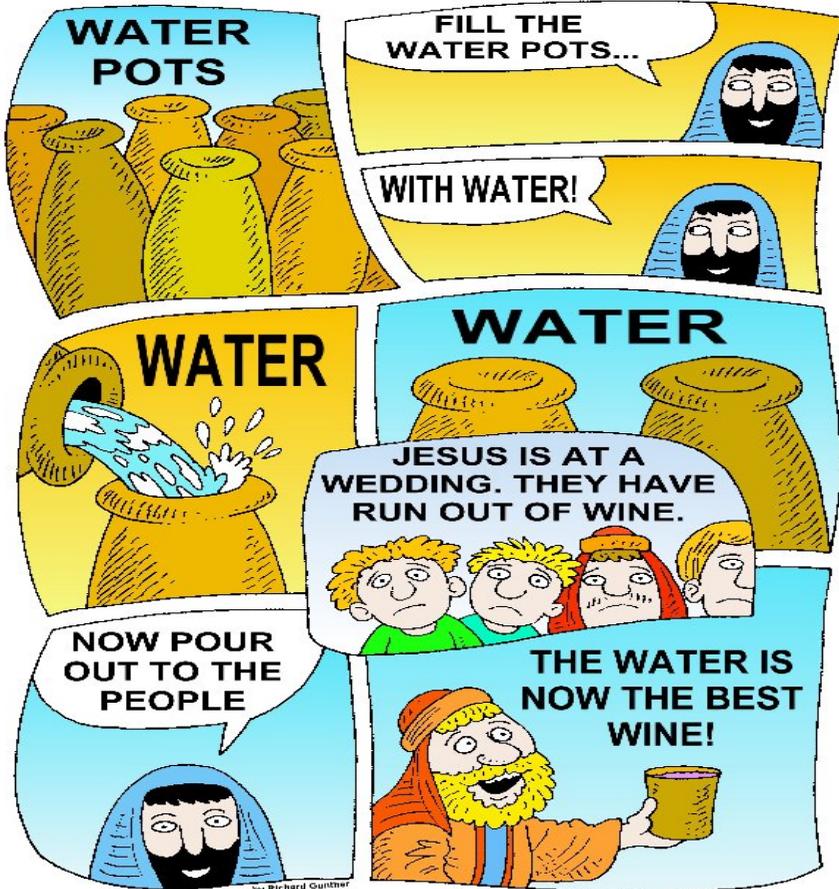




CHRIST CHURCH
CROUCH END HILL
LONDON N8 8AX
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DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU.

Vicar's ten - minute reflection

DO WHATEVER JESUS TELLS YOU.



A misprint in a church bulletin read: "The choir will sing, "I Heard the Bells On Christmas Day.'" We are on the other side of Christmas. For some of us that means the Christmas bells will soon be turning to Christmas bills. And those bills have a way of making some of us loathe our very existence to the point that we are easily pushed to gambling, heavy drinking or comfort eating! I consider it divine good fortune that we have a scripture lesson so early in the year which encourages us to ponder a miracle.

You and I need to become more sensitive to the possibility of miracles. Such a sensitivity will help us recognize present miracles, which we either do not see or which we take for granted; and it will prepare us to receive still more miracles. We are surrounded by the glorious and the miraculous and do not know it. Science ought to have increased our sense of awe, as it has unfolded the marvels of the heavens above and mysteries of our bodies within; but we take the attitude that if we know how far it is to a given planet, we have, therefore, encompassed all its significance. We need to know that God is at work in our world. The affairs of this world, and of our individual lives, often seem to be out of control. At such times we can be reassured by the knowledge that God has worked wonderfully in days past, and that he is still at work.

So I direct our attention today to a story from the Gospel of John, generally referred to as Jesus' first miracle. I am impressed that this miracle came to pass, not in the confines of a place of worship, nor even in a uniquely religious occasion; but where people were celebrating one of the happy social events of our common life - a wedding. Jesus and his disciples had been invited to the wedding. (John 2:1-2), and He went. And He seemed right at home. John tells us that it was at this wedding in Cana of Galilee that He performed the first of his "signs." and "his disciples believed in him." (John 2:11) What was this sign? The story seems pretty straightforward, but in John's Gospel we must always remember that the author often has more than one meaning for the events he describes.

In the course of the wedding feast, the family ran out of wine; for the provisions to fail at a wedding party would be a humiliation that would haunt the families who were the hosts for generations. So Mary comes to her Son Jesus, and tells Him about the problem.



One wonders just exactly what she expected Him to do about it. A legend says that Joseph had already died by this time, and Mary must have been familiar with leaning on Jesus when it mattered most. Was she expecting Jesus to send one of his disciples to a nearby corner shop to buy wine? May be. Or was Mary expecting Jesus to say a few soothing words to pacify angry guests? May be. How effective that would have been, one can only speculate. Jesus answered that his hour had not yet come. Several times in this Gospel, Jesus expressed such a sense of divine timing. But Jesus' mother was not to be put off so easily.

She instructed the servants to do whatever Jesus told them. Jesus gave in to his mother's request. He instructed the servants to fill some nearby purification jars with water; then told them to draw some of the water out of one of the jars and take it to the steward of the feast. When the steward tasted the wine, he praised it as the best of the occasion, marvelling that they had saved this special wine until the last.

We will discover in this miracle- sign- that God used several human instruments in bringing the miracle to pass. The miracle began with Mary. It began from where any a less-remembered miracle has begun- with an unabashed, indomitable, undeterred mother.

The scriptures do not give us many insights into the thinking of Mary. We're told that after the shepherds' visit, "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). And again, a dozen years later, following the remarkable experience in the temple at Jerusalem, "His mother treasured all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51b). In truth, I imagine that Mary's mind and heart were a beehive of wonderings, glories, and apprehensions.

Many things about this Son of hers must have confused her. But one thing was sure -- she knew he was different and special. "When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine' " (v. 3). Probably any of us who have memories of our mothers will hear the inferences which are waiting to be drawn from those four words. From anyone else, "They have no wine" might be simply a statement of fact. From the mother (also, sometimes, from our children), the tone of voice says, "What are you going to do about it?" Very clearly, Jesus got the message. He responded, not to a statement of fact, but to the implied request for help. "Why are you asking me?" Jesus countered. "It's not my time." Mary proceeded as if she hadn't heard Jesus' objection. (continued on page 6)

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PITFALLS TO BE AVOIDED



DON'T

1. Jump to conclusions about other people's motives.
2. Get caught up in competition. Strive for cooperation.
3. Describe yourself in negative terms.
4. Compare yourself to others to try and validate your results.
5. Violate your personal values or ethics for any reason.
6. Make excuses for telling lies. Just be honest and tactful.
7. Be rude to others regardless of how you feel about them.
8. Invalidate other people's feelings.
9. Disrespect yourself or others.
10. Forget to be grateful.
11. Talk down to people.
12. Expect the worst or project negative expectations.
13. Speak in blanket generalizations.
14. Dominate conversations.
15. Try to assign blame. It doesn't matter who's at fault.
16. Focus on lack.
17. Put yourself or other people down.
18. Indulge in "pity parties."
19. Think of yourself as smarter than, or better than everyone else.
20. Keep eating just because it tastes good.
21. Always insist on having the last word.
22. Look for other people's faults. You don't want them looking for yours.
23. Snivel.
24. Allow negative thoughts to dominate your outlook.
25. Imagine yourself as sick, poor, unworthy, or worthless.
26. Entertain or dwell on inappropriate thoughts or actions.
27. Harbour grudges or think about getting even.
28. Make lame excuses, just take responsibility.
29. Waste time trying to win an argument.
30. Say "I can't" because you choose not to.
31. Expect TV to make you smarter.
32. Forget to take action every day.
33. Ignore the needs of others.
34. Say yes when you really mean no.
35. Dehumanize members of the opposite sex.

Personal Development Pitfalls to be avoided

36. Over commit your time, energy, or resources.
37. Allow what you "have to do" to erase what you "want to do."
38. Let the media or popular opinion make your decisions for you.
39. Buy things you don't need just because they're cool.
40. Forget to smile often and sincerely.
41. Stress over things you can't control or change.
42. Let work dominate your days off.
43. Imagine you will do it someday. Do it now.
44. Expect others to make you feel happy, satisfied, or loved.
45. Tell yourself there isn't enough time for a healthy lifestyle.
46. Blame your genetics for bad lifestyle choices.
47. Get trapped spending your free time doing things you don't like.
48. Make decisions because you're afraid you might miss out on something.
49. Worry over the personal decisions of others.
50. Focus on or talk about problems.
51. Get involved in things that are none of your business.
52. Avoid eye contact.
53. Say "I told you so" when things go bad because your advice was ignored.
54. Follow fads, trends, or allow others to dictate your identity.
55. Pretend that your reality is someone else's fault.
56. Invent distractions to avoid responsibilities.
57. Shy away from new experiences.
58. Pretend you know something when you don't.
59. Be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help.
60. Forget to show appreciation to others.
61. Allow your analytical mind to invalidate your intuition.
62. Ignore that little voice in your head.
63. Be too proud to learn from children
64. Worry about social standing, prestige, or popular opinion.
65. Talk yourself out of pursuing your dreams.
66. Think that ignoring a problem will make it go away.
67. Try to convince yourself that the things on this list don't matter.

Do whatever Jesus tells you (contd. from page 3)

From the human point of view, hers was the style of many a mother: while you complained that you were not going to school, Mother continued to pack your lunch. From a faith point of view, Mary was doing what we need to do more often: she was riding over the objection without giving it undue credence. She simply instructed the servants to do whatever Jesus told them.

The second major contributors to the miracle were the servants. I'm not sure to what degree they were impressed by the innate authority which people were beginning to see in Jesus, or were intimidated by Mary's insistence. One way or another, they did exactly as they were told. What they did was very remarkable. The pots which Jesus ordered filled were not containers of drinking water; rather, they were wash water -- the jars for purification. When Jesus instructed the servants to take some water from those jars and deliver it to the steward of the feast, he was asking a reckless venture. Water in place of wine was bad enough, but wash water? The servants are the unsung heroes of this story. I marvel that they would hazard their jobs in such an absurd risk.

When the steward sipped from the cup and pronounced it something very special, the miracle was complete. The power belonged to Jesus; but the miracle belonged to Jesus, Mary, and a small team of unnamed servants. The occasion of the miracle would never have been established if it hadn't been for Mary's insistence in the face of Jesus' apparent reluctance.

And the delivering of the miracle wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for the servants. In that structured first-century society, Jesus couldn't have delivered the wine for himself. He was dependent on the cooperation of the servants -- and their daring, almost foolhardy cooperation.

And that's the stuff of which miracles are made. God hardly ever does a miracle unaided. Just as God works with us in the routine business of this world, so he works with us in the extraordinary and the miracles. Sometimes our human involvement is so much in the normal course of things that we hardly know a miracle has occurred. Sometimes you and I are privileged to participate in very small, yet very real miracles. Have you, with sudden unexplainable impulse, sent a card or note to someone, then had them

Do whatever Jesus tells you (contd. from page 6)

tell you that your greeting card came at just the right time? "How did you know," the person asked, "that I needed something like that at that very time? How could your timing be so perfect?" Yes, how? Is it only a coincidence that you felt the urge at such a special time? Do you suppose such "coincidences" would happen more often if we were more ready to bear water for our Lord? You and I live in a time and place where miracles are badly needed, and in short supply. We are so trained to be skeptical, not only of God, but even of our own generous impulses, that the miraculous must struggle for any kind of hearing. That's why it's so important that those of us who believe in God, and who believe deeply in love, compassion, and service to others should be sensitive to our potential agents of the miraculous. Many prayers are left unsaid, or are spoken tremulously, because we have been conditioned to expect nothing; and ask for nothing. Many ventures, some grand and some ordinary, are never begun because we don't have the faith to dare.

Much of the living of our time has taken on the quality of a wedding feast in which the celebration has faded into silence. A miracle is needed, which will bring a true and worthy intoxication to life. Jesus Christ waits in the wings, ready to introduce such gladness. He waits to perform that great and necessary miracle: the enlivening of life.

But it is a miracle which calls for helpers: a "mother" who will insist on giving Jesus a role at the feast, and servants who will dare to deliver the water-made-wine. Our Lord Jesus Christ will do the rest. But he counts on us to do what only we can do. Then there is the matter of the size of the jars. Each held 20-30 gallons. That is, the whole amount would be between 120-180 gallons of wine! Certainly more than any imaginable wedding party could possibly use! John must be trying to tell us again that through Jesus Christ, God provides us with far more than we can ever possibly need. Grace heaped on top of grace. Dele Agbelusi

Memory Verse

His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you. (John 2:5)



BREAKING CHRISTIAN NEWS

DATELINE IRAN

Iranian judges promised that by mid-December, if Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, did not respond to their court's request for comment, they would publish a written decision on the apostasy charges made against Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani. Neither the court nor the Supreme Leader has issued anything, leaving the Pastor languishing in an Iranian prison – a violation of Iranian and international law. Pastor Youcef, convicted of apostasy, is spending his life in prison, waiting on the empty promises of Iran's judiciary to determine his fate."

BIBLE BECOMES BESTSELLER IN NORWAY.

The UK's bestseller lists might have been dominated by cookery, courtesy of Jamie Oliver, and romance, courtesy of David Nicholls, but Norwegian readers were plumping for another sort of book last year: the Bible. The first Norwegian translation of the Bible for 30 years topped the country's book charts almost every week between its publication in October and the end of the year, selling almost 80,000 copies so far and hugely exceeding expectations. Its launch in the autumn saw Harry Potter-style overnight queues, with bookshops selling out on the first day as Norwegians rushed to get their hands on the new edition.

"We only printed 25,000 to start with and thought it would last six to nine months, but it was launched mid-October and by the end of the year it had sold 79,000 copies – it's just incredible," said Stine Smemo Strachan, who worked on the project for the Norwegian Bible Society. "It has only been knocked off the number one spot once, by [literary author] Karl Ove Knausgård ... There were people sleeping outside the day before the launch because it was embargoed – it's a bit ironic seeing that the content has been available for quite some time now."

Thirty consultant translators, priests and academics translated the Greek and Hebrew original into Norwegian for the new edition, with a team of 12 literary authors including Knausgård and playwright Jon Fosse then smoothing out that text. "Obviously it was very important to get the right translation but they also wanted it to be readable, to make sure it was good literary language."

Alison Flood. guardian.co.uk 3 January 2012

LAUGHTER LINES

AFRAID OF SEVEN KIDS AT A TIME!

Recently, three men were nervously waiting in the Father's room at the Good Samaritan Hospital as their wives prepared to give births to their first children. The men were too scared to go in.



Soon the head nurse arrived with good news from the birthing rooms. She said to the first father-to-be, "Sir, you are a father of twins!"

"That's great," he said. "I'm a baseball player and I am going to sign a contract with the **Minnesota Twins**. This will be good press."

Soon, the nurse arrived and said to the second father-to-be, "Sir, you are the father of triplets."

"Fantastic," he said, "because I work for the **3M Company**. This will be great press."

The third father-to-be got up and ran out of the room. He was moving so fast that he did not bother to take the elevator. Finally, the nurse yelled out the window as the man entered the nearby parking lot. The nurse cried out, "What's wrong? Where are you going?"

He said, "I've got to resign real fast. I am Vice-President of **Seven-up!**"

HAPPY CHRISTMAS and PEACE ON EARTH

"Christmas is a joyous day for children. For parents, peace on earth comes several days later--when all the batteries wear out!"

LAUGHTER LINES

DAILY EMOTIONS

As I was having my daily devotions one morning, I heard my 3-year-old daughter, Kayla, answer the telephone in the next room. Trying not to burst out laughing, I listened as she told the caller, "My mom is having her emotions now. Can she call you back?"

Kelly Kennard, Willard

HOMEMADE HUMOUR

Recently, we've been teaching our 2-year-old daughter, Kali, that God is the Creator who made all things. One morning, after I made her bed, she climbed back into it to play.

"Hey," I said, "I just made that!"

"No, no," Kali replied, "God made it!"

DECISIONS IN THE DARK

Making decisions in the dark can lead to some regrettable consequences. Back in the days before electricity, a tightfisted old farmer was taking his hired man to task for carrying a lighted lantern when he went to call on his best girl. "Why," he exclaimed, "when I went a-courtin' I never carried one of them things, I always went in the dark." "Yes," the hired man said wryly, "and look at what you got!"

NO TROUSERS FOR WOMEN IN PARIS!

In late 1799, a law banning women in Paris from wearing trousers was introduced and ladies wanting to 'dress like a man' had to seek permission from the capital's main police station to do so. The law was relaxed in 1892.

Blind Louis Braille Gave Reading to the Blind

At four o'clock in the morning of January 4, 1809, in Coupvray, France, a local midwife eased tiny Louis Braille into the world. Louis was the fourth child of his mother, Monique, and his father Simon, a leather worker. The pair formed a sturdy middle-class couple, devout and prosperous. But the boy appeared frail, so they arranged to have him baptized right away.



Louis quickly showed himself to be a bright-eyed child, prying into everything. The early death that had been feared for him did not happen. However, another disaster struck. Three-year-old Louis had been warned not to play with his father's tools. But temptation was strong. One day, when no one was looking, he took up a sharp knife and tried to cut a piece of leather. The blade slipped, gouging one of his eyes. The wound became dangerously infected. Then the infection spread to his good eye. Louis was blind.

The town's old priest died. Father Jacques Palluy took his place. He saw the potential of young Louis and began to teach him. Afterward, Palluy arranged for a newly appointed schoolmaster to instruct Louis. The good priest later got Louis admitted to the Royal Institution for Blind Youth.

At the institute, Louis proved to be an apt pupil. In addition to his regular subjects, he learned to play the piano. Playing religious music on the organ would become one of the joys of his later life.

Captain Barbier introduced a system of raised dots to the Royal Institution. It had serious flaws. Young Louis was still just a boy, but he set out to solve the problems of Barbier's system. The captain was reluctant to accept suggestions from a boy, so Louis began to experiment at night. At fifteen, he created the world's first really good system for blind reading. At nineteen years of age, he developed a Braille system of writing music. At twenty, he was a teacher at his own school.

In writing of his own system, Louis never sought glory, happy to remind his readers how much he owed to Captain Barbier. This, despite the fact that Barbier fought Louis' system and tried to get his own method made the official medium of instruction. Louis showed true saintliness. His frustration must have been great, because teachers, afraid of losing their jobs, also resisted the improved system. Deeply modest, Louis hid his many acts of kindness and charity.

(Concluded on page 14)

GOD IS NEVER WRONG

A king who did not believe in the goodness of God, had a slave who, in all circumstances, said: My king, do not be discouraged, because everything God does is perfect, no mistakes!

One day they went hunting and along the way a wild animal attacked the king. His slave managed to kill the animal, but could not prevent his majesty losing a finger. Furious and without showing his gratitude for being saved, the nobleman said "Is God good? If He was good, I would not have been attacked and lost my finger." The slave replied: "My king, despite all these things, I can only tell you that God is good, and he knows "why" What God does is perfect. He is never wrong!"

Outraged by the response, the king ordered the arrest of his slave. Later, he left for another hunt and was captured by savages who made human sacrifices. When the king was about to be sacrificed, the savages found that one of his fingers was missing, so he was released. According to their tradition, the king was a blemished sacrifice because of his missing finger and their gods would not accept him.

Upon his return to the palace, he authorized the release of his slave. He said, "My dear, God was really good to me! I was almost killed by the wild men, but for lack of a single finger, I was let go! But I have a question: if God is so good, why did he allow me to put you in jail?"

"My King, if I had gone with you in this hunt, I would have been sacrificed for you, because I have no missing finger, therefore, remember everything God does is perfect. He is never wrong."

Often we complain when negative things happen to us, forgetting that nothing is random and that everything has a purpose. We should make it our first duty to offer every day to God. We should ask God to inspire our thoughts, guide our actions, and ease our feelings. And do not be afraid. God is never wrong!

RECIPE FOR A BLISSFUL 2012

So God brought you into 2012 eh! You are not to be congratulated for making it into 2012, it is God who should be praised for bringing you into 2012. I see that you have great plans and great expectations for 2012; but do you know the plans God has for you in 2012? Is it not true that your plans will come to nothing if God is not in support?

Here then is the recipe for a blissful 2012: Realign your plans with God's plans for you. Strike out any plan of yours that does not align with God's plan and add new plans that you never considered but are part of God's plans for you for 2012.

"How can I know God's plans?" you may ask. If you are asking me that question that is a big mistake. Ask God! God is certainly eager to reveal the plans He has for you in 2012 one step at a time, but you must be in a listening mode all the time. Good Christians are sadly preoccupied with good activities like Martha (Luke 10:38-42) but miss out what God is whispering to them. Until we learn to be quiet before God not just once a day but as many times as possible, we will neither hear God nor know His full plans for us. Learn what it means to sit quietly and listen to God as Mary did in the text quoted above. Do that several times a day.

King David sought the Lord as expressed in Psalm 27:4; Samuel did the same. He said: "Speak Lord for your servant is listening." (1Sam. 3:10) Even Jesus Christ often withdrew several times a day to quiet places to hear and speak to the Father (Luke 5:16). "Be still and know ..." Ps. 46:10; "Wait for the Lord..." Ps. 27:14. The more you listen and yield to God, the more blissful 2012 will be for you.

Sunday Bwanhot

Continued from page 12. (Blind Louis Braille)

For instance, he gave up a position he loved, playing organ for a church, simply because another blind person needed it more than he did. Louis developed tuberculosis in young manhood. As he lay dying he said, "God was pleased to hold before my eyes the dazzling splendors of eternal hope. After that, doesn't it seem that nothing more could keep me bound to the earth?" He asked for final communion about midday on January 6, 1852. After three and a half hours of agony late that afternoon, he died at seven-thirty in the evening.

Dan Graves, MSL

HEAVENLY CORRESPONDENCE

E-MAIL FROM GOD (34)

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From: **GOD, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

To: **You, My beloved child**

**I can do everything through him
who gives me strength.
Philippians 4: 13**

Subject: **Change Stations Today**

Dear Child,

Don't listen to that old radio station in your head that keeps singing yesterday's hit: "I can't, I can't, I can't." Change stations today! Tune into Me and get the sound of the truth going inside you.

The truth will sing a totally different song. The words go like this:

There's nothing you can't do! Anything and everything is possible. When you trust Me, I'll give you strength to see there's absolutely nothing you can't do!

Once you get hold of that powerful reality, you'll see locked doors fly open. You'll find solutions to problems that used to look hopeless. And you'll realize that it's Me working in you, strengthening you do what needs doing. Tune into My truth today!

Your DJ,

God

Adapted from 'e-mail from God for Teens'-Clonigers

MOTTO/TEXT FOR THE YEAR

“...I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.

FINDING OUT ABOUT ...CHRIST CHURCH?

Tel/Fax: 020 8340 1566

We are a family of men and women, boys and girls who are resolved to live for God in a world that has largely chosen to ignore Him.

We believe that it is God's world and that He has given the answer to all human problems in Jesus Christ. As a body of believers, we offer to all who come, regular opportunities for worship and service that point the way to God as our strongest resource in all aspects of life.

We will be pleased to welcome you to any of our activities. You will find a warm welcome at Christ Church.

Times of worship and fellowship are shown below:

- Sunday**
- **8.00 am.** Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
 - **10.30 am.** Main service with Crèche facilities
- There is family/parade service once every month - usually the third Sunday of the month unless otherwise indicated.
- **5.00 pm.** Evening worship

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE

- Sunday** - Choir practice in church (9.30 am)
- Monday** - Baby n' Toddler Group (9.30 am to 11.30 am)
- Brownies meeting in church (5.30 pm)
- Prayer meetings in church - 6th, 20th Feb. and 5th March. (8 pm)
- Wednesday** - Fellowship Meal in church (6:30 pm) followed by,
Bible Fellowship (7.15 pm)
- Thursday** - Homework Club (5 pm-7 pm)
- Friday** - Bible Fellowship in church - West Chapel (2.00 pm) - On recess
- Scouts meeting in church and hall (6.30 pm)
- Music Team practice in choir vestry (6.00 pm)
- Saturday** - Cell group prayer meeting in church (7-8 pm)

Enquiry/Counselling/Prayer Lifeline - please phone 020 8340 1566

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