleaf / page S2

'Love in a Cup' Community Café

Every Thursday, 2-5pm:
St Andrew's United Church Halls

Bells a success
page S7

Sebastian's
PUZZLE
CORNER
page S5

Sebastian's
in trouble
page S4

Cartoon -
Two Sons
page S6

INSIDE

What is 'real'? continued

Chat-bots use artificial intelligence programmed to affirm and flatter the user at every stage in the conversation – to keep him or her 'hooked' – even if what the user proposes is manifestly wrong.

The trouble is that humans are not programmed to be unaffected by constant praise, and the education system is not always successful in teaching students critical thinking skills, to separate fact from opinion. The spread of conspiracy theories on social media is just one example of this!

So what can we do? Well, lots. For a start, if you are using a chat-bot, don't suspend your critical faculties: check all the time against what you *know* to be real and accurate. If what the 'bot' suggests seems too good to be true, it probably is! Second, talk to a trusted (and sceptical) friend.

Finally, if you are worried about someone else or think you may need help yourself but don't want to talk to family or friends, contact **Mind**, the mental health charity, online (www.mind.org.uk) or by phone (0208 215 2243).

'The Velveteen Rabbit' – an alternative 'reality'

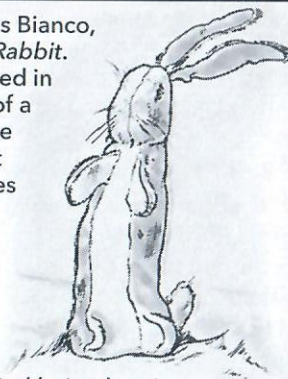
In 1922 an English and American author, Marjory Williams Bianco, published her wonderful children's book, *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Over 100 years later it is still in print, and has been adapted in film and animated versions. The tale follows the journey of a stuffed rabbit and explores themes of love, reality, and the nature of being through the eyes of toys. It is a significant 'corrective', in a world obsessed with wealth, profit, images of 'success' and power. If you've never read it, you can get it free on-line (it's out of copyright) or buy a hard copy for just a few pounds. This extract is from early in the story:

'What is REAL?' asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. 'Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?'

'Real isn't how you are made,' said the Skin Horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.'

'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit.

'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. 'When you are Real



you don't mind being hurt.'

'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?'

'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby.'

A PRAYER FOR WISDOM
Lord, teach me to discern those things which are wholesome, loving and life-enhancing.

Grant me strength of mind and heart to recognise and reject those things are self-destructive, hurtful to my neighbours (wherever

they live and whatever their race, religion or culture) and damaging to the Earth and all that you have created. AMEN



What's the weather like?

Don't we all just love talking about the weather? No matter

what time of the year it is, we all love to applaud or bemoan the conditions that face us as we leave our front door each day. Goodness knows what shopkeepers would talk about if we couldn't start our conversation with the weather outside!

I don't think we can blame climate change for that! We've been talking (and usually complaining) about the weather well before we understood that global warming was even 'a thing'.

Fooled

The unpredictability of the elements is something that we in the UK have got used to. Not sure what to put on in the morning? Many a time it looks bright and sunny out there, only for us to put on a light tee-shirt and shorts and find that we have been fooled! Within the hour we are soaked through in a heavy thunderstorm that appears from nowhere! At least these days we have those great 'apps' on our phones that can forecast even the microclimate of a village or postcode area.

Life's uncertainties

But weather isn't the only unpredictable thing that comes our way. Life is full of unpredictability. Some of us cope better with it than others. There's no shame in finding that we cope better with life when there are more certainties than not! Not everyone wants to feel the thrill of inconsistency and enjoy the rollercoaster of change!

IS THIS THE
WEATHER
BUREAU?...

... DO YOU HAVE A
COMPLAINTS
DEPARTMENT?



Friendly skies

But one thing in life that we *can* depend upon is a God who never changes! We may feel that life's events, even relationships, are fickle – built on shifting sand. However, we can know a God who is consistent and always dependable. He won't be in a bad mood one day and bright and friendly the next! The author AW Tozer wrote of 'living under friendly skies', when we become really aware what God is like.

The Old Testament speaks of God's reliability: 'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases . . . great is his faithfulness.' (*Lamentations 3:22-23*)

On the rock

There is dependability in God that we can all find and enjoy, in the midst of uncertain times. We just need to stand on the rock of his promise to us and lean into him when we find the storm starts blowing.

David Swannack is Rector of the South Manlake Group of Churches to which St Andrew's United Church, Kirton, belongs. See p58.

St Andrew's United Church HARVEST FESTIVAL SERVICE
12 October at 11am, followed by lunch in the Church Hall





Sebastian's in trouble!

Hi there, everyone!

The other day, I invited my mother and my friend Cedric to tea. When she comes to visit, my mother always brings her special recipe chocolate cakes with crunchy flies. We keep telling her she should apply to go on 'Spider Bake-Off'.

We were sitting chatting after tea when my mother said, 'Boys, I need someone to help me move my bookcase. I've dropped my knitting needles down behind it and it's too heavy for me to move on my own. You'll come, won't you?' 'Of course, Mum!' I said. 'When?' 'I'd really like to do it tomorrow,' replied my mother. 'OK! I'll be there! I promise!' I said. 'Sorry,' said Cedric, 'I want to watch the football on TV. It's the start of the new season.'

Well, the next day, two of my friends (not Cedric) called round. 'Come on, Sebastian,' they said. 'We're going to play in the churchyard. It's such a lovely day.' 'OK,' I said. 'That'll be great. I'm meant to be going to Mum's, but she won't mind. I'll go tomorrow instead.' And we had a great time out in the sunshine. We played football and hide-and-seek and rolled around on the grass.

The next day, I looked at my shirt. It was all dirty and stained with grass. 'Mum will sort this out,' I said to myself. Off I ran to see her - but instead of looking pleased to see me, she frowned.

A little boy watched as the church steward brought the offertory plate round. When it came to his row, he said loudly, 'Don't pay for me, Daddy, I'm under five.'



'Hey! Aren't empty promises better than no promises at all?'

'I was expecting you yesterday, Sebastian,' she said. 'You promised to come and help me. You really let me down.'

'Sorry, Mum!' I muttered, quickly hiding my shirt. 'I'll help you now.' 'You're too late,' she said. 'Cedric came and helped me yesterday.' 'But he said he wouldn't come,' I protested. 'Well, he changed his mind,' said my mother. 'So who do you think deserves the special cake I've made - the spider who said he'd come and didn't, or the spider who said he wouldn't come, then changed his mind?'

Of course, it was Cedric who deserved the cake. Jesus told a story like this, about a father who asked his two sons to work in his vineyard. One promised to go, but didn't. The other said he wouldn't help, then changed his mind. *

Well, Cedric and Mum taught me that empty promises are pretty useless!

Your friend, *Sebastian*

* See the cartoon story over the page!

The brother and sister were told they had to be quiet in church. 'Why?' asked the little girl. Her brother quickly chimed in, 'Because people are sleeping!'



Sebastian Spider's Puzzle Corner for all ages

Step Ladder

Climb from COOK to HELP changing just one letter at a time, without disturbing the order of the remaining letters. We have provided clues for the steps, but not in the correct order.

HELP

CLUES

- Warmth
- Sea vessel
- Water bird
- Pile
- Outer garment
- Rhythm

COOK

Q: What kind of murderer is full of fibre?

A: A cereal killer.

Q: What is orange and sounds like a parrot?

A: A carrot.

Find solutions to the puzzles on page 58.

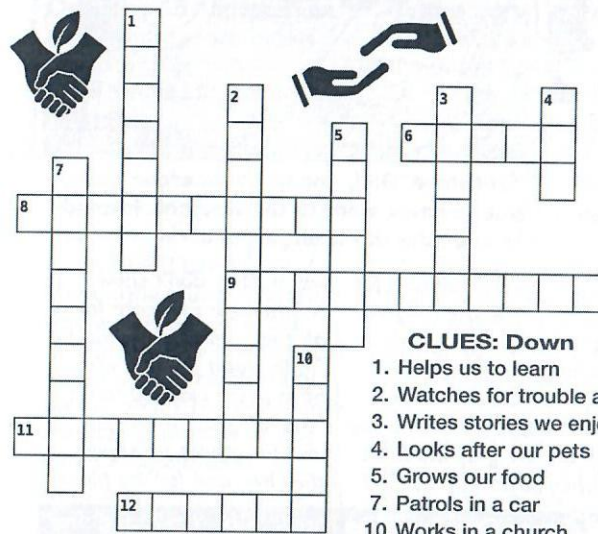
'SEPTEMBER START' WORD SEARCH

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

Find these words in the puzzle box. Words are hidden → and ↓

APPLES	FRUIT	NUTS	SQUIRREL
AUTUMN	GOAL	PLAYTIME	TEACHER
BROWN	HARVEST	REFEREE	TREES
FARMER	LEAVES	SCHOOL	WALKING
FOOTBALL	MIST	SEPTEMBER	WHISTLE

HELPING HANDS CROSSWORD



CLUES: Down

- Helps us to learn
- Watches for trouble at sea
- Writes stories we enjoy
- Looks after our pets
- Grows our food
- Patrols in a car
- Works in a church

A tricky maths riddle



The winner runs the distance in 15 secs, the second in 21 secs, the third in 24 secs. How many seconds will it take the sixth athlete to finish?

CLUES: Across

- Works in a hospital ward
- Tells us about the weather
- Sells us fruit and vegetables
- Medical worker who often comes in an ambulance
- May use a stethoscope

'What does God want?' asks Jesus

Jesus often told parables to make people think. This is a parable Jesus told to help us think what 'obedience' means. Jesus told a story about family life. He began: 'There was a farmer with two sons who wanted them to help him.'



He asked the first, 'Son, will you go and work today in the vineyard.' 'No,' the son replied, 'I've got other plans.'



But later he changed his mind and went and worked in the vineyard as his father had asked him.



The father went to the other son and said the same thing, 'Son, will you go and work today in the vineyard?'



'Of course, Dad,' the boy answered. But he never went to the vineyard. Instead he spent his day lazing around.

WHICH SON PLEASSED THE FATHER?
Read the story in Matthew 21.28-32



This story is still relevant for people living in the modern 21st century world. Jesus's teaching isn't just for people 2,000 years ago! Some people today who say they are living as the Bible teaches do not live as God

wants. They don't show compassion and care for all their neighbours and for God's world. Others, who have never claimed to be 'holy' or 'good' show real love for others, wherever they live, and for the planet.

Watch the video on YouTube by Tangy Crayfish, *The Parable of the Two Sons*

St Andrew's United Church Harvest Festival 12 October at 11am

Estelle's fiancé was a soldier in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Bravely, he reported unlawful killings he had seen during border fighting, but was blackmailed into silence by threats to her life.



Estelle

Be the light at the end of someone's journey...



Encouraged by her family, Estelle fled, hoping to make a new life in Cyprus, where her qualifications would ensure that she found a job. Part of the journey had to be made on foot and, as a result, Estelle's legs and feet were so badly injured that she needed medical help when she eventually arrived in

Cyprus. She now works on the front desk in a BMS (Baptist) World Mission reception centre for refugees. The centre offers essential services, such as a food bank, help in processing paperwork and computing classes to people from all over the world who have been forced to flee from violence.

Half the funds raised at the St Andrew's United Church's Harvest Festival this year will go to support BMS World Mission's *Refugees Welcome* appeal for its Cyprus-based Centre. The other half will be sent to the DEC

(Disasters Emergency Committee) for its current appeal. At the moment, this is its Middle East Humanitarian Appeal. Offerings of food, toiletries and cleaning products will be given to *The Forge Project*, Scunthorpe.

PLEASE JOIN US... Our Harvest Festival service in St Andrew's is at 11am on Sunday 12 October, followed by lunch in the United Church Halls, to which everyone is welcome.

Local ringers cracked it!

Maxine Timms on the successful VJ Day bell ringing

On Friday 15 August some West Lindsey bell ringers were involved in quarter peals for the 80th Anniversary of VJ Day.

Successfully completed quarter peals are listed (with any dedications) on an international database!

A combined band from Messingham and Kirton in Lindsey kicked off in the morning with a quarter peal on six bells at Holy Trinity, Messingham, but only a few minutes in we had to stop when a rope broke!

After a couple of phone calls, we decamped to St Peter's,

Bottesford, where we successfully completed the quarter peal in about 50 minutes. This was a first on Treble (the highest pitched bell) for Clive, one of our Kirton ringers.

At 1 pm we convened at St Andrew's, Kirton, for a quarter peal on eight bells, with ringers from Messingham, Scotter, Kirton, Willingham by Stow and Belton.

We were delighted to complete this quarter peal, which was a first on eight bells for Carol from Messingham!



A quarter peal involves 1260 'changes' - that is, 1260 rows, with the bells sounding in a different order each time.

When the quarter peal is rung on seven or more bells (St Andrew's has 8), no row is repeated. On fewer than 7 bells all possible rows must be rung with the fewest possible repeats. *Work all that out!* If you want to know more about bell ringing, contact Maxine on 07736 640645.



Your local churches

St Andrew's United Church, Kirton in Lindsey

www.standrewsunitedchurch.org.uk

St Radegund's Church, Grayingham

www.achurchnearyou.com/grayingham-st-radegund



Ministry Contacts: Sep 2025 - KIRTON

- ☎ 01724 647789 The Revd David Swannack (Anglican Vicar)
- ☎ 07395 453246 The Revd Robert Roberts (Methodist Minister)
- ☎ 01652 648846 The Revd Preb Dr Michael Sheard (Anglican, retired)
- ☎ 01652 649365 Dr Pat Frankish (Baptist Deacon; Anglican Lay Reader)

Ministry Contact: Sep 2025 - GRAYINGHAM

- ☎ 07738 356048 The Revd Charles Thody (Anglican Priest in Charge)

Other enquiries

Church Council Secretary, Kirton, 01652 648846

Church hall bookings, Kirton, 01652 648573

Church Warden, Kirton, Dr Pat Frankish, 01652 649365

Church Council Secretary, Grayingham, 01652 640157

Church Warden, Grayingham, Mr Clive Marshall, 01652 648125

SAFEGUARDING (Kirton) 01652 640740

SAFEGUARDING (Gray'm) 01652 640157

Baptism bookings (Kirton) - 07776 487791

Wedding bookings (Kirton) - 01652 648846

Funerals (Kirton) - 01652 648573

Worship in our buildings in Sep/October 2025

- St Andrew's United Church, Kirton, 11am Sunday; 9.30 every Wednesday
- St Radegund's, Grayingham, 9.30 1st Sun HC; other Sundays 9am

Please visit our websites/Facebook or phone one of the contact numbers above for other information about our churches and activities.

Join us for Worship on Zoom: every Sunday at 9.30am

* To join - on computer, tablet or phone - contact heather.bunker@btinternet.com

St Andrew's United Church 4th SUNDAY every month, FAMILY SERVICE 11am

PUZZLE ANSWERS (p.56)

Step Ladder: COOK, COOT, COAT, BOAT, BEAT, HEAT, HEAP, HELP

Crossword: Down: 1) teacher; 2) coastguard; 3) author; 4) vet; 5) farmer; 7) policeman; 10) vicar Across: 6) nurse; 8) forecaster; 9) greengrocer; 11) paramedic; 12) doctor.

Maths puzzle: 39 seconds.
The formula: $15+(1+5)=21$;
 $21+(2+1)=24$; $24+(2+4)=30$;
 $30+(3+0)=33$; $33+(3+3)=39$

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In a Nutshell is published

(1) as an insert in
Kirton First (1aN)
and (2) bi-monthly
in A4 format (StAn)
only £5.80 pa (six issues;
single copies £1 each)

Opinions expressed here
are not necessarily those
of the editorial group

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Copy: StAN 8 Sep, 1aN 1 Oct.

Single copies can be bought from
Paynes Chemist in Kirton in Lindsey



CLEATHAM HALL NEWS

Celebrating Life at Cleatham Hall

Celebrating Family and Friends, Birthdays and Anniversaries.

Feel relaxed and enjoy the hospitality we are renowned for while enjoying a relaxing meal. So, if there are just 2 or 52 of you, contact us by email or phone to book your own personal celebration.

Restaurant Opening Times:

Wed - Sat: 12pm - 8.30pm

Sunday Lunch
12pm - 4pm

Events planned for this year book early and make sure you don't miss out:

- We have now scheduled an "Adamms family themed" Halloween party on the 31st October.
- Our Christmas starts with a Wreath making and afternoon tea on the 28th November, followed by our annual Cleatham Christmas fair on the 29th with a visit from Santa, gift stalls and our fabulous Christmas café.
- Then on the 12th December our "Darwin Story" Murder Mystery dinner returns!!
- Festive menus will commence on the 30th November

The Restaurant is open daily from Wednesday to Sunday. Watch out for our Autumn menus starting in September. Try our Sunday Lunch, or weekday Lunch 2 course, Table d'hôte menu from £20, our celebrated Afternoon teas and of course Dinner menu. All using homemade seasonal jams and chutneys, available to buy. Brunch served from 9 - 11am, Lunch served from 12 to 3pm, Afternoon Teas from 1 to 4pm Dinners from 6 to 8.30 pm

See our website at www.cleathamhall.com/events for our menus and pricing

To book call: 01652 649402 or email: enquiry@cleathamhall.com



Cleatham Hall, Cleatham, North Lincolnshire, DN21 4JS

www.cleathamhall.com

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Email: enquiry@cleathamhall.com