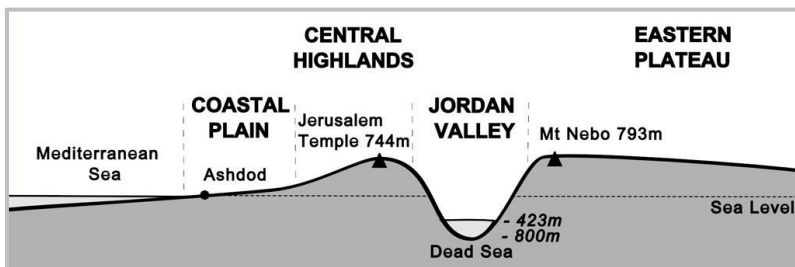
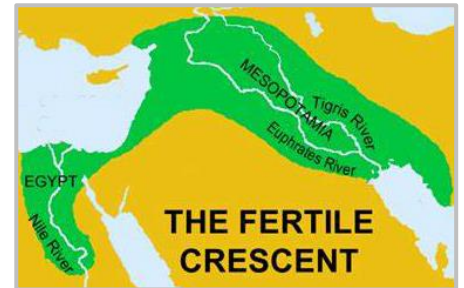


Adventure Club

A weekly lesson for children, young people, parents and grandparents, from the GCI Watford Church.
Number 43, 15th January 2021

Learning a Little More about Some People and Places in the Holy Land

One definition of the *Holy Land* is 'a region on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean'. The Holy Land forms part of the 'Fertile Crescent'. In the Crescent are also three great rivers, the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris. It serves as a natural bridge between the continents of Asia and Africa. Because of the deserts south and east, the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the mountains to the north, all the international trade routes have had to pass through this region. Many armies have marched up and down its land. The Holy Land has always been an important passageway between the two centres of ancient civilizations, namely Egypt and Mesopotamia. If the world had a centre, many would place it here in the Holy Land.



The key events of the Bible unfold in the Holy Land. The land itself consists of very different landscapes. Geographically the Holy Land can be divided into four sections: The Central Highlands; The Jordan Valley; The Mediterranean Coastal Plain and The Eastern Plateau.

The Central Highlands

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He was brought up in Nazareth in the hills of Galilee and, as a child, He went up to Jerusalem each year with Mary and Joseph [Luke 2:4-6, 39 & 41-43](#). Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem are all in the Central Highlands. These highlands are on the east of the Jordan river. From both the Jordan Valley and the Mediterranean Coast there is a steady incline up to Jerusalem [Psalm 122:3-4](#).

The Jordan Valley

Jordan comes from a Hebrew word *yarden* which means 'descending'. The river Jordan begins in the foothills of Mt Hermon and gradually descends along the valley about 2,600 feet. The river flows through the Hula basin into the Sea of Galilee and then on to the lowest point on earth, the Dead Sea (1,388ft / 423m below sea level). Because of its meandering, the river itself is about 210 miles long. The river Jordan is mentioned nearly 200 times in the Bible. Jesus is baptised in the river Jordan and He lived in the Jordan Valley in Capernaum – a fishing town next to Sea of Galilee. Jericho is in the Jordan Valley.



The Mediterranean Coastal Plain

After the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph flee along the Mediterranean Coastal Plain to Egypt to escape the murderous wrath of Herod the Great [Matthew 2:13-15](#). During the ministry of Jesus, He visits the area of Tyre and Sidon. Later, Peter has a vision beside the Mediterranean Sea at Joppa, and agrees to meet a centurion at the Roman port of Caesarea [Mark 7:24-31 & Acts 10:1-48](#). Paul also goes to Caesarea [Acts 9:30](#). Joppa, Caesarea, Tyre and Sidon are all along the Coastal Plain. *The Way of the Sea* (also called the *Via Maris*) is an ancient route along the Coastal Plain that linked the northern lands to the Nile delta in Egypt.

The Eastern Plateau

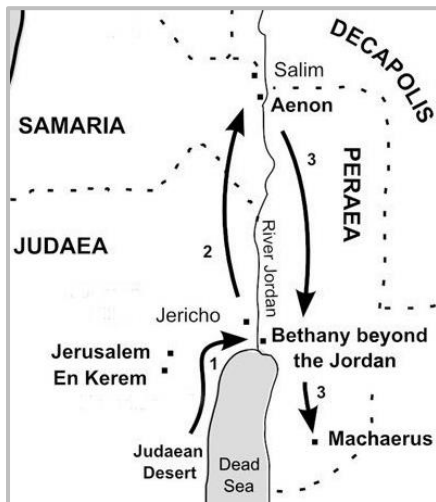
Rising steeply from the floor of the Jordan Valley, the Eastern Plateau reaches 2,602ft / 793m above sea level at the summit of Mt Nebo. (Mt Nebo is where Moses died Deuteronomy 34:1-8.) *The King's Highway* was a major trade route along the Eastern Plateau going from Ezion-Geber (Elath) at the top of the Gulf of Aqaba to Damascus and beyond. Paul was travelling along the Eastern Plateau when 'suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"' Acts 9:3-4.

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The Bible is a historic record of real places. Some have calculated there are 1,173 places mentioned in the Bible. A few of these cities, towns and villages are mentioned below.

The Bible is a historic record of real people. Some have calculated there are 1,372 people mentioned in the Bible. (Of this total 1,182 are men and 190 are women.) A few of these men and women are mentioned below.

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John the Baptist's Journeys

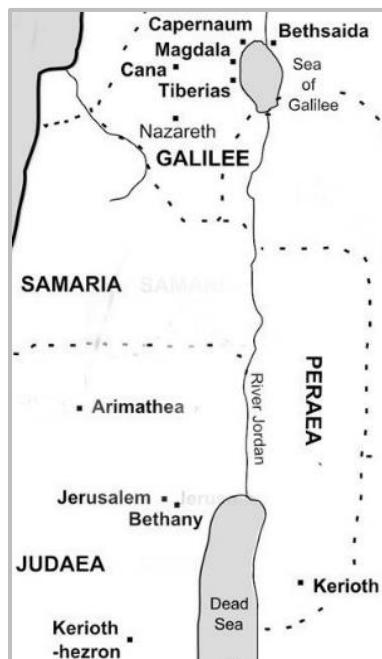
1. According to tradition John the Baptist may have been born in a village called En Kerem. John's father Zechariah served in nearby Jerusalem as a priest in the Temple Luke 1:5-25. John grows up and goes to live in the desert of Judaea Luke 1:57-80. He begins his ministry at or near to Bethany beyond the Jordan Luke 3:1-18. 2. John baptises people in the river Jordan. He preaches a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. This was the message he preached: 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and



Bethany Beyond the Jordan is a UNESCO World Heritage Site as it's believed John the Baptist preached and baptized in or near this area.

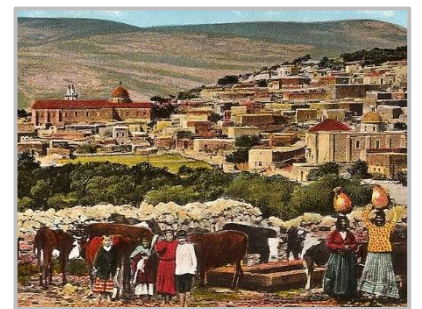
loose. I indeed baptised you with water, but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.' Mark 1:7-8, NKJV. When John baptises Jesus, a voice from heaven says: 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' Mark 1:11, NKJV. Later, John baptises at Aenon, near Salim John 3:23. 3. According to the historian Josephus, John is imprisoned by Herod Antipas in his fortress at Machaerus because John had told him that his marriage to Herodias, his brother Philip's estranged wife, was wrong Mark 6:17-18. John is beheaded on Herod's birthday at the request of his stepdaughter, urged on by her mother, Herodias. John's disciples bury his body Mark 6:21-29.

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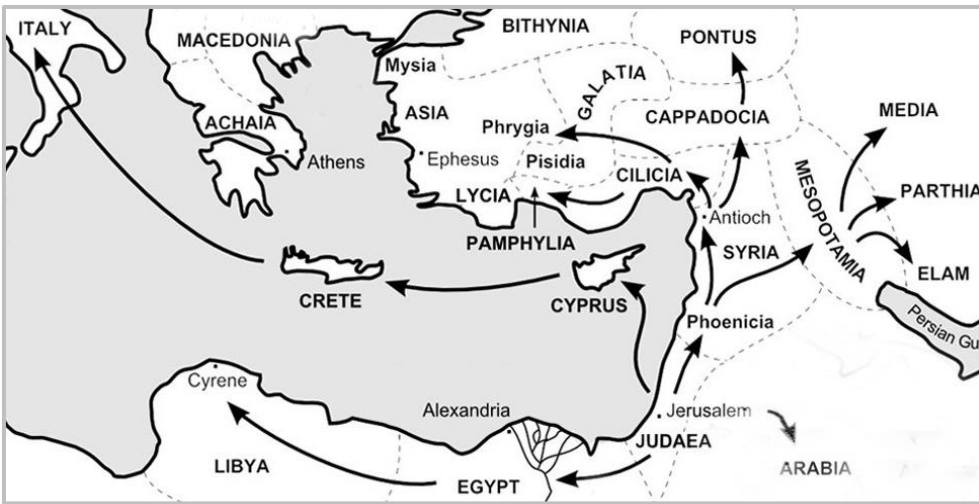
Where Jesus's Followers Came From

Nathaniel (probably the same person as Bartholomew) came from Cana in Galilee John 21:2. Philip was a friend of Nathaniel and came from Bethsaida John 1:43-45. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew also originally came from Bethsaida John 1:44, but later they both lived in Capernaum Mark 1:29-30. Zebedee and his sons James and John also lived and worked in Capernaum Mark 1:19-20. Levi (better known as Matthew) was a tax collector who resided in Capernaum as well Mark 2:1-14. Some think the word *Ischriot* means 'man from Keriath', so it may be that Judas Ischriot's family originated in either Keriath in Peraea or Keriath-hezron in Judaea. Mary Magdalene probably came from Magdala next to the Sea of Galilee Luke 23:55 & 24:10. Some think Joanna (and possibly Susanna) came from the Tiberias area. (Joanna's husband, Chuza, was the steward of Herod Antipas Luke 8:3 and some commentators believe Herod Antipas made his capital in Tiberias.) Mary and Martha lived in Bethany, near Jerusalem, with their brother Lazarus John 11:1-3. Joseph, who laid Jesus's body in his own tomb, was most likely from Arimathea in Judaea Mark 15:43.



Nathaniel came from Cana.
Photo taken in about 1935.

How the Gospel Spread After Pentecost



‘Suddenly, there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind’ and the believers are filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Amazingly they ‘began to speak with other tongues’ and ‘everyone heard them speak in his own language’. These had come to Jerusalem for the festival from all

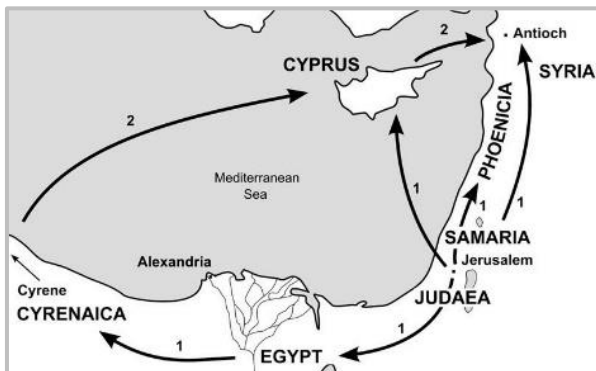


over the known world. They are ‘devout men, from every nation under heaven’ Acts 2:1-5. They have come from not only Judaea, but also Parthia, Media, Elam and Mesopotamia to the east; Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia, Pamphylia and Asia to the north; Egypt and Arabia to the south and Libya, Rome and Crete to the west. They’re all astonished that they can hear about ‘the wonderful works of God’, the Gospel, being preached in their own native tongues Acts 2:6-12. About three thousand Jews are baptised ‘that day’. ‘They continued

steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers’ Acts 2:40-42. After the festival this huge multitude of people carry this incredible story and the message of grace back to their own regions and countries.

The Scattering of Believers After Stephen’s Death

1. Following Stephen’s death by stoning, other members of the young Church in Jerusalem are persecuted by the staunchly traditional Jewish hierarchy. Consequently, most of the believers scatter throughout Judaea and Samaria Acts 7:54-8:1. Some of those persecuted travel as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the message among fellow Jews Acts 11:19. 2. Other Jewish believers from Cyprus and Cyrene go to Antioch in Syria and begin speaking to the Greek-speaking Gentiles as well as to fellow Jews Acts 11:20.

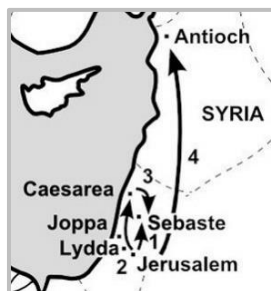


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Peter’s Journeys

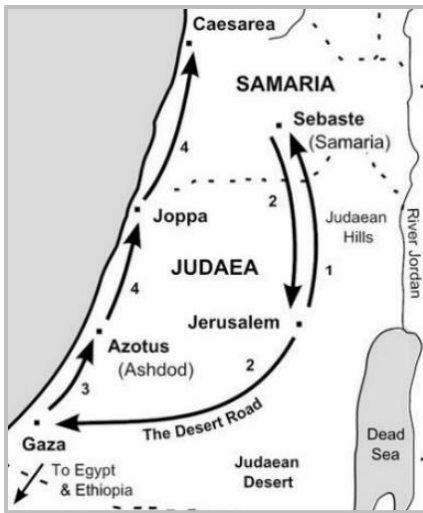
1. Peter and John go to Sebaste (another name for Samaria) where they pray for the new Samaritan believers to receive the Holy Spirit Acts 8:14-15. ‘For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.’ Acts 8:16-17. 2. Later, Peter visits the believers in Lydda. He says to Aeneas (who has been bedridden for eight years) ‘“Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” Then he rose immediately’ Acts 9:32-34. Peter then goes to Joppa where Tabitha, one of the believers there, has just died. Peter prays for her, and she ‘opened her eyes’ and comes back to life Acts 9:36-43. Peter then travels to Caesarea and shares the Good News of Jesus’s resurrection with Cornelius’s Gentile family and friends Acts 10:1-48. 3. Peter reports back to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem Acts 11:1-18. 4. Peter then travels to Antioch where Paul ‘withstood him to his face’ Galatians 2:11-14.



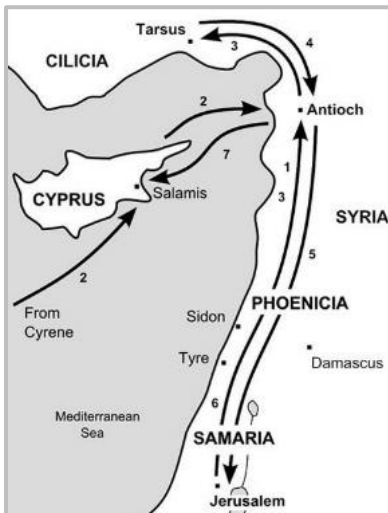
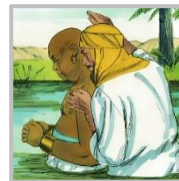
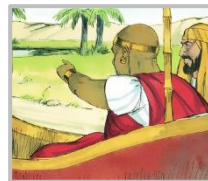
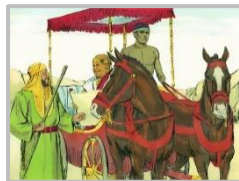
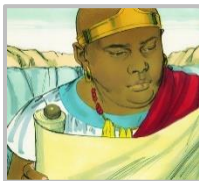
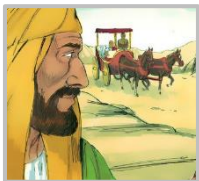
Roman Aqueduct that brought fresh water nearly 10 miles into Caesarea.

the believers in Lydda. He says to Aeneas (who has been bedridden for eight years) ‘“Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” Then he rose immediately’ Acts 9:32-34. Peter then goes to Joppa where Tabitha, one of the believers there, has just died. Peter prays for her, and she ‘opened her eyes’ and comes back to life Acts 9:36-43. Peter then travels to Caesarea and shares the Good News of Jesus’s resurrection with Cornelius’s Gentile family and friends Acts 10:1-48. 3. Peter reports back to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem Acts 11:1-18. 4. Peter then travels to Antioch where Paul ‘withstood him to his face’ Galatians 2:11-14.

Philip's Journeys



'As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging of men and women, committing them to prison' Acts 8:3. **1.** Because of the persecution of the new believers 'those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word'. For example, Philip travels to those who have fled to Sebaste (another name for the city of Samaria) Acts 8:4-8. **2.** Philip then travels down to the coastal town of Gaza. On the way, Philip meets an official from the court of Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia. The official believes in Jesus and is baptised Acts 8:26-39. **3.** The Holy Spirit takes Philip further north to Azotus (Greek name for Ashdod) Acts 8:40. **4.** Philip preaches the Good News of Jesus in all the coastal towns he passes through before reaching Caesarea on the coast of Samaria Acts 8:40.



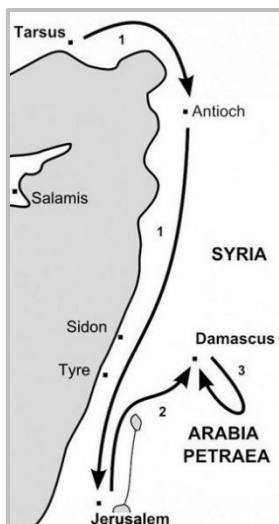
The Growth of the Antioch Church

1. After the stoning of Stephen, some Jewish believers flee to Antioch in Syria and spread the Good News to the Jews there Acts 11:19. **2.** Other believers from Cyprus and Cyrene also arrive in Antioch and preach to the Gentiles Acts 11:20-21. **3.** Barnabas is then sent to investigate the new Gentile believers in Antioch. 'Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord'. Barnabas goes on to Tarsus Acts 11:22-25.



St Peter's Church in Antioch dating back to about the 4th or 5th century.

4. Barnabas brings Saul (Paul) back to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year Barnabas and Saul assembled with the church and taught a great many people. Interestingly the disciples were first called *Christians* in Antioch. Acts 11:26. **5.** Barnabas and Paul travel to Judea, taking a gift for those who are suffering due to famine Acts 11:27-30. **6.** Barnabas and Paul return to Antioch with John Mark Acts 12:25. **7.** Barnabas and Paul, accompanied by John Mark, are sent by the Church in Antioch to Cyprus Acts 13:1-5.

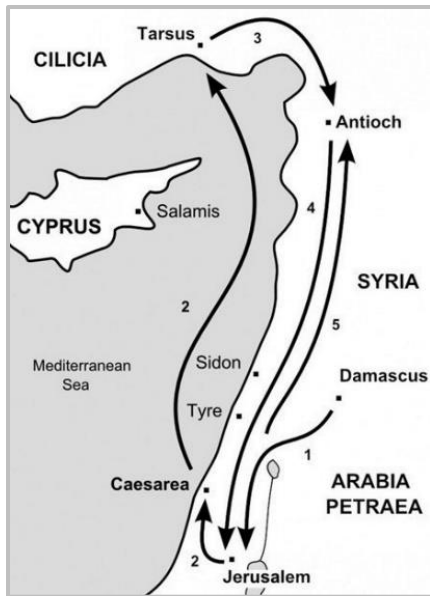


Paul's Early Life

1. The apostle Paul was born in Tarsus. (In his early life the Scriptures call him Saul.) Saul is taken to Jerusalem as a boy and is taught by Gamaliel, a respected Jewish Pharisee Acts 5:34, 22:3. **2.** Saul leads a violent persecution of the Church in Jerusalem Acts 8:1-3. He then sets off to Damascus to persecute more Christians there. Just before reaching the city, the risen Jesus appears to him. Saul falls to the ground blinded. He is taken into the city and spends three days neither eating nor drinking Acts 9:1-9. Ananias is sent by God to Saul who has been taken to the house of Judas in a street called 'Straight'. Ananias lays his hands on Saul and prays that he will receive his sight back and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Something like scales fall from Saul's eyes and he can see again. He is baptised and then begins to boldly teach and prove that Jesus is the Christ Acts 9:10-22. **3.** Saul journeys into the desert area of Arabia, then returns to Damascus Galatians 1:15-17.



Paul's Early Ministry



1. Because of death threats Paul leaves Damascus by being let down the city wall in a large basket! Paul goes to Jerusalem to meet the leaders of the Christian community there, but the apostles are afraid of him because of his previous reputation. They don't believe he can really be a Spirit-filled disciple. However, 'Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus' Acts 9:23-29. 2. Consequently, Paul's life is threatened



St Paul's Chapel in Damascus. Traditionally near where Paul escaped in a large basket.

again, therefore the disciples take Paul to Caesarea and send him to Tarsus Acts 9:29-30. Paul extends his preaching ministry to Cilicia and Syria Galatians 1:21. 3. Barnabas takes Paul from Tarsus to Antioch. For a whole year they preach and teach there Acts 11:25-26. 4. Then Barnabas and Paul visit the Jewish believers in Jerusalem with money for famine relief sent by their fellow believers in Antioch Acts 11:27-30. 5. Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch Acts 12:25-13:1-2.

See if you can memorise some, or all, of the following:

'Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?"

Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." ' Acts 9:4-5, NKJV

Word Search

PEOPLE	PLACES
JORDAN	VALLEY
COASTAL	PLAIN
CENTRAL	HIGHLANDS
EASTERN	PLATEAU
JOHN	BAPTIST
ANTIOCH	CHURCH
SAUL	PAUL
STEPHEN	BARNABAS
JERICO	JERUSALEM
SIDON	TYRE
PETER	MARK
PHILIP	ETHIOPIAN
JOPPA	CAESAREA

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

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Any questions, etc, please contact the UK GCI Watford Church Council or Geoff Sole, 01707 880782 or geoff@geoffsole.co.uk.