

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



Although we are not meeting physically at this time, we continue to 'be' church.

For details of our prayer times and Zoom get togethers visit

www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/services/sermons/

Don't hesitate to get in touch if you need pastoral support.

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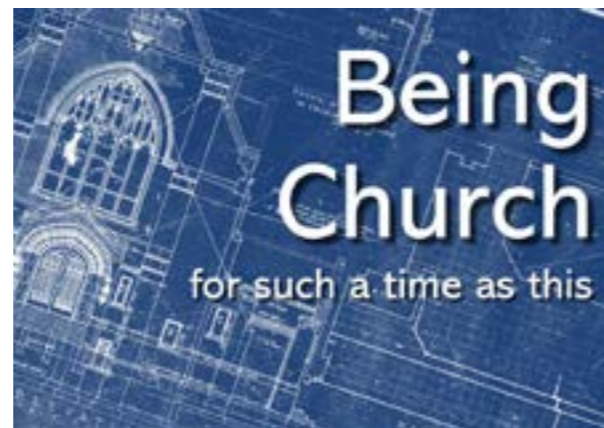
#tringbaptistchurch High Street Baptist Church

Worship at home



Our sermons, all-age talks and other videos are available on our YouTube channel

'High Street Baptist Church, Tring, UK'.



For our weekly Worship at Home resources and details about our meetings visit our website www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

Revd Ruth Egan – you are not alone!



In recent months all of us have been through an unprecedented experience. The global pandemic and imposed lockdown that followed was unlike anything that we, as a nation, had encountered before in this era; and in many ways it turned our lives upside-down and inside-out. Whether in full isolation, household shielding or socially distancing, the impact has been felt universally, and change to the usual way of doing things has been unavoidable. We may not have all been in the same boat, as each of us will have experienced this time differently from one another, but we have most certainly been together in the storm.

I have been reflecting on the experience of being on a stormy sea recently, and the dynamics in tension that arise from this for us. I am not a sailor (which possibly is about to become very apparent), and in actual fact, I'm not that keen to be on a boat at all, but this nautical image has become quite vivid for me in a particular way. It conjures up a number of contrasting thoughts and feelings which resonate with me when I think of the uncertain times that we have been living through. Many of us, I'm sure, will have had experience of being tossed by the waves in the sea (even if that is only through paddling on the shore, rather than sailing in the open ocean), and therefore can probably recall the difficulty of simply remaining standing at points. If you are actually on deck, it is a tricky balance of trying to hold on tight to stabilise yourself, whilst also allowing for some flex in order to move with the rhythm of the rocking vessel which is beyond your control. In a storm it seems that we are more at the mercy of the sea than ever, and its power to expose our limitations heightened. I may not know all the technical language for such a scenario, but I'm sure that a large amount of skill goes into simply keeping a boat afloat, and persevering through the battering until peace on the water is restored.

At times over the first half of this year it has felt like that for a number of us, I guess. Our focus has been on survival and obtaining essentials for ourselves and our families, whilst luxuries may have been temporarily more restricted. Our attention has mostly had to be focused on 'the now', and our long-term vision somewhat inhibited by the fog of the unknown which has surrounded us; and yet our eyes have been set on the horizon, longing for calm to return to our shores. It may just be me, but I can relate to the sense of being caught in the vulnerable place that is a boat on a stormy sea, and presented with such a circumstance, I have certainly been provoked to consider my priorities, and perspectives on life afresh. Acknowledging both our strength and stamina to keep going, alongside our inadequacy to cope alone with the overwhelming level of uncertainty we have been facing, has in itself been a tension that each of us has had to navigate.

As Christians we find encouragement in the Bible that even though unexpected storms of life may catch us off-guard at times, God is always prepared for them. Whilst we might be inclined to panic or crumble in such confusing times, he is ready and able to give us what we need to find a way through the clouds and persevere in the rain. Storms can have huge destructive power, and change our landscape irreversibly, which can leave us feeling adrift and out of our depth. However, they can also bring rain

that waters the ground and stimulates growth in places where we may not even have realised there is something planted. Possibilities and opportunities can arise, even through a storm, but it is only natural to experience a degree of weathering from such a vivid reminder of our vulnerability as human beings. There is a reason many step off a boat at the end of a journey and say, 'It's good to be back on solid ground'.

As I said at the start, we may not have all been in the same boat, but we have most certainly been together in the storm. Even so, it is possible to be surrounded by others in a situation, and convinced that no one else is struggling at all, and still feel utterly lonely as a result. We only have to read a few of the Psalms in the Bible to see that this too is something commonly experienced by people in the storms of life, and wholly understood by God. Nevertheless Scripture also promises that we will never be left alone; God has made himself available to us always and everywhere if we just call out to him. We can be encouraged that he is always there for us whatever happens if we just ask him (*Matthew 7:7-8, Romans 10:9*).

My prayer for you today is that whatever situation you are facing right now, you will know that God remains a constant presence to help you through; and he will walk with you as an anchor whilst you discern the way ahead and seek to hold on to hope in the storm.

Ruth Egan
High Street Baptist Church



Gwen is 99!

On Bank Holiday Monday, 25 May, Gwen Hewison from St Peter & St Paul's celebrated her 99th birthday in style. Sally Cottle was able to make a socially distanced visit and found her in good spirits and thrilled with all the cards and good wishes she had received. Her fellow residents at Emma Rothschild hung up bunting and put up a gazebo for her and she was able to enjoy the glorious sunshine, surrounded by beautiful roses and country garden flowers.

Gwen passes on her thanks to everyone for making her birthday special.

The Editor



Letter from Orkney

I am writing this at the end of May, the first day of the slight easing of lockdown restrictions announced by Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. We can now meet up to four people from one other household per day, as long as it's outside and socially distanced. The pitfalls are perilous – what if we want to meet up with someone and they've already filled their diary for weeks ahead, and we don't seem to have been allocated a slot? Or vice versa. The social embarrassments could be endless...

Along with many, we have gained solace (and weight) from eating far more than usual. I have to admit it has actually been rather nice to indulge myself without feeling too guilty! As we move towards



summer I thought I would share my very favourite salad dish. However, despite it being a salad it is not exactly deficient in calories. I think it's healthy though, and that's what counts.

Whenever I announce to Mac we're having salad for dinner he pulls faces, but once he's had this one he has to confess he really enjoyed it. As always with salads, all ingredients are completely interchangeable depending on likes and dislikes, but this is my favourite, and you'll see it is heavily influenced by my liking for Italian food. (We should be in Florence as I write this, but I try not to think about that.)

Carrie Dodge
St Mary's Stromness

Warm Italian Salmon Salad

Serves 2

Ingredients

2 hot smoked salmon fillets or ordinary salmon fillets if preferred

Small bag baby spinach, or baby leaf salad leaves

Basil leaves

Handful of sundried tomatoes, sliced

Handful of pitted black olives, halved

2 or 3 artichoke hearts, sliced (available on deli counters or in jars, in olive oil)

1 handful roasted pine nuts

1 avocado, peeled, sliced and diced in smallish pieces (sprinkle with a little lemon juice to prevent them going black)

Shavings of fresh parmesan cheese (use a potato peeler)

Method

1. Tear up the spinach/salad leaves and basil and put in large bowl
2. Dry fry the pine nuts in a non-stick frying pan until they're browned
3. Combine leaves with the tomatoes, olives, artichoke hearts and pine nuts
4. Mix in the avocado pieces
5. Heat a little olive oil in a frying pan over a high heat, add the salmon fillets and heat until cooked through, but still moist. Remove the skin if necessary.
6. Flake the salmon into pieces and lightly toss through the salad so the pieces don't break up too much.
7. Sprinkle parmesan shavings over the top.

Serve with either crusty bread or warm buttered new potatoes, salt and pepper, good olive oil and good balsamic vinegar to taste.

Bon appétito!



Tring Wave goes international!

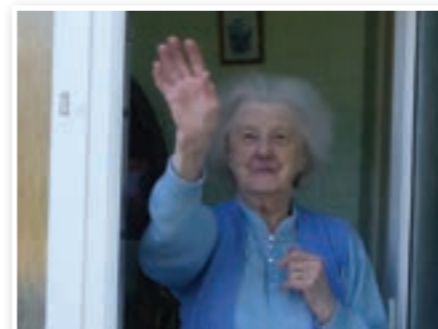
Last month I asked *Comment* readers to send a photo of themselves smiling or waving at the rest of the *Comment* readers. Many have sent in photos or asked others to do it for them and you

will find greetings in this edition scattered throughout the magazine. We may not yet be able to see everyone else in person, but consider this a virtual greeting!

Barbara Anscombe told friends in

Adelaide about this and they thought it such a good idea, they adopted it for themselves. But they call it the Tring Wave!

The Editor



The world outside my window



With the schools closed, I am far more involved in my children's learning. While factorising algebraic equations and critiquing short stories is familiar

from my own school days, some subjects seem to have moved with the times. For a geography assignment my son had to make a poster presentation on geographical concepts using the title 'The World Outside My Window'. Living on the edge of Tring, the world outside his window has a diverse range of community amenities: green space, farm, sports club, supermarket. We discussed the potential and got excited about the aspects he could investigate.

However, it got me thinking. We are all, naturally, very preoccupied with our immediate world. For many, life is constrained to four walls and thoughts of immediate concern might be when or how I will do my next food shop, when the hairdressers will open, or if I can still get my car MOT done. For others,

they are preparing lessons for students, working long shifts and perhaps isolating from their families so they can still work in hospitals and care settings. Each of us face our own challenges. But on the whole, we have enough food, we can collect our repeat prescription, we can enjoy some nature in our garden or on a local walk.

For many around the world, however, coronavirus is just another stress on top of an already desperate living situation. They may be in a conflict zone, in temporary and overcrowded accommodation or living on the road, suffering food scarcity, without clean water to drink (never mind hand-washing), and in perpetual fear.

This is not meant to be a 'quit complaining' article; instead I wanted to share the recent discussions at our latest Justice & Peace meeting. While we are not able to plan events in town, we noted that there are many actions we can carry out without leaving our own front rooms. Campaigning on behalf of those who do not have a voice can be done by signing petitions and lobbying government. Keeping up-to-



date on global issues requires actively seeking news sources in order to move beyond our own shores; this can be done via BBC World Service radio, the international pages of quality papers or the many international development organisations.

As a group, Tring Justice & Peace meet monthly and have continued to do so during lockdown via Zoom. At our last meeting we shared the various campaigns we can get involved in. We hope this list will prove interesting to others, and perhaps prompt action for the world beyond our windows.

Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church

PCC in a pandemic



I don't like committees. I am by nature an impatient person, and my satisfaction comes from getting things done (promptly). When I escaped from paid

employment just a few years ago I resolved not to be on any committees. And I've been a member of St Peter & St Paul's in Tring for decades without getting roped into any. So I still wonder how it came about that I had the privilege of chairing the first Zoom meeting of the Team PCC in May, at that time in the middle of the 'Stay at Home' lockdown.

In fact it was an effective meeting, with more than twenty members present. We heard about the many ways in which the clergy have been trying to fill the void left by the abrupt shutting of our

Churches in late March. Online provision was popular, but not available to all. And everybody feels pain and sadness at the loss of Christian communion, in all senses. There have been many acts of kindness and support to vulnerable people in the parish; the Food Bank is only one symbol of our aim to help all in need. The crisis has dented the parish's income without really reducing its day-to-day spending, but we shall be sustained by the generosity of our members. The repair of our buildings has mostly been suspended for the time being, but we are blessed by the support of the Friends organisations. While the Zoom meeting, complemented by good briefings circulated beforehand, was very effective at reporting, we found it a harder medium in which to debate what might happen next. We were not helped by the uncertainties about the extent and timing of re-openings.

John Whiteman, St Peter & St Paul

What is the PCC?

I asked that question the first time I chaired a meeting of the Parochial Church Council; if committees have the reputation of being dull, church committees probably top the list. In fact it is a gathering of a cross-section of key people who run the five churches in the Tring Team Parish. The purpose is to share information about what is going on across the parish, and share responsibility for what happens next. There is quite a formidable list of formal duties, starting with Safeguarding and running through Data Protection, Health and Safety. We try not to let the dryness of some of the topics dampen our enthusiasm for our underlying mission, of showing God's love to all in Tring and beyond. It is a privilege to work with such a dedicated group of Christians.

Living in community



One of the things I acquired after my parents died was my mum's promise box. Inside are dozens of tiny scrolls, each one curled around a promise of God

from scripture. They were popular during the last century and my mum kept it on her dressing table. I remember her often picking one out and unfurling a promise, presumably seeking some reassurance from God. The promises in the little box sparkle with love and hope and that underline life.

One of Jesus' promises is 'I will not leave you orphaned' from John 14:8. No one wants to be orphaned. We all want to be known and to be cared for. Even if we have suffered at the hands of abusive parents, we long for that care from someone – whether we can articulate it or not. 'I will not leave you orphaned' speaks to our fears and challenges of abandonment and loneliness, isolation and vulnerability. Most of us do become orphans in the strict sense of the word. Most of us do lose our parents to death. And then something shifts. Usually, a lot shifts. It changes us.

Other big life changes can have the effect of making us feel orphaned, leaving us questioning, 'What do I do now? Who's going to love me and care for me?'

'I will not leave you orphaned', is a promise that connects with us. Jesus says this as part of his goodbye speech before the worst happens. We understand that Jesus' friends and followers didn't want to be abandoned, that they might be thinking, 'What will we do if you're not around?' 'Who's going to care for us and teach us?' That's why Jesus says he won't leave them, even though he knows he's facing death soon. Within this promise lies the promise of resurrection. In this goodbye speech, Jesus speaks about presence and absence, coming and going, arriving and leaving. He's about to leave them, but he says, 'I am coming to you', and 'you will see me'.

We know something of the tension between presence and absence at the moment. Someone present through Zoom, but absent in person; seeing someone on a walk and appreciating the presence of another person before us in real life, but knowing that it's fleeting

– you can't meet up later in the pub and put the world to rights.

This promise wasn't made to an individual, but to a group: Jesus' friends. It speaks of the basic nature of needing others, the interdependence of a healthy relationship. It speaks of God's valuing of community, that God works through human care and companionship. There, we can see the love of God.

We've come to rely on community in the last few months perhaps more than ever before. The illusion of self-sufficiency has faded: we need each other. We bring Christ to one other. The hymn 'Brother, sister' (the only hymn Didier Jaquet likes!) puts this poignantly: 'Brother, sister let me serve you / Let me be as Christ to you; / Pray that I may have the grace to / Let you be my servant too. / I will hold the Christ-light for you / In the night-time of your fear; / I will hold my hand out to you, / Speak the peace you long to hear. / I will weep when you are weeping; / When you laugh I'll laugh with you; / I will share your joy and sorrow / till we've seen this journey through.

If we hide away, resisting the help of others, we are confining ourselves to an orphanage. When one person is low, another holds out the Christ-light, bringing the reminder of God's presence. It's a beautiful thing. Look for it, notice it, treasure it. If you still feel drawn to self-sufficiency – maybe you feel orphaned, or fear being orphaned and are protecting yourself – can you begin to let loving help seep into your fearful heart?

In these confusing, frustrating, anxious-making times, when hugs are rationed, and smiles are distanced, when meals and parties, office-banter, football matches, chats at the school gate, even the reassuring background buzz of a coffee shop is absent; when so many shared experiences, so much shared humanity, is missing, or severely restricted, we hold on to the promise of Christ: 'I will not leave you orphaned'. We embrace that promise of Christ in the care we receive and offer others.

'I will not leave you orphaned... because I live, you also will live'. Our living isn't simply surviving. It's fullness of life, found in the depths of God's love. When we commune with God, we are nourished. 'May I know you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly.' We commune with God to be nourished and strengthened to offer Christ to another. This communion with

God isn't a private or secret thing. Even if we live alone and are praying alone at home, we are part of a huge worshipping community. Jesus' words are all about the communal. The promises he makes aren't made to individuals, but to a community, a community whose life stems from God's love which flows into their love and care for each other; a community in which none are orphans, and all are welcome.

**Michelle Grace
Tring Team**

A prayer from isolation

*God of heaven and earth,
in these times of isolation,
apart from loved ones,
distant from friends,
away from neighbours,
thank you that there is
nothing in all of creation,
not even coronavirus,
that is able to separate us
from your love.*

*May your love,
that never fails,
continue to be shared
through the kindness of
strangers looking out for
each other,
for neighbours near and
far all recognising our
shared vulnerability,
each of us grateful for every
breath, and willing everyone
to know the gift of a full and
healthy life.*

*Keep us all in your care.
We pray for those who
don't know your love, and for
the growth of the church.
We pray, Thy Kingdom Come.*

**Janet Goodyer
St Peter & St Paul's**

Celebrating the season of Creation



Don't get too excited – no, it's not the season we are in now!

In the seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Lent and Easter, Christians from

all traditions celebrate the life of Christ. In the season of Pentecost we celebrate the Holy Spirit. In the season of Creation, we have an opportunity to celebrate creation and our Creator God. For four Sundays in September, before St Francis of Assisi Day, we join in celebrating Christ, the creator, and the wonders of creation. We commit ourselves to a ministry of healing Earth, with Christ and creation as our partners.

There is no edition of *Comment* in August, so this July/August edition serves for two months. Our world may be a little



different come September. That edition of *Comment* magazine will carry a special feature on the season of Creation in all its many aspects, led by two volunteers from High Street Baptist Church, Nicky Bull and Polly Eaton.

If you have something on the subject you would like to contribute, please

send it to me by 1 August. If you have something else relevant to September or the events of the summer that you would like to share with *Comment* readers wherever they are – please also send them to me, preferably with photos. All will be, as always, very welcome!

The Editor

Keeping in touch

I have recently been given a book which may interest some readers who remember Mr Philip and Mrs Winifred Gibbs who lived in Tring between 1961 and 1996 when they moved to

Aston Clinton.

Win moved to St Josephs about four years ago. Recently she has been writing a book called 'Keeping in Touch' which I now have to share with anyone

who is interested. My phone number is 01442 381795.

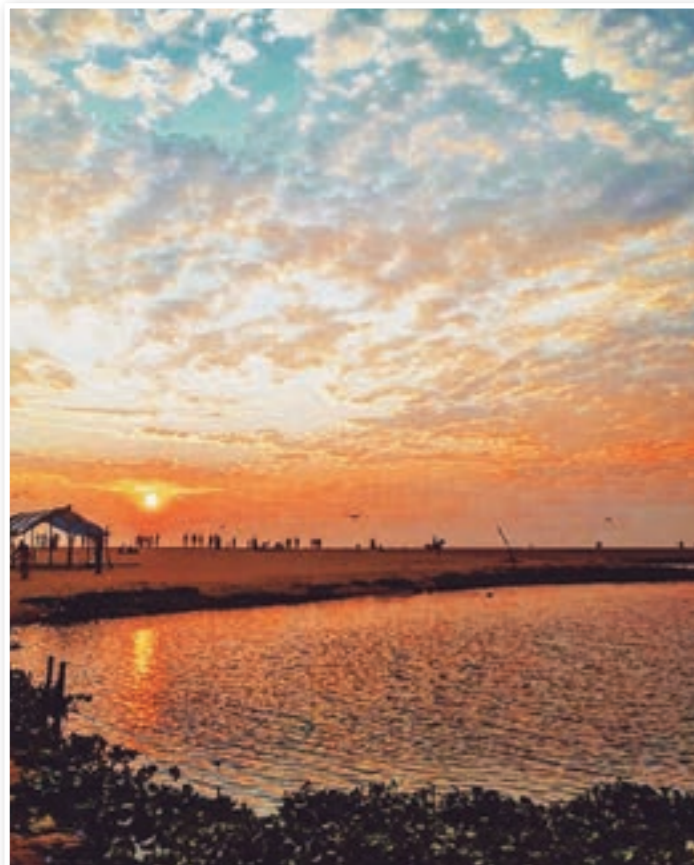
**Helen Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul**

Home from Kerala

I still have moments of disbelief. The nature of the events and the pace at which it made its way into our holiday, which was otherwise going exceptionally well, were totally unexpected.

After our precious little girl came into our lives, we felt the need to give her the opportunity to spend time with grandparents, to get to know the extended family and have the experience of visiting the countries (India and Bahrain) where my husband and I spent our lovely childhoods. It always felt like a perfect getaway.

It gives me the much-needed time to unwind and Mikaela gets to hang out and be pampered by the grandparents and her great grandmother. Being the only grandchild on both sides of the family makes her visit even more special to them. Whilst in Kerala, we travel around sightseeing, soak it all in and visit our ancestral home to spend time with cousins and wider family. Moreover, we take full advantage of the tropical experience. The sun is generous (perhaps far too generous at times!). Strolling on sandy beaches and lazing in a houseboat on the backwaters have got to be our favourite things to do. Gazing into lush greenery with the backdrop of coconut groves and walking through the paddy fields suddenly feel like a norm. Tucking



into homemade delicacies while watching the summer showers feel blissful. All of it is a real treat for the senses.

If you have been to Kerala, you would agree with me that there is a certain charm about it that lures you back. The middle eastern experience is equally fantastic. We consider ourselves lucky to enjoy the best of the seasons both here at home and abroad.

Mikaela and I flew to Kerala in January. My husband was to join us a few weeks later. We would then stop over in Bahrain on our way back to the UK. Just as expected, our holiday started on a brilliant note.

When 'Covid-19' was first highlighted in the news headlines, little did we know what was to follow. However, it did not take us long to realise the intensity of its effects. The sequence of the events that followed quickly turned our seemingly well-planned holiday into one of chaos and uncertainty. Our tickets to Bahrain getting cancelled was the first indicator of the severity of the situation. It was followed (perhaps not exactly in this order) by international border closures, local restrictions, closing of commercial air routes and very shortly followed by a lockdown which was extended more than once. This also meant that as visitors, we did not



have enough time to plan and execute our return journey. We kept booking tickets in hope and they kept being cancelled. It was clear that we were going to have to remain in India till lockdown ceased.

It is very interesting how quickly our perceptions change in a time like this. Suddenly, a holiday that I had looked forward to, and previously felt ecstatic to be on, ceased to give me any peace of mind, let alone happiness. My husband and I feel strongly about spending time with parents and maintaining strong ties with extended family. Therefore, we have always felt at peace with Mikaela and I spending some time away each year. However, in the face of a calamity of this nature, all we wanted was to be together as a family; unfortunately, it seemed a difficult thing to achieve.

Our next best option was to rely on repatriation, and we started working towards it. It involved several emails and phone calls to various authorities, being part of numerous groups on social media and staying updated on the developments; lots of patience and sleepless nights, not just for us, but for our families too. Feelings of uncertainty clouded our thoughts.

We kept updating ourselves with information regarding the rescue flights. India being a huge country, it



seemed impossible to have a scheduled flight from every state which led to uncertainties as to how I would be able to travel to another state if need be with a young child and moreover whether it was even possible with the restrictions. There were more worrying questions than viable solutions.

We had to constantly remind ourselves that there were countless numbers of people affected in various ways by this pandemic and perhaps more severely. Also, we were in a safe place and with family who loved us dearly. There might have been many others who were stranded in more difficult situations. We felt grateful to be safe. However, trusting things to work out well felt easier said than done.

We hoped we could be home before Mikaela's 3rd birthday. It came and went. Next up was Easter which we were quite hopeful about, but it soon became obvious we would not be making that either. By that point, my husband had started the new routine of working from home, followed closely by the lockdown which meant he felt lonely and isolated. I also think you tend to worry about people more when you are far away from them. Both of us felt uneasy about each other's



drive from home! A wave of initial relief took over, but we still had lots more bridges to cross. We had to register for the flights and wait for our ticket status to be confirmed, which could be roughly twenty-four hours prior to the departure. If I remember rightly, we got to know our confirmed status fifteen hours or so before departure to the airport! I do not think I have been through a similar stressful patch ever before. The hours that followed the confirmation got filled by frantic organisation. A taxi was sent to pick us up from home. Both of us put on our masks and packed our share of sanitisers (the rest of the luggage felt unimportant at this point!) and we embarked on a journey that lasted almost a day.

It felt so different travelling this time: near empty car parks, bare premises, forms to fill in, health clearance measures, long waits, stop overs, change of crew and lots of mixed emotions! We felt lucky once again. The transport to the airport went smoothly, the staff at the airport were warm and helpful and the flight crew did their best to keep people relaxed and happy. More than anything, Mikaela dealt with

wellbeing and apprehensive of the how the situation would unfold.

After a couple of weeks' worth of wait, we finally got some news about a flight scheduled from South of India and to add to our disbelief, the departure port was the city we were in. The airport is under a fifteen-minute

that long journey like a pro. I have always admired her ability to adapt to changes, her zest and endless energy. It was not any different this time either. This little girl kept our spirits high throughout this period. We finally got to that point when we could see the aircraft landing at our port of departure. Most people stood up in excitement to behold this sight! I guess it is that feeling of relief knowing you will soon be on your way home. Finally we were reunited! I was delighted and relieved to be back home and together again. Mikaela was excited to see Daddy after so long. Suddenly everything felt perfect!

The experience has cemented more than a few aspects for us as a family. Adversities seem to possess that unique ability to bring about positive



effects too. As we navigate through this new 'normal', we are grateful for every moment we spend together, and we are striving to make it a richer experience. We witnessed yet again the immense support and love of our family and friends which was hugely comforting to know and experience. It has helped us look at the bigger picture, think about all those people who contribute in every way to make your life work seamlessly and be grateful. More than anything we experienced the unfailing work of God, yet again. It has given us another reason to trust without doubting. There is one song that kept coming to my mind during this period - 'Through it all' by Booth brothers.

When Annette approached me about sharing our story, it felt important to oblige. She among others had taken the time to keep in touch with us during this period. When you are away, it always feels good to hear from your community at home.

**Linta Behanan
St Peter & St Paul**

Lives lit by God's Spirit



One of the things I love about different languages is how you discover words that we don't have in English, but ought to: *mangata* is a Swedish word for the path of light reflected from the moon on water at night; *l'esprit de l'escalier* is a French phrase that means the very witty response, the ultimate comeback, you think of too late; *boketto* is a Japanese word for just mindlessly

gazing at something, thinking of nothing. All glorious words and phrases, and reminders that when you translate from one language to another, you can lose some of the meaning or poetry.

It is why it can be good to go back to the original in the Bible rather than just relying on one translation. When St John talks of the Holy Spirit in John chapter 14, he refers to him as the Advocate or the Helper, depending on what version you are reading. The original in Greek is *paracletos*, which St Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, felt did not have an equivalent word, so he just used

the same word, thus creating the word Paraclete. He did that because it has so many meanings – helper, comforter, guide, advisor and more – and he felt keeping the original was the only way to encompass it all.

It is a very important reminder describing that God is beyond us, and beyond our language. But even though we cannot fully describe God, we can know God; we can feel God's love; we can live lives lit by God's Spirit. May we continue on that path of love and light.

Jane Banister
Tring Team

Rebel without a cause

Some people may find Spaghetti Junction on the M6 a confusion of exits, snaking around on itself, promising to deliver you either on the road to the city centre or in the opposite direction towards Sutton Coldfield. If you're aiming for the city centre and you pass the Aston Villa football ground, then, fortunately, you're going in the right direction.

As a native of Birmingham, I find Spaghetti Junction very familiar to negotiate in either direction: towards the city centre – or generally, driving in the opposite direction.

The journey to my old home meant driving up George Road which runs alongside Brookvale Park with its lake and teeming birdlife. On the right-hand side at the top of this long road is George Road Baptist Church. For a long while it was called George Road Baptist Evangelical Church and yes ... look away now ... tambourines were shaken on Sundays. This was my church in Birmingham for over twenty years and

the place where I attended Sunday School, Girls Life Brigade and weekly Youth Club. I was baptised in this Church by the Minister, John Turner, and in my teens helped to run Christian Endeavour groups. I have fond memories of the Church but most especially the lovely Christian members who faithfully served and prayed for all of us.

I know that so many in my age group (60+) have similar experiences of the past decades, which changed so much at the end of the 20th century and into this one. I have so much to thank these Christians for – their prayers were answered in many ways, and yet they would never have known.

I've been thinking of the annual Church Anniversary when the front of the Church was transformed into ranked platforms with the pipe organ in the middle of them. The minister stood on the right-hand side, almost an afterthought, surrounded by the choir and younger members of the Sunday School and Youth group. My memories of the event are hazy except for possibly the last year I was involved when I was a young teenager.

The dress code for the day was

always white dresses for women and girls and a crisp white shirt and black trousers for men and boys. It was the 70s and I had discovered the fashion emporium of Chelsea Girl in Birmingham city centre. My mum bought me what I considered was my first 'grown up' dress and I loved it. It had puffed sleeves that ended in an elasticated frilled cuff at my wrists, ruching across the chest and a flattering neckline. It wasn't too short, and it wasn't too long.

In all ways except for one it was perfect to wear for the Church Anniversary. I was warned against it and chose to ignore the advice. I loved the dress and was determined to wear it. Linda, my best friend, looked angelic in her appropriate lacy confection. She looked like a model. I, however, in a sea of shades of white, stuck out like the rebel without a cause in my sky-blue dress. Stubbornly, feeling the smooth satin swish when I walked, I didn't care a bit.

Julie Harris
New Mill Baptist Church



George Road Baptist Church, Birmingham



Brookvale Park



Tring Team Parish

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

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Team Rector Revd Huw Bellis 01442 822170 or 07411483229 huw@tringteamparish.org.uk

Team Vicar Revd Jane Banister 01442 822170 Long Marston and Wilstone: jane@tringteamparish.org.uk

Team Vicar Revd Michelle Grace 01442 851200 Aldbury: michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk

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Postcard from Sydney



We've been thinking a lot lately about belonging. It has been good to feel connected back to friends in Tring via Facebook; occasional Skype chats; and some of the online services offered by the Tring Team Parish. We hope and pray you are all coping with the pandemic as well as possible. Sylvie's experience in the UK over the last few years meant that part of the reason for coming to Australia was that John wanted first-hand experience of living and working overseas, something only previously experienced with a year in the USA more than a decade ago.

Given Australia's history, the similarities with the UK are many. Indeed, they are so great that many Brits seem to think of Australia as basically the UK but with more exotic animals and much sunnier weather. Cricket; beer (much better, we are pleased to report, than it was twenty years ago); and a kangaroo and emu standing in for the lion and unicorn on passports.

There is much that we love about life in Australia. We are trying out a new Blue Mountains bush-walk each weekend; it will be a long time before the novelty of cockatoos on our balcony wears off; and we're enjoying the quirks of Aussie English. Our local supermarket has one section labelled 'Manchester' (which



turns out to mean 'household linen') and another for 'UK food' (which oddly includes Coca-Cola and Dr Pepper, which last time we looked, were American products). Meanwhile, we had to turn to Google to understand Prime Minister Scott Morrison's recent announcement that, because Australia has so far handled the coronavirus relatively well, the nation deserved an 'early mark' since the economy could not be expected to stay 'under the doona' forever. Turns out that an 'early mark' – a phrase baffling even to friends in Melbourne – means something like letting someone out early for good behaviour, whilst a 'doona' is a duvet. But we are also experiencing something of the downside of being 'immigrants'. We are here not through the fabled 'points-based immigration system' – John was already too old to qualify for that – but on four-year Temporary Skills Shortage visas. The university that employs us has agreed to support our application for permanent residency once we have worked for them for six months. But unless and until that works out – and the decision to grant or refuse that status can take up to a year – TSS status is what we have. And COVID-19 has brought home to us what that means.

First, having long been homeowners in the UK, we are tenants here in Sydney. We love the house we are renting, but since as we all know an Englishman's home is his castle, John feels mildly



uncomfortable in the knowledge that we could be turfed out of the castle with a month's notice. But buying is not yet an option: our TSS status would make getting a mortgage extremely difficult, and we would anyway be subject to a Foreign Citizen's Stamp Duty Surcharge of up to 10% on top of the cost of already very expensive property. (The average Sydney house costs more than a million dollars.) The Australian government effectively puts us in the same category as offshore property speculators.

Second, various elements of life are inaccessible to us. Many savings accounts are only available to citizens or permanent residents, while for reasons too complex to explain here, we are currently paying for private health insurance that we are unable to access until such time as we attain permanent residency. When COVID-19 first hit, and people started losing their jobs, the news reported property agencies sending out very clear communications to people with our status. One bunch of charmers sent out the following message to its overseas tenants: 'If you are from another country and have lost your job and have waited this long, you are being irresponsible for doing so!!!! Go back home to your friends and family and live through this crisis with their support as many non-Australians have already done.' The worrying bit was that this was by no means exceptional. Soon afterwards, the messaging from government followed suit. One government minister remarked that while overseas workers were welcome in the economic good times, in times of crisis, Australia had to look after its own. Mr Morrison seems unable to complete a

sentence without the word 'Australians' in it, which makes us non-Australians feel rather excluded, despite our contribution to the public purse. Australia is a much higher-taxed society than the UK, and approximately 40% of the population of Sydney was born outside Australia, so we are hardly a tiny minority. We are very grateful that, despite the hit to the economy – very much including the university sector – our jobs are, at least at present, not under threat. But since the visa conditions require us to work for a given employer, if we were to lose our jobs, our ability to stay in the country would almost certainly cease too: we would have sixty days to leave. For those of you who have a little German, we are, essentially, mere Gastarbeiter. Perhaps the most worrying thing in the current situation is that if one of us had to rush home to Germany or the UK because of a family emergency, it is not clear if or when we would be able to get back into Australia. The ABC recently reported on several couples and families caught in this situation. A colleague of John's



John Lippitt & Sylvie Magerstädt formerly St Peter & St Paul

has claimed that COVID-19 has given us that rarest of things: the sense that we are a shared moral community, such that 'we're all in this together'. But given that the rules for Australian citizens and permanent residents on the one hand, and temporary residents on the other, are so different, we're not so sure.

Don't get us wrong; despite the inevitable complications of moving continents in the small window between devastating bushfires and a global pandemic, we are mostly loving our Australian adventure; are very glad we moved here; and find our colleagues and most of the Australians we've met to be a friendly bunch. But it's not all beach barbies and koalas. And we have been wondering about a question that seems highly relevant to the UK, as it develops its own version of the 'Australian points-based immigration system'. What degree of loyalty, and what sense of belonging, can a country reasonably expect from people to whom it is made abundantly clear that their perceived value is merely instrumental?

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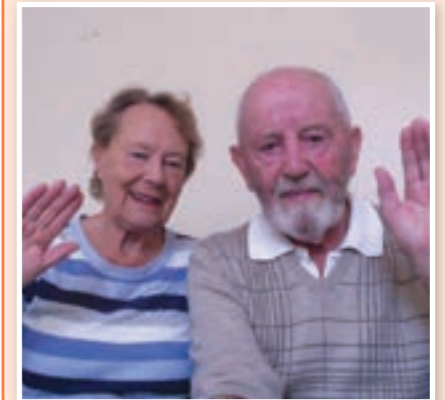


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Goodbye for now!

We are sorry to say goodbye 'virtually' to David and Margaret Whiting who crept away to Dorset under cover of Lockdown. They have moved out of Tring and will soon move into their new home in Southbourne. Their contribution to St Peter & St Paul's (and Comment) has been felt in so many ways over the past six years and they will be much missed. We wish them every blessing in their new home.

The Editor



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TEN YEAR GUARANTEE

The strangest year of my life?

I think I can safely say that this is one of the strangest years of my life.

Others may think similarly. Already I have certain dates imprinted in my mind and I suspect there are more to come. Time is becoming an uncontrollable variable!

On 1 April, although the NHS and Covid-19 were beginning to dominate thinking, I managed to get a regular routine medical procedure performed at Stoke Mandeville. The whole process which sometimes can take several days from admission to discharge was performed from start to finish in about four hours – amazing!

My next date was 30 May. We had our first visitors at the house since New Year, one of our sons and his eldest boy. They arrived by bicycle and the whole visit was conducted in our back garden – lovely but weird.

Looking forward, I have a lunch planned on the 15 July at the Crows Nest with a group of old friends – our first get-together since February. Will it happen?

Getting my crystal ball out I have some other provisional dates pencilled in: the second Covid-19 peak – early September?; the provisional 'Back to business as usual' – 1 December? Am I an optimist or a pessimist?

On a broader canvas, it has been weird, to say the least. Habits of many years have been called into question and our old regular weekly routine

is becoming a distant memory. Our neighbours, however, have been very good and our south-west facing garden is a blessing. Jenny is the hardest hit – the lock-down of Champneys has been very cruel for her. The children very kindly got together and gave her a membership last year and her regular aquarobics classes there have been an amazing relief for the arthritis in her right ankle.



Very luckily Covid-19 has been fairly gentle so far with the rest of the family. Most of our adults have worked steadily throughout; one has been furloughed; one has just finished her university course; most are working from home; two (building contractors) are surviving on odd-jobs. The teenagers and the little ones are waiting to return to school and we are all enjoying the summer weather.

Jenny and I have rigorously self-isolated. Paradoxically, our communications with the rest of the family are probably better than in normal

times. Images are exchanged, calls are made, and texts are worked hard: group get-togethers and conversations as and when! Birthday and anniversary cards are sent and received.

We are looking forward now to entertaining family visitors in our back garden (we have a separate controllable access). As said above, the first two have arrived by bicycle! Another is planning a day visit soon.

Jenny is steadily turning our back garden over to vegetables – we now have French beans, carrots, radishes, lettuce, cucumbers and tomatoes planted in pots or hanging baskets and probably a few others I don't know about yet!

Our milkman has been excellent, delivering the usual basics as ordered (bottles of milk, eggs and bread plus the occasional treat!). Oakhouse delivers pre-prepared and plated frozen meals each week and we have avoided the supermarket as far as possible – our longest break between visits has been four weeks.

Our regular 'Sunday Times' newspaper is becoming a distant memory. Mail, however, including parcels, has been excellent! An occasional visit to a Garden Centre for plants is a special event!

I find it hard to contemplate going back to our old routines. Our lives have changed for good (or bad?). I hope for the good!

Bill Bradford, St Peter & St Paul

All things bright and beautiful

During lockdown we in Long Marston were thinking of little things the whole village could get involved in. Glenys

had the lovely idea of the stone garden in the Churchyard of All Saints Church and it sort of progressed from there.



We opened it out to others, to paint and decorate stones and place them at the steps; then Alan moved them to the tree stump near the entrance of the churchyard so all could see them and add to their number. Tammy kindly added a bucket of pebbles for anyone to decorate and place at the stump.

It has grown from a small few to a lovely display. People have left stones in memory of loved ones or left kind words and messages of hope, to commemorate VE Day, to thank care workers – and some are just bright and beautiful. We are a little addicted to painting stones and pebbles now! Thank you to all who have contributed so far.

Glenys Jeffery, Tammy Pearce & Alan Munt, All Saints, Long Marston

Should we boycott Chinese products?

We are living through the biggest calamity to strike us since the Second World War. We feel afraid for our livelihoods, our way of living, even our survival. In these difficulties it is perhaps not surprising that we are tempted to want to know whose fault this is. And we seem to have a plausible suspect in the form of China. The pandemic started to show in Wuhan, and it is possible that the virus originated in a wildlife market there, or perhaps in a research laboratory (with conspiracy theorists suggesting some deliberate intent). We don't know for sure, and may find it difficult ever to establish a proof, not least because the Chinese authorities are discouraging an open enquiry (that itself adding weight to suspicions in some minds). So the idea of a 'Chinese' virus has an apparent grain of truth, and is certainly being promoted by many seeking to deflect attention from their own shortcomings, Donald Trump being probably the clearest exemplar. So should we blame China and the Chinese? And punish them by boycotting Chinese products?

First, is it fair to blame all Chinese people (nearly 1.5 thousand million,



some twenty times the population of the UK) and enterprises for the possible actions of some, even if, in the worst case, it were deliberate or at least negligent? We don't normally support the notion of joint or community-scale guilt for crimes. Would we in Tring feel we should be punished for something that happened in a fish market in Aberdeen, even if it were negligent, and covered up? And if we boycott China, why not other repressive and reprehensible regimes, like Saudi Arabia?

Second, is it practical? We have been hearing of all kinds of medical products for which China is the predominant source. And lots of products ostensibly made elsewhere –

nearly all electronics and cars – will contain Chinese components or elements.

Finally, what would a consumer boycott achieve? Some have been very successful – Fair Trade, or the boycott of Nestle for its selling of baby milk powder in countries with inadequate water supply being examples. But a general boycott is a very blunt weapon; we have seen that stopping trade with a country – e.g. North Korea, Iran – can hurt many of its inhabitants without producing a prompt change in policy. And a boycott of all things Chinese would certainly feed the notion that there are good groups of people (us?) and bad groups (whoever is not like us?).

So should we do nothing, just 'let them get away with it'? The boring but correct approach is to support and promote a rules-based system of international trade and relations, reflecting what we aim to sustain within a civilised society. Aspiring to 'Love thy neighbour' is complex in a connected world, and requires patience: a real challenge when we long for a quick and simple answer.

**John Whiteman
St Peter & St Paul**

The Children's Society Garden Party



We usually write to our dedicated band of Tring box holders in May about the annual Box Opening and Garden day for the Children's Society which was scheduled this year for 13 June 2020. Unfortunately, like so much of life at the moment, our plans were interrupted and it was necessary for us to postpone this event. It also seemed increasingly unlikely that we would be able to do anything this year. We miss you all and the jolly time we have always had on that day – very much! We would also very much like to thank you for your long-term continuing support for the Children's Society.

We would now like to suggest that we will hold the Garden Day and Box Opening event in Summer 2021 when, hopefully, life will have become

something more normal and we will be able to celebrate together.

If, of course, you would like your box to be emptied in advance of that, just let us know and we will arrange to collect it. We will count up and forward the box proceeds we collect; please do consider making a special donation in place of our normal event fundraising. If you send it to us (cheques to 'The Children's Society') we will package everything together and send it off to show what a big heart Tring has – even in these challenging times! If you would like further details of the current activities, please look at supporter@childrenssociety.org.uk.

If you are missing your vital supplies, and are keen to buy your Garden Day home-made preserves – quite an attraction at the event – or if you would like to have a taste of summer from Greenways produce, please do contact us and we will let you know what's available. All proceeds direct to the Children's Society.



The current crisis is clearly very grave and worrying for everyone; there is no doubt that the long term need for the Children's Society will continue long into the future. Indeed, it is quite clear that this situation is making the work of support and expert care the Society provides even more essential for some of the most vulnerable young people in our society. Financial pressures are unyielding for Charities in the current climate, so please do help where you can.

Thank you for all you feel able to do to help at this time.

**Grahame & Prue Senior
St Peter & St Paul**

Christian Aid MegaStick Walk in lockdown

With events that involve more than just a family group in one place cancelled, the annual Christian Aid walk was one of the casualties. Or was it? In early May I was out for one of my regular exercise walks, and was pondering the sad fact when I came to the realisation that we could do it but not in the form we usually do it, that is, walking together in groups. It would need at least one of the walkers who always gets match funding to be part of it to make a reasonable sum, but we could walk individually, rather than as a group. An email was hastily sent off to clergy and Annette, who I've always walked with, and an email returned from her to say she had decided to do exactly the same! Someone was giving us a prod! So, with about ten days to go, JustGiving accounts were set up, emails sent, notices in the e-sheet published and we were off!



I decided to walk on each of the seven days of Christian Aid Week, 10-16 May, so Sunday, Day One, the walk had to start at St Peter & St Paul's as normal. But my Church is not far to walk to from my house so I decided to go the long way, over the bypass onto the south side of Tring and through the fields and woods, nearly up to Hastoe and down the ridge overlooking Tring for my first glimpse of Tring Parish Church. Using the delayed time exposure on my camera, and the war memorial instead of a tripod, I took my first selfie to prove I got there. A sense of achievement as one Church was ticked off, but where to next? It quickly became clear that if I walked on seven days, and I like to vary my routes using as many footpaths as possible, that I could take in other places than just our five parish Churches.



Day Two took me out of the Parish and even the Diocese, as I walked over the fields to St Mary's at Drayton Beauchamp, then down into Aston Clinton for St Michael & All Angels, and round the back to All Saints, Buckland, then across the fields and the disused Wendover canal home. My camera being my constant companion, as well as taking my 'Church selfies', I had time to capture views and close-ups of flowers and butterflies etc.



Day Three, pouring over my map, I decided to walk to Marsworth, across the fields, canals and reservoirs, but having arrived at All Saints Church, I found taking a selfie a little difficult as there are no gravestones. I did carry a small tripod so that one was a bit tricky, but another Church ticked off! That day I walked further than I planned having missed a cut-through into a neighbouring field (being distracted by taking pictures



of lambs), and found my way blocked by an electric fence! Then later having left Marsworth Church, I got on to the wrong bit of canal so ended up back in Marsworth rather than heading towards Wilstone! My rendezvous at Wilstone was with Annette for a photo opportunity to promote the walk, socially distancing ourselves, but a chance to have a good natter as we had missed that part of the walk and catching Olga Martin who was out walking her dog.



Day Four was a long one and brought my total Churches up to nine. I walked down to Drayton Beauchamp, across the edge of Wilstone Reservoir and across the fields to St Mary's, Puttenham – a lovely peaceful place to stop for a quick sit-down. The next part of my walk was going to be across the fields to Long Marston, but the sight of the Puttenham cows looking at me made me chicken-out and take the road instead. I passed



by the ruined Long Marston Church Tower (which we visited on last year's walk) and decided to add that one into my count before going on to All Saints, Long Marston, and managed some good pictures of the Church and



to lay my stone down in their collection. I had found a painted stone in Tring a few days before and it seemed appropriate to leave it there, having written on the date and Christian Aid week on the back. Then I walked across the fields to St Cross, Wilstone, again and home via the reservoir.



Day Five was a shorter day as I stayed in Tring. We have three Baptist Churches, one Catholic and one Methodist Church so my total rose to fourteen! Now that meeting on public places was allowed, I was greeted in Tring Park by my youngest supporter, my grandson Evan, who is 16 months old, along with his parents Lucy and Adam who came to give me moral support. It was the first time I had seen him in the flesh for a couple of months so it really made my day!

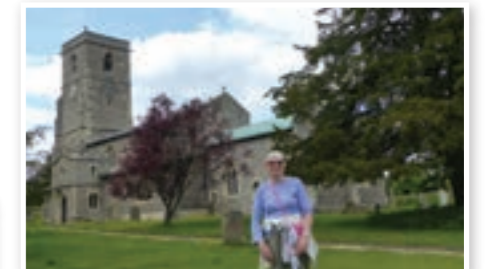


Day Six took me over Tring Park to Wigginton and two more Churches, the Baptist Chapel and St Bartholomew's and then along the Ridgway to Aldbury and St John the Baptist Church. All too soon it was time to make my way over

the golf course and Aldbury Nowers and down into Marshcroft Lane and home to the other side of Tring. It was another long day but took my total number of churches to seventeen.

Day Seven: time for a rest as that's what you are supposed to do on the seventh day? Having visited all the Churches I had planned to, I drove round to our five Parish Churches to record intercessions for the Sunday service. Visiting them is what we usually do on the MegaStick Walk.

On each of my day's walking, I met various people. Most I didn't know, but I always tried to share a greeting as we passed. Some I got in conversation with and when they asked me where I was going, I told them about the walk and asked if they would sponsor us. A number duly did, so thank you to them! A good friend I bumped into one day asked me if I had counted the cemetery Chapel? It had not occurred to me, even though I live about 200 yards from it and



I pass it frequently! So that brought my total up to eighteen churches, and the tally of miles walked was over forty!

On reflection over the different week of walking, I missed the company and chatter of friends, Annette, Margaret and Janet, and others we have walked with over the years. I missed our rendezvous in Watery Lane with the other group doing the route backwards! I missed the hospitality of the Parish Churches and a cool interior to sit in for a few minutes! I missed the cheery welcome back in Tring and the BBQ at the end. But I gained so much in return: a maximum of nine miles in a day meant I didn't get blisters! Visiting more Churches and walking new paths made me appreciate what we have on our doorstep; having the quietness to remember in prayer friends who are struggling at this time of lockdown in so many ways; having time to stop and take so many photos, some of which I shared on Facebook, appreciated by many who are confined to homes at this time of lockdown. All in all a week of blessings and a brilliant total raised for Christian Aid: it was so worth it!

Janet Goodyer
St Peter & St Paul's

COVID-19 and its impact

COVID-19 and its impact on the poorest countries

During this time of lockdown there have been many interesting webinars available free online and the following is mostly taken from two of those hosted by The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) which we discussed at a recent Justice & Peace Group meeting. These webinars and others too have been recorded and can be listened to by going to <https://www.gotostage.com/channel/66fdbaf62d7f4c6a911bede6389f7d2f>.

COVID-19 and the impact on International Debt

This was the title of the webinar which took place on 14 May. It is directly relevant to CAFOD's petition to our prime minister which can be found at <https://e-activist.com/page/59334/petition/1>.

Many countries are in debt crisis and are struggling to make debt payments at the moment; others are at risk of joining them. There are three main categories of debt: owed to other countries; owed to institutions such as the world bank; owed to private creditors like hedge funds. The drivers of debt are: tax avoidance and evasion; corruption and other illicit finance flows; repatriation of profits by multinational corporations.

There is very little bilateral debt owed to the UK. In April this year the G20 countries including the UK made an announcement that the seventy-seven poorest countries would not have to make their debt repayments during May to December 2020. This debt however has been suspended and not cancelled.

CAFOD are pressing the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to cancel more debt. The IMF has a lot of gold and some of the debt could be cancelled by the IMF selling some more of their gold which is worth a lot more now. They sold gold before and in 2005, the year of the Make Poverty History campaign, the G7 leading countries announced they would wipe out the debts of eighteen of the world's poorest countries, having found they could use the money raised from previous gold sales to cover the losses made.

Between 2000 and 2015 the global Jubilee Campaign won \$130 billion of debt cancellation for developing countries.

A lot of debt is owed under UK Law and under New York law. An insolvency

bill is going through our parliament at the moment, heavily focused on debt owed in the UK. Focus is on supporting UK companies suffering because of the UK pandemic. Efforts are being made to get a clause added which would affect the international sphere too. It would cover the seventy-seven countries whose debt has been suspended (but not cancelled) by the G20. It would have the effect of preventing these countries from being sued in UK courts if they could not repay their debts, owed for example to hedge funds.

CAFOD's petition calls among other things for all debt payments by developing countries due in 2020 to be cancelled so that countries can spend money on much needed healthcare rather than debt repayments.



Coronavirus in Latin America

This was the title of another online webinar hosted by CAFOD on 26 May 2020. It is very relevant as, at the time of writing, Latin America has now become the epicentre in the world for COVID-19, with Brazil the worst affected country. Latin America is the most unequal continent in the world. Most people in Latin America do not have steady jobs with access to healthcare and so have little opportunity to make it to hospital for treatment that they need.

In Brazil, the Amazon is under threat. It provides one fifth of the drinking water of the planet and one fifth of the planet's oxygen. The irony is that indigenous people in the Amazon are unable to survive COVID-19 because they cannot gain access to oxygen when they become ill. Legislation has been brought in to exploit the Amazon and for the President of Brazil, Mr Jair Bolsonaro, it seems the indigenous people are an obstacle to Brazil's economic development. In April 2020 there is almost twice as much logging in the Brazilian Amazon as in April last year. The President initially more or less denied that coronavirus exists. He initially reportedly described it as 'just a little flu', and when he was told how many people had been killed by the virus asked, 'What do you

want me to do about it? It's nothing to do with me'. Although there are only hundreds of thousands of indigenous people (compared with 212 million people in Brazil) the infection rates are higher among them than among other people. The Amazonian region is becoming a cemetery for the indigenous people.

In San Salvador quarantine has been applied with brutal force. People have been put in detention camps because they have tried to sell food on the streets. Ladies who have gone out onto the street to sell their small pancakes to help their families survive have been thrown into prison. Anyone speaking out against this is accused of being a friend of the coronavirus! San Salvador has announced that their health system has seemingly collapsed. They have a very small number of ventilators and know they can't provide treatments for people. At the same time, they are saying they are going to open up again.

In Nicaragua the government has taken no measures against coronavirus and is denying its existence. At night dead people are being taken from hospitals by the army and buried without their families knowing.

Part of CAFOD's petition urges our prime minister to work together with other world leaders to make sure that any vaccine developed with UK public money is made available to everyone regardless of their income or where in the world they live.

So here are some reasons why we should all be encouraged to sign CAFOD's petition and to tell our friends and families about it too. The petition is likely to be available for signing until the end of August.

Michael Demidecki
Justice & Peace Group, Tring



Wartime Memories

Commemorating VE & VJ Day 1945

VE Day in Puttenham

After the serious part of the morning, the frivolities began in the afternoon. Observing the now-normal social distancing routine Puttenham dressed for the occasion.

Bunting, mini-flags and large Union flags were displayed in gardens and along the road. Tables, chairs, and vast amounts of food appeared in picnic baskets and on table tops. At the 'Puttenham end' of the village, by the turning down to St Mary's Church, the music played, and some danced in the road to the tunes. There are not very many houses in Puttenham and even fewer in Astrope, and because of bends in the road and fields between houses,

the Astrope people could only see each other in very small groups, but we managed.

The weather was at full summer temperature and Puttenham partied. On a 'delivery trip' to Long Marston, it was noted that all was much the same there: an afternoon of frivolity which seemed to carry on until about 8.00pm!

Then we returned to 'Covid-19 hibernation', but a day to remember for all the right reasons.

Christine Rutter
St Mary's Puttenham



My parents' war



Bodicote, North Oxfordshire

During the War, my dad worked on a local farm and watermill owned by his mother's family in

Bloxham (the next village). He was in a Reserved Occupation (like coal-miners, merchant seaman, fisherman and other occupations which were essential to keep the country fed and supplied with critical supplies). The photo of the farmhouse and watermill is believed to have been taken in about 1900. In 1945, he moved to Lamprey & Son, a seed corn and animal feeds company in Banbury (in the same business as Heygates), where he worked up to his retirement in 1984.

Dad was a member of the Home Guard for four years, and developed an extensive knowledge of the local area. At the end of the War, he (and I believe all who served in any of the Armed Forces) received a letter of thanks from King George VI.

Food was rationed from January 1940, and clothing from June 1941; petrol for private purposes became very scarce, so most private cars were barely used from 1942.

Meat was both scarce and rationed, but rabbits were not on ration, and farmers considered them vermin because they ate the crops. Dad knew farmers for miles around, and they were happy for him to catch them with nets and ferrets, or shoot them. He was a good shot and skilful with ferrets, so



caught hundreds – some he kept for his mum (who was a teacher) and his brother (who also worked on a local farm), but he distributed the great majority to the poorer and more isolated homes in the village.

Rabbit is now an unusual meat in the UK (though surprisingly popular still in Malta), but I can personally assure you that rabbit pie and rabbit stew are both very tasty meals – I used to take rabbit pie back to Uni in the 1960s.

On 14 November 1940, the Luftwaffe launched their infamous air raid on Coventry. Coventry is twenty-seven miles north of Bodicote, but the raid could clearly be heard from there, and the red glow could be easily seen in the sky. Later German reports said that the red glow could be seen from their aircraft as they crossed over the south coast on their way to Coventry. One aircraft dropped three bombs in the fields a few hundred yards north of the village, causing no damage to buildings or people, but creating deep craters that could still be seen thirty years later.

Another incident was a bomber on a training flight that had engine trouble; the pilot was able to steer the plane away from the village, but could not prevent it from crash-landing and killing all the crew. In 2012, the village arranged to erect a memorial to the crew of this aeroplane, and relatives of some of those killed attended a short opening ceremony – there was still one living witness to the crash in the village at the time.

Bodicote had at least three camps – an allied army camp (used first by the British and then by the Americans), a hutted community for Polish farm workers, and a Prisoner-of-War (POW) camp for captured Germans and Italians. One of Dad's nephews said he could remember seeing black GIs (American soldiers) marching down the road. They were housed separately from the

white American soldiers, who were in a separate camp on the other side of the village.

There was a small air-raid shelter in the gardens of the Manor House, and the Air Raid siren remained by the Council-owned cottage until at least 1966. People could make their own Anderson (garden) or Morrison (indoor) shelters, though they would only really help against flying shrapnel and bricks, not normally a direct hit.

Evacuation from Dover

Mum was brought up in Dover, and attended the Folkestone Commercial College until 1939, learning about typing, short-hand and book-keeping. When the war started, she joined Dover Food Office, which organised the rationing system in the area on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture. In 1941, Mum was evacuated to Bodicote, where she initially worked at the Banbury Food Office. She met her husband-to-be (my dad) in Bodicote, and transferred to the Women's Land Army (WLA).

Mum enjoyed her time as WLA Girl working on farms in local villages. She started with an eight-week training course in nearby Cropredy, then was allotted to a farm where she got up early on cold dark mornings to milk the cows. She also became skilled at driving tractors, hoeing, digging, ploughing, feeding the animals, etc. Although most of the WLA girls were from towns and cities, many of them married local country lads.

The Women's Land Army was not formally recognised at the end of the War, despite all their efforts and vital role in providing food for the nation. In 1968, a campaign started to organise a reunion of WLA 'girls', and a national reunion of 5,000 was held at the Royal Albert Hall. Several local events were also held such as one in Bodicote which Mum organised. Other former WLA girls reported that they worked from 4.30am to 8.00pm and to midnight sometimes in the summer. One said she had six weeks continuous duty without even a half-day off. Their uniform was free but had to be handed back at the end of the War. One family refused to return the uniform because the trousers had been patched fourteen times in seven years,

but relented when the Government Department threatened legal action. Other girls received medals for pulling pilots out of burning aircraft and some were killed as a result of enemy action or plain industrial accidents. The campaign also led to the WLA being recognised and laying their own wreath at the annual Remembrance Day event at the Cenotaph.

A wedding in Bodicote

Mum and Dad were married at the Methodist Chapel in Bodicote in 1944. After a short time in Banbury, they moved back to the house in Bodicote which had been the family home since 1924 (and remains so to this day, though with the expected generational turnover).

Grandma in Dover

My grandma lived in Dover throughout the War, and served with the Salvation Army as 'Secretary of the Home League' (and doubtless other roles). Starting with the Battle of Britain, Dover was a key target for enemy aircraft and shipping; it was a key strategic town and defended the narrowest part of the English Channel, as well as being an invasion target, and was the nearest

town to enemy forces (just twenty-two miles from Calais). Dover rapidly became known as 'Hell-Fire Corner'. Dover Castle was a key position – it has many deep tunnels from WWII, WWI and the Napoleonic Wars.

Grandma was a lifelong Salvation Army member, a Captain during WWI and had been awarded a medal then by General Bramwell Booth, the second leader of the Salvation Army. She was one of twelve children, all of whom reached adulthood, and many of whom settled in the Dover area. She didn't talk about her experiences during the War but the picture of the just-bombed Burlington Hotel illustrated what was probably a daily occurrence. The Burlington Hotel and surrounding area had been totally destroyed by 1945.

Dover, just after the war

Mum went to stay with her many relatives in Dover once the European War had finished on 8 May 1945, staying for several weeks, but sending frequent letters back to my dad. In



one of the letters, she reports on the condition of Dover: 'I walked through some of Dover's back-streets and I had to rack my brains to think what buildings had been up before I left.

Everywhere you look is flat and the different views one gets of the castle is amazing. You could see it from about two places in the town, now you can see it practically whichever way you look.'

Mum took me to Dover in about 1953, and even as a four-year-old, I was struck by the number of flattened sites, and the concrete, barbed wire and other wartime residue, particularly on the cliffs.

Malcolm Rogers, FOTCH Treasurer

Remembering World War II



I was born in 1936, three years before the start of World War II. I lived in Liverpool, a large city that was targeted by German bombers almost every night.

I can remember being woken up to the sound of a siren, the air raid warning that German planes were approaching. Search lights would light up the sky looking for the bombers. My parents would carry my siblings and myself to the Anderson Shelter to protect us from bomb blasts. The Anderson Shelter was a special shelter which was buried in

the ground in our garden. The shelter had bunk beds, blankets and drinks for us and we would stay there until the 'All Clear' siren sounded and we knew that the danger was over. Our house was never bombed but a house further down my street was. Thankfully the bomb didn't explode and the next day the bomb squad arrived to disarm it – it was quite exciting to us children to see a lot of army personnel, police and army vehicles surrounding the house.

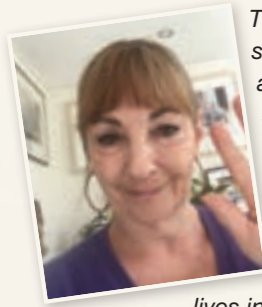
Every house had to have black curtains on the windows to prevent any light from showing through them. If a window did happen to show a little bit of light shining through, the warden who patrolled the street at night would shout very loudly 'PUT THAT LIGHT

OUT!'. This was very important because a German plane could spot a little bit of light from the sky and bomb the area.

Food was rationed and every man, woman and child had a ration book which contained points for eggs, butter, cheese, sugar and meat. The books would be registered to a shop of the parents' choice. It was usually the Co-op shop (the wartime version of Tesco) and the ration book holder was given a special number (a bit like today's bank cards) and you took your ration book to the shop and points were taken from the book to buy goods. Food rationing lasted for fourteen years, only ending on 4 July 1954, nine years after the end of World War II.

Irene Berry, Corpus Christi

War diary of a Jewish refugee



This is the second part of an article that started in the June edition of Comment supplied by Jackie Robinson who lives in Aldbury. Her

late mother, Rosi Schul, came to the UK in 1939 as the teacher accompanying a Kindertransport.

Poland, 3 November 1938

The hours went by and suddenly there was loud banging on a cell door and the sound of someone calling. Ruth Gold was making her presence known and the sound of her knocking in the silence was quite eerie. It was a long time before a warder appeared. I flinched at every bang of the door although I was very calm. Then a heavy-footed officer arrived and called out angrily, 'What's up?' without even opening the door.

'My mother is not well.' The man turned away without saying a word and I heard him telling his fellow warders, 'And nor am I'. Then the door was closed and he was gone. A deep sense of abandonment and helplessness

overcame me as I experienced total powerlessness. I must have fallen asleep very late. I woke up early the next morning because I was freezing. As the new day dawned slowly, so I recognised the passing of time. Suddenly I was fully awake, a torch light was shining full in my face. It was a warder to check whether any cell inmate might have hung himself because he was having such fun. No, I

did not feel like hanging myself. In spite of all the pain of all that I had lost, my mood was that of a desire for adventure along with an optimistic outlook on life. I got up and inspected my bedroom. Now I wanted to play the real prisoner. I tried out my elegant toilet arrangements, combed my hair, changed my stockings and listened to a dispute between the Golds and the prison warder concerning the breakfast. They rudely rejected it. I happily accepted my clay jug with washing up water and a dry crust of bread. Yes, indeed, I ate and drank with absolute disdain. That was part of being a real prisoner. Then I recorded this historic moment in my diary – until my ink ran out.

Gradually I became more ill at ease. If I had had to talk to anyone I would have burst into tears. I hummed several of my beautiful children's songs and paced back and forth in my cell like a caged animal. Time passed very slowly – I could hear sounds from the street and the clinking of the warder's keys but my cell door remained firmly locked. Now I have some idea at least of how it feels to be a criminal – whether guilty or not – awaiting trial and interrogation for days or weeks. It must be terrible. I could not sit still so I walked round

and round balancing on the edge of my bunk. It was not easy to balance but it occupied me.

After about an hour – it seemed to me much longer – there was a rattling at my door. Someone opened it and I was allowed to go and wash. I went along the corridor, through an iron door and arrived in a tiny open room. Beside a table with writing things on it and old beer bottles there was a dirty sink. I had my wash things with me and while I washed my fellow prisoners appeared. The three boys were very jolly and related stories about ghosts in their cell. Mrs Gold was very depressed whilst Ruth, quite groomed, somewhat loudly described how after the Peter Kreuder evening in Stuttgart, she had been collected from Esslingen station. It had been lovely. I was determined to give the impression of being cool and casual just as Ruth was trying to be in her way but in view of the situation it was inappropriate at this moment. I was very aware of this because inwardly I felt so sad.

The Golds had no toiletries of their own. Ruth looked elegant but had nothing. We didn't use the prisoners' hand towel. Then we all agreed to be locked in the same cell. Suddenly I was

overcome by the sheer hopelessness of the situation and although I tried to control myself, the tears just ran down my face. Oh God, how little one can do against it. Mrs Gold had ordered apples, bananas and rolls, and we sat and talked a little. I said nothing more. I wanted just to weep. Suddenly the door rattled and opened. Herr Vater and Samuel came in with our cases and said their goodbyes. No words can describe the scene. With great self-control I managed to talk to them. Rothschild was deadly white and Samuel looked dreadful. We didn't say much. I gave Samuel my sister Regina's address. In one stroke everything that had gone before was torn apart. As the door closed, I felt utterly empty and dead inside.

The Esslingers had packed a lot. There was a new large suitcase for me, a blanket and other things, and my guitar. That was a ray of light for me and I took it out straight away. Our spirits were raised through singing out, truly singing out. When Frau Gold's brother arrived, our feelings welled up again, and we could not hold back our tears. However we soon felt better. We began to talk and sing and feel calm again. We ordered a good lunch and the sausages and potato salad raised our

spirits a little. Frau Gold was allowed to return to her home and pack her own suitcase. During the time we just sat together. The warder generously left the cell door open so that we could walk up and down the corridor as far as the locked iron gate. For us that meant there was hope that we might be allowed to go home and our mood became somewhat lighter – but the uncertainty nagged at us and made us terribly nervous. Suddenly the Golds were collected to be taken to Stuttgart. Now we were alone and we realised that we would have to go too. I broke down and wept. Soon I was called down. The Commissar was very, very kind and let me sign my own deportation papers. Then he said 'Head up Miss' and shook my hand. 'The three boys may return to the house ... for you as their teacher that should make you very happy.' I felt no joy. I explained the situation to the boys, and they were really pleased. Then I gathered up my belongings but stupidly left my guitar behind. I was driven along the familiar road to Stuttgart in a smart car. How many times I had travelled this stretch of road on my bicycle! That lovely journey with Elsass and Litowski in whose home we had entertained ourselves with fine music. Every corner and street

reminded me of something. We travelled quickly through a few more streets in Stuttgart and then into a large courtyard inside the prison. There were lots of people. Jews, Jews, Jews, Police, onlookers and helpers from the German Jewish community with baskets of food. As I got out of my lovely car Ilse Herz approached me and called out shocked, 'You too Rosi?' She hugged me and said crying, 'Don't worry, everything will be alright soon'. There was no time for us to lament and actually I was losing my composure. Everywhere there were familiar faces, crying women, packages, suitcases, children, Police officials and civilians.

We went into a huge building where I found out that my suitcase had mistakenly been left in Esslingen. There I stood on a wide staircase – feeling totally lost. Many miserable wailing people pushed past me and I didn't know what to do without my case. Eventually the Commissar took me downstairs to telephone and we discovered that it was on its way. We waited in front of a huge gate before we were let into a long corridor where hundreds of people were waiting inside and outside cells for their deportation arrangements.

To be continued....



Memories of VJ Day

That August in 1945 I was 15 years old and my brother 12. Our parents had taken us to Southend for a week's holiday - the first for six years of course. Although family photo albums show me at the seaside before the war, I can't remember any of them, so seeing the sea and sand was thrilling.

After dinner in our hotel on the 15 August, we went along to some gardens overlooking the pierhead and length of the 'Prom'. There was a sea of people as far as we could see – laughing, dancing, hugging. There was a band playing somewhere and I noticed a whole group of sailors joining in – possibly their ship was moored nearby. I wanted to go and join in the

celebrations but my parents refused to let me. I was miffed at the time but later realised it was sensible!

It wasn't till many years later that I realised the full significance of the VE Day and VJ Day celebrations. World events were not brought into our homes as they are today: we listened to news on my Father's very crackly wireless set and I know he had a daily newspaper, but I wasn't allowed to read it.

**Heather Blundell
High Street Baptist Church**

Happy 90th birthday, Heather! We understand it was on 2 June this year.

The Editor



Reflections on VJ Day

In spring 2015 I finished writing my book 'Yosomono: The Stranger' and self-published it on Amazon kindle in two parts: 'Coming Home' set in 1945/1946 and 'Finding Peace' set twenty years later. Thanks to the kindness of friends and family I have earned around £20 in royalties. J K Rowling sleeps soundly at night.



'Yosomono' is one of the Japanese words for 'stranger' and sets the theme for the books. Who is the stranger throughout the two novels? In Book One the answer is simple – Jim Richards returns home in November 1946 having been presumed dead in a Japanese prisoner of war camp since Singapore fell in 1942. Like so many returning men and women from the war, Jim is a stranger to his family, especially his 10-year-old son Tommy. The father and child need to learn to know and understand each other and demolish the obstacles that confront them. Tommy is no longer the cute 6-year-old kid Jim left behind. The skeletal, undernourished, fussy eater, Jim, looks nothing like the smart uniformed man in the photograph in the living room.

The purpose of 'Coming Home' was to show to 21st century readers how Tommy develops a hatred for the Japanese. Jim, wanting to spare painting a picture of horror to his son, remembers an incident in the camp when all their letters, arriving through the Red Cross, were burnt before anyone could read them. Tommy is convinced that his letters written to his father were in that bundle.

In Book Two, 'Finding Peace', Tommy, now Tom, is focused on a career in electronics and computers. Inevitably this takes him to forward-

thinking Japan to learn more about future developments. The theme for Book Two is to show to Tom and the reader that in war, everyone suffers, the military and civilians. Tom hates everything about Japan, only eats Western food, refuses to bow politely and has no interest in visiting any of the sites in Tokyo. Inevitably it is when he falls in love that he allows himself to see beyond what happened in the past.

I immersed myself in research for both novels and particularly the accounts of veteran Far East prisoners of war. Their suffering was horrific and nothing can absolve the brutality towards them from their captors. But I also read accounts of the war from the Japanese point of view. In particular, the Anime film, 'Night of the Fireflies', which is a tragic story of a brother and sister trying to survive in a Tokyo that was flattened by the American fire bombing. The book, 'Hiroshima', written by John Hersey and published in 1946 recounts the stories of six people who were in Hiroshima when the bomb fell from just before 8.15am and then follows them for twelve months. It's a remarkable story of survival. The other profound description of that period in WWII is a documentary called 'Moving Half the Mountain: Building the Death Railway' which features veteran British military men imprisoned by the Japanese and veteran Japanese military men, each describing their experiences.

The documentary reveals the brutal military training that each of the Japanese men endured as teenagers. Nothing I read about the Japanese could excuse the awful cruelty of their actions, but it did help me as a Westerner to understand why they treated other military men in the same way.

In the last thirteen years I have visited Japan three times and Hiroshima twice. I had wanted to see the country since I was about 7 years old, despite my grandmother hating the entire nation. I was not disappointed for one moment. After their defeat by the Allies, Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution states '... the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat of use of force as means of settling international disputes'.

When I stand at the Genbaku Dome

in Hiroshima and think of all the times I saw it in photographs, I am very impressed with the memorial and the Peace Memorial Park. The museum reinforces my strong belief that war affects everyone – no one is immune to suffering.

Book Two of 'Yosomono: The Stranger' is subtitled 'Finding Peace'. Tom as the main character goes on a journey of self-examination to find the peace he seeks after the war ended. While he's searching, he finally learns more about the stranger who was his father and the truth of what he faced in the prisoner of war camp.

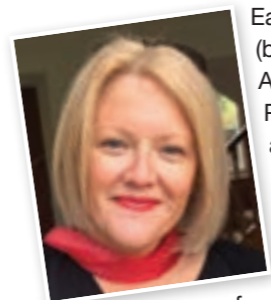
We all hope to have learned valuable life lessons as we grow older. The documentary I mentioned is very moving and I can only finish this piece for VJ Day with one of the Japanese soldiers who worked on the Burma railway – a humble man called Mikio Kinoshata. With his watery eyes gleaming behind his polished glasses he pauses before pronouncing; '... killing human beings is the last thing you should do. That's what I learnt.'



'These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' John 16:33

Julie Harris
New Mill Baptist Church

Summer 2020 fundraiser: Dementia UK



Each Summer (between July & August) the Tring Parish Team choose a charity to focus our fundraising efforts towards. Last year we had huge amounts of success with Toilet Twinning! This year, we are delighted to be partnering with Dementia UK to help raise money for the Admiral Nurse scheme.

What do Dementia UK Admiral Nurses do?

Dementia UK provides specialist dementia support for families through the Admiral Nurse service. When things get challenging or difficult, the nurses work alongside people with dementia and their families: giving them the one-to-one support, expert guidance and practical solutions they need, and that can be hard to find elsewhere.

Admiral Nurses are continually trained, developed and supported by Dementia UK. Families that have their support have someone truly expert and caring by their side – helping them to live more positively with dementia in the present, and to face the challenges of tomorrow with more confidence and less fear.

How can our donations make a difference?

£10 could cover call costs for four people phoning the Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline, so that calls are always free.

£25 could cover the telephone costs of 10 families calling the free Helpline, whenever they need support.

£40 could mean an Admiral Nurse can send life-changing advice on how to communicate with someone with dementia to 32 families.

£50 could mean an Admiral Nurse can send life-changing advice on how to communicate with someone with dementia to 40 families.

£70 could help fund a Helpline Admiral Nurse for two hours in the evening, helping carers in crisis, when other sources of support have closed for the night.

£110 could pay for a brand new nurse for four hours, offering life-changing support to families facing dementia.

£200 could pay for a brand new nurse for a whole day, offering life-changing support to families facing dementia.

How can I get involved?

There are a huge number of ways we can all make a difference and raise money for this great cause during lockdown. Here follow some brilliant ideas.

Quiz whiz

Host an online quiz for your friends and family. Challenge them with general knowledge or focus it around your area of expertise!

Share your special skills

Everyone has a special skill. Why not share yours by hosting a class online? This could be you baking your favourite recipe, demonstrating your artistic or crafting talents or sharing your morning exercise routine. Then invite people to join in and make a donation!

Get together while apart

You can still be together with family friends while apart by arranging an afternoon tea or evening drinks using platforms like Zoom, Google Hangouts and WhatsApp. Invite all your family and friends to join you virtually and make a donation.

Entertain others

Are you a singer, dancer or can you play a musical instrument? Then entertain others with a livestream gig in your bedroom, or pre-record different songs each day and ask people to donate if they enjoy watching them (or if they want you to stop!).

Get competitive

Everyone loves a bit of friendly competition. Create your own competition for you and your loved ones to take part in. It could be a one-off, such as who can draw the best rainbow for the #rainbowtrail with their eyes closed or take your time with who can grow the tallest sunflower.

Craft-a-long

Arrange an online crafting session with friends and family where you all work on your own craft activities or everyone tries the same new craft. Then showcase your creations on social media. Ask those taking part to make donations to your online fundraising page, and you could even sell the items afterwards to raise extra money.

In aid of



DementiaUK
Helping families face dementia

Sponsor your steps

Still want to reach your daily 10,000 steps target? Challenge yourself to get your steps in without leaving your house and ask friends and family to sponsor your efforts.

Puzzle off

Set a puzzle challenge, such as how many puzzles you can complete in a set time period. Challenge others to try to beat you and ask for sponsorship to take part.

Get your game on

Are you part of an established gaming group and finding you have more time to play together? Consider live streaming your game through a platform like Twitch and asking people to sponsor you. You could even tie the donations to your game e.g. for every £10 gift, a player of your choice can re-roll a bad dice roll.

Shave it off!

With the hairdresser's closed, now might be the time for a totally new look! Ask your friends and family to sponsor your head shave to raise funds for dementia specialist nurses.

Celebrate your special occasion

If you have a birthday or other anniversary coming up that you won't be able to celebrate in person, consider setting up a Facebook Fundraising page and asking for donations to our Dementia UK fundraiser instead.

In the coming weeks there will be a donation button added to our Tring Team Parish website page, where you can be as generous as you like! Please check out: www.tringteamparish.org.uk/ our-charities or you can contact us on 01442 822170 to find out more!

Sarah Marshall
Tring Team Parish

Tweet of the month

Most birds are known by two different names. In this country they have an English name and a scientific name – sometimes incorrectly known as a Latin name. A lot of people think that the scientific name is made up of Latin words and indeed some are Latin; but a number are taken from ancient Greek and there are also names of people that have been ‘Latinised’ and basically made to look like a Latin word. A good example of this is Ash’s Lark, named after John Ash who was the first person to recognise it as a species. Its scientific name is *Mirafra ashi* and *ashi* is derived from John’s surname and nothing to do with Latin at all.

Little Owl is theoretically not a native to Britain: despite being reasonably well-established in southern Britain, it was introduced to Britain in 1843. However, fossil evidence suggests that it has been native in the past and became extinct, so maybe re-introduced might be more appropriate.

Little Owl is certainly a suitable English name for this species in a British context as it is definitely the smallest owl

commonly found in Britain. In a European context, Eurasian Scops Owl is slightly smaller and is a very rare visitor to Britain and Eurasian Pygmy Owl is Starling-sized, and the smallest owl in Europe, but has yet to reach Britain. Little Owl is more diurnal than the other British owls and so is one of the easier owls to see and to photograph – although getting close to one is not easy. Being a smaller owl than the others, it eats more insects but does include small amphibians and birds in its diet.

It is quite a widespread species and is found in a band across Western Europe from Portugal, across the centre of Asia to the east coast of China and in North Africa and down as far south as Ethiopia; and importantly, it is found in Greece. The fact that this species is found in southern Europe explains its scientific name – *Athene noctua*. Unlike the English name which tends to have the specific name first (Little) and the



family name second (Owl), the scientific name is the other way around so the generic name is *Athene* and the specific name is *noctua*. *Athene* is taken from the mythical Greek goddess *Athene* who was their goddess of wisdom, war, arts and night. *Athene*’s favourite bird was said to be the owl – hence her name being used for Little Owl and its close relatives. *Noctua* means owl or night owl which was considered to be sacred to the Etruscan mythical goddess *Minerva* who was their goddess of wisdom, war, art, schools, and commerce.

To the best of my knowledge, the one true God doesn’t have a name forming part of the name of any bird, but since like us they are all his, that is the most important thing to remember.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

(My) life in art (with apologies to Konstantin Stanislavsky)



How does Art shape the way we think about religion and spiritual matters?

As some of you who have attended various services or group meetings with me will know, I have a tendency to use graphic art – in particular paintings – to make a spiritual or theological point. It seems that most of my life has been spent involved, one way or other with art, and it is the aesthetic which speaks most eloquently to me. Indeed, my very first paid job was teaching old ladies to paint (some of them were in their late 30s and 40s and as I was 15 at the time seemed very ancient!). That was a very easy task (watercolours you paint light to dark and oil colours you paint dark to light. The rest is down to you).

Sadly my own talent remains pretty limited so I have really developed from a practitioner to a humble observer of the sheer intellectual and aesthetic genius that goes into great art. It always strikes me that graphic art is probably the highest art form. Unlike literature, ballet, music, cinema, drama etc it has one transcendent characteristic. It has to work entirely in a single moment. There is no passage of time to explain the narrative or develop the theme. There is no past or future: there is only the eternal present.

Given the very nature of God, it does seem to me that infinity in a single moment is often best expressed through great paintings. The last sermon I had to deliver was on Good Friday 2020, where I used the amazing Salvador Dali image of ‘St John of the Cross’ as my theme. This painting is so eloquent in its expression of the suffering Saviour looking down on the whole world with love. Of course, there are many, many images of Christ on the cross but this one to me expresses something of the nature of the sacrifice and its purpose of salvation most eloquently.

A long term friend of mine who has recently taken up religious and

philosophical study with a passion, asked me to give him some help with images which explained Christianity and its particular differences within the pantheon of alternative religions (he was brought up as a Jain and I think leans towards Buddhism). I started by introducing him to three paintings and two books. The paintings were the Dali ‘St John of the Cross’, the Holman Hunt ‘Light of the World’ and the Carracci ‘Quo Vadis Domine’. To me they represent different aspects of Christ’s ministry with a clarity that very few other interpretations can do.

The persuasive power of Art
Of course, not all paintings are by ‘old masters’ or celebrated artists. Much of religious art has been produced over the centuries by artists and craftsmen who were skilled and dedicated and talented but those individual identities are lost or have not been recorded. Such art can speak to us just as powerfully as the works of Michelangelo or Goya and its persuasive power can be instantaneous.

I am writing this in the week leading up to Trinity Sunday and so it seems appropriate to look at an image that attempts to explain the Tri-partite God of the Trinity both graphically and intellectually.

The painting (shown here) is in the Lima Museum of Art in Peru and was painted in the late 1700s by that most important religious artist of all – ‘Anonymous’. It is called ‘Trifacial Trinity’ and is from the Cusco School (1750 – 1770). It not only shows the three faces of God but also demonstrates the intellectual faith concept which is at the heart of Trinitarian belief. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit (they are all separate); The Father is God and The Son is God and The Holy Spirit is God (they are all one).

This paradox has been the subject of countless books and thousands of sermons and is often the subject of much anguished debate on Trinity Sunday. For me it is beautifully summed up with absolute clarity in this painting. It neatly merges the graphic traditions of early medieval religious art

(the three-faced God) and the intellectual hypotheses of writers and theologians from the 12th Century onwards in the diagrammatic ‘scutum fidei’ – the shield of faith.

I think ‘Anonymous of Cusco’ has done a wonderful job of demonstrating the persuasive power of Art in getting straight to the point with unmissable clarity.

Perhaps this is a good moment to celebrate all those countless anonymous artists and craftsmen across the world and throughout history who have done so much to take us closer to the heart of faith.

Grahame Senior, Tring Team



The two books were both by the same author, Reza Aslan, and both have single word titles. The first one ‘Zealot’ establishes the historic narrative of Christ’s earthly life. The second ‘God’ establishes the God of Christianity within the pantheon of other divinities. In particular it takes a point of view that God (or any god) is a construct of the restless human need to find a purpose and a meaning in all the chaos of his short life. Wonderful arguments thoroughly researched and beautifully written but to me they lack the clarity and immediacy of the graphic images. But that’s just what I think...

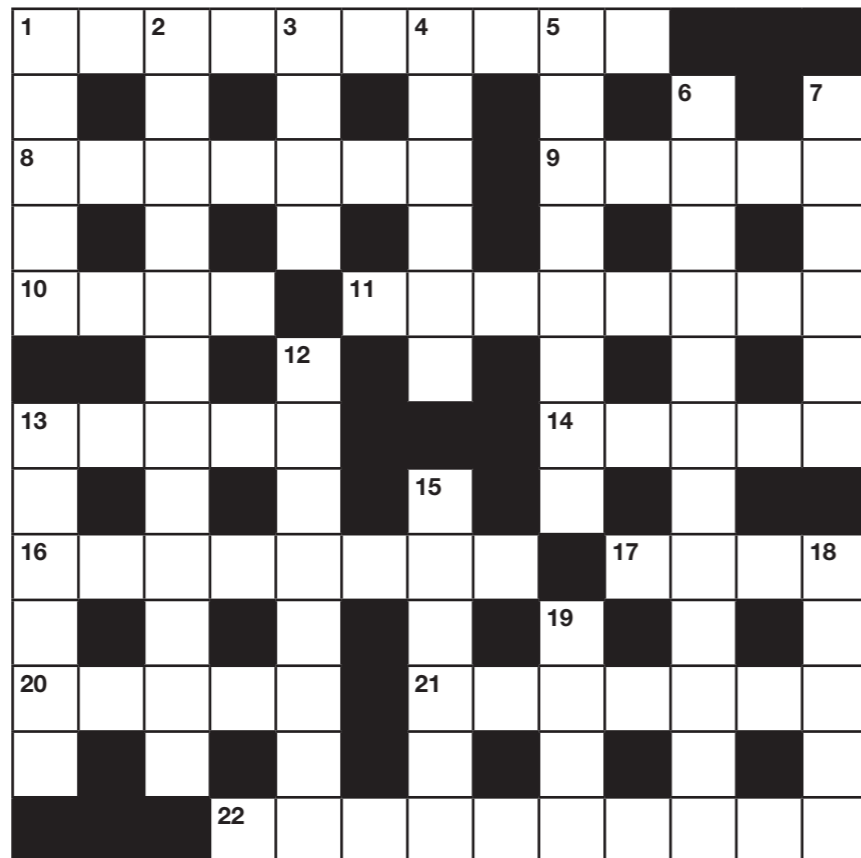
Crossword

ACROSS

- 1. Repayment (10)
- 8. Preachings (7)
- 9. Protective garment (5)
- 10. Breather (4)
- 11. First appearance (8)
- 13. True belief (5)
- 14. Preference (5)
- 16. Sorry (8)
- 17. Ratio, for and against (4)
- 20. Elements of music (5)
- 21. Introductory article (7)
- 22. Taken care of (10)

DOWN

- 1. Ascension (5)
- 2. Our united faith (12)
- 3. Secondary planet (4)
- 4. Spring festival (6)
- 5. Lacking and needing (8)
- 6. Early Israel (8) (4)
- 7. False (6)
- 12. Member of a Jewish sect (8)
- 13. Prolific (6)
- 15. Dazed state (6)
- 18. Rate of movement (5)
- 19. Give way (4)



Answers on page 39

Prayers for the summer

5 July

Lord, you know how weary and bowed down I feel sometimes. I claim your rest for my soul. I come to you in my emptiness and cry to you for your fullness. Rescue me and fill me, Lord. Amen.

12 July

Lord God, help me to identify the people around me whose soil is shallow and where little will grow. Help me to hold them up in love before you. Show me practical ways to help them and share your love with them. Amen.

19 July

The field is the world. Lord, I live in a tiny patch of your world but it is still my field to serve you. I pray that I will give my time and gifts to you and yours in whatever way I can. Your kingdom come, O Lord. Amen.

26 July

O God, mere words cannot convey what a privilege it is to be heirs to your kingdom. As we explore your word today, help us to learn about new treasures as well as old. May we see the amazing things you can do in our lives. We are part of your kingdom, and we come to you in awe and wonder. Amen.

2 August

Lord, today, we pray for people who have little or nothing: for those who feel trapped in their situation, and can't see the bigger picture, or even any tiny glimmer of light.

We pray for people who are hungry: for parents who struggle to feed their children, and themselves. We thank you for the work of food banks, and pray that they would have the resources to continue to meet so many needs. We pray that you would give us an appreciation of our food: the work that goes into producing and distributing it. Teach us not to be wasteful, but to preserve and pass on the goodness of your earth. Amen.

9 August

God of the earth and the waves, we praise you that you more than meet all our needs. You call us out from our security to experience your adventures and blessings. You don't want us to be like a becalmed ship, or stuck in the harbour. You want us out in deep water – and you'll be with us. We praise you, Lord. Amen.

16 August

Lord, sometimes we look as though we are listening to others. We may even make all the right noises! But we confess that our attention is often anywhere but where it is supposed to be. Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

Sometimes we are too distracted by our own concerns. We care only for ourselves, and listen only to those who say what we want to hear. Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities. Sometimes we don't listen to people because we don't like them, or because they are different from us. Sometimes we have bad or unhelpful thoughts. Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

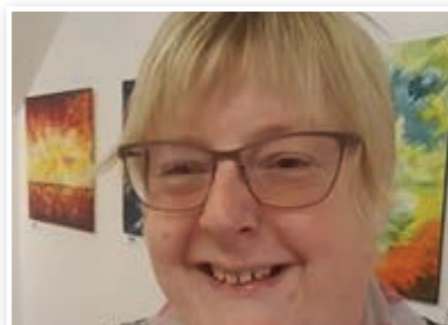
Sometimes we don't listen to you, Lord, because we are too busy, or a bit frightened about what you might say to us. Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities. Amen.

23 August

Lord God, we come before you in humble adoration. How blessed are we that the one who holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven is the one who has the key to our hearts. Thank you, God, for the privilege of being part of the amazing story of faith that sustained our ancestors. Thank you, God, that we know our future is safe with you. Amen.

30 August

For those who carry crosses of: uncertainty or anxiety, fear or hurt, sorrow or concern, joy or laughter, goodness or hope, peace or love, we ask you to walk with them. Amen.



One year on...



'Far beyond my expectations' is the phrase that comes to mind when I contemplate my first year in ordained ministry. As some of you may know,

on 30 June 2019, at St Albans Cathedral, I was ordained Deacon in the Church of England and (aside from my wedding day and the births of my children), I can wholeheartedly say it was the best day of my life... so far. When I look back at the day now, it seems like some kind of wonderful dream.



The experience I've had over the last year has been hugely varied. Of course there have been the nuts and bolts of understanding how the Parish Team operates, navigating my way down country roads to locate the Parish Churches and getting to grips with endless numbers of Church keys! However, so much more of what I have learned and appreciated has come from the people I've encountered.

If I were to include all that I have enjoyed about my first year, I fear I might run out of room; but here are some of the highlights.

Working with Bishop Wood School

This has been brilliant. Leading assemblies, working with the Year 6 Worship Group, sitting down to have lunch with them, getting to know the children and staff, has been such a blessing. I find that working with them gives me so much hope and energy. I think possibly I get more from them than they do from me! I've also had great fun with the Youth

Café teenagers on a Monday after school, learning a huge amount from them too, not least around how out-of-date my technical knowledge is!

Providing support to those recently bereaved

This is another area which I feel has been a true privilege. Walking with people through their darkest moments, sometimes not saying anything at all, just being there, has felt like an incredibly profound journey to be a part of.

Churches working together

Another area which has been both affirming and positive, is how well all the local churches work together in Tring. It's been such a joy to pray with our sisters and brothers in Christ and present the unity he intended for us. I have valued getting to know so many people from the other churches, put aside any differences and celebrate what we have in common. Alleluia!

Pastoral care

This has also been a real highlight. Chatting to people during coffee mornings and visiting those who are housebound, it has been a pleasure to listen to the diverse and interesting range of life stories from such wonderful people. I've learnt so much from hearing other people's faith journeys too and how we've all come to Christ in such unique and personal ways. It's truly inspiring. I will never get tired of this.

When I first considered this reflection, I wasn't quite sure where to begin so I thought I'd start by taking a look at some of the photos taken on the day of my ordination (by a member of the Tring Parish congregation). I was hoping for some inspiration of what to write, and it didn't take me long to find it. On the day, I was surrounded by people, family, friends, church and work colleagues – it



was incredible. However, to top this off, there was also a large contingent from the Tring Parish who had taken the time to travel by coach to support and welcome their new curate.

I was presented with what seemed like a conveyor belt of people, telling me their names and wishing me well. At the time I remember thinking how incredible this was and how grateful I felt that they wanted to be a part of this journey with me from day one. However, I must confess, it was a whirlwind experience and as soon I was whisked off to celebrate with my family, many of the names disappeared from my head!

Now, a year on, I revisited those images and was overcome with emotion. I immediately began to well up with tears. I now know personally each of these wonderful people. Seeing them all in these photos, in their Sunday bests, beaming from ear to ear, suddenly means even more to me. I have had the absolute honour and pleasure of getting to know them since, every one of them beautiful, faithful Christians, filled with God's love.

At the end of June 2020, I was due to be priested and I was looking forward to celebrating with these wonderful people once again. Sadly, however, due to the Coronavirus, priestings have been postponed until at least the end of September 2020. The event is likely to be a more intimate affair (although nothing has been confirmed yet). However, the Tring Team Parish will absolutely be in my heart when I take my next set of vows and no doubt we will make up for it after lockdown!

Yours forever in Christ,
Sarah Marshall, Tring Team

Parish registers

Funerals We thank God for the lives of the departed and pray for comfort for those who mourn.

Peter Barford 89

Chris Side 73

George Rupert Cannon 98

Hearing the heartbeats



Growing up I went to Church very regularly with my family, and then I stopped. I used to joke that the only reason God called me into ministry was to get me to go to Church because I didn't go otherwise. This period of being absent from our Churches and worshipping online has therefore been an interesting experience. Is there part of me which is happy to slip out of worshipping again?

I don't think there is, but interestingly, for me, Sunday worship by technology has been a real challenge. I know we in the Tring Team have a wonderfully loyal congregation who have been tuning in to the services and it has genuinely worked for them, and I am truly grateful that it has and it is the same privilege as being at the front in Church as it is to lead these online services knowing that it helps people. I can't work out whether the not wanting to 'tune in' myself is the medium or whether one has just been so involved putting the services together and getting them onto the website that one doesn't want to see them anymore. We have started doing online services out of necessity. We need to work out whether they will remain part of our lives for ever now.

What's good?

One of the things which is obviously working for people is that you can participate in the service at a time that works for you. We know that a core group of people sit down at 10.00am to watch the service (because that is what you do on a Sunday). It feels important to me that, divided as we are, we are united as a community because of our common prayer. However, there is nothing wrong with those who get up early worshipping early, or people coming back to the service later in the week. For me the other real positive is the children's worship. Of course the rectory kids are too old now for me to get an idea if it is really working for families but my instinct is that it has been really valuable to be able to provide alongside, and at the same time as, our adult worship a form of worship which is more accessible to children. I think I would like to see this grow and develop in our parish (especially if others lead it!).

What's less good?

When I do watch one of our services, I do not sing. I might well hum the hymn for the rest of the day, and I really do like it that all the music comes from the parish – it is our church musicians creating music for us. I might be a rubbish singer, but I do like singing and that just does not work for me online. The other thing is silence. We can have a surfeit of silence in our lives at the moment, but I miss the silence of worship. That silence isn't a real silence. We hear the breath of the person next to us, or the baby crying in the back row, or the elderly member of the congregation suddenly rummaging around for something important. However, in worship, those moments of togetherness speak of our eager longing for God. It is something I cannot replicate alone. I am aware that as I preside online, I rush through it. I need other people to help me slow down and to find a new rhythm in life and prayer. Likewise preaching to me is always a three-way dialogue (if that is a possibility), the three points in that conversation are the text (or God) the preacher and the congregation. There needs to be back and forth in all directions in this conversation. I miss the interaction of preaching – talking to a camera doesn't cut the mustard, and I miss all of the conversations in the week before which feed into the sermon.

Maybe my conclusion is that God has won! God called me into ministry to get me to go to Church, and now he has got me. These weeks have given me a vision of what retirement might be like on a Sunday morning when I no longer

have to go to Church. I could potter in the garden, I could find a service to watch that suited me when I want it? No. I think however great the tech may be, I want to pray hearing the heart beats of those in the pews around as our hearts cry out for God.

The future

Advice about a return to Church is still currently vague. Our thinking is that we will, when it comes, need a phased return to worshipping in our Churches. Not all services will resume immediately, and we will need to mark out our Church buildings to maintain social distancing. Cleaning will be key, and we won't be able to use volunteers over the age of 70 as the government advice is both clear and stark. We will need to continue to provide online worship for some time, not least because those most vulnerable are still being encouraged to stay in.

After that there are a great number of unknowns. We don't know if we will be allowed to sing or not. There is some talk about whether we will need to 'book' to come to Church and will need to take registers to assist with track and trace. I think I prefer the idea of being open to all, but maybe recognising that some will need to be turned away if we are at a safe capacity. The Church of England is starting to roll out guidance and we are working on keeping everyone safe.

We are in what the Anglican church calls 'ordinary time' now, whatever it feels like. Remember, as Jesus promises, 'I am with you always, to the end of the age'.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

Jeremy Bear reads Comment!

Following all those wonderful photos last month of the activities of Jeremy Bear in lockdown, we are sad to see that at the end of May, he retired, exhausted, inside again. Perhaps he will spend the rest of lockdown reading his *Comment* magazine, here supplied by Margaret Gittins.

The Editor



A less well-known reformer



I read John Allan's article in last month's *Comment*, 'William Shakespeare & virtual communion' with interest and my mind went to one of the lesser-known reformers

and his teaching on Communion. He rejoices in the wonderful name of Zwingli, which gives him the great honour of being the last entry in 'The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church', or at least in my edition thereof.

Huldrych or Ulrich Zwingli was born on 1 January 1484 in Wildhaus, in the Toggenburg valley of Switzerland, to a family of farmers, the third child of nine. Zwingli's primary schooling was provided by his uncle Bartholomew, a priest. At 10 years old, Zwingli was sent to Basel to obtain his secondary education where he learned Latin. After three years in Basel, he stayed a short time in Bern. The Dominicans in Bern tried to persuade Zwingli to join their order and it is possible that he was received as a novice, a trainee friar or monk. His father and uncle disapproved of such a course of action and he left Bern without completing his Latin studies. He enrolled in the University of Vienna in the winter of 1498, where he might have been expelled for a short period. Zwingli continued his studies in Vienna until 1502, after which he transferred to the University of Basel. Here he came under the influence of Thomas Wyttenbach who taught the new approach to the Bible under the influence of the Dutch Reformer Erasmus. Zwingli received the Master

of Arts degree in 1506 and, in the same year, he was ordained a Catholic priest. It appears from these early years that he did not always conform to what was expected of him.

From 1506 to 1516 he was the Pastor to the congregation at Glarus, a beautiful town situated between a lake and the mountains in what is now a German-speaking canton of Switzerland. Here he gave himself to study of the Bible, teaching himself Greek, the language of the New Testament, and the basics of Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament. In 1516 he left Glarus for Einsiedeln and in 1518 he went to the significant Old Minster in Zurich where he stayed for the rest of his life. His split with Rome was gradual but came to a head when, in April 1524, he married Anna Myer in the Cathedral.

According to Zwingli, the cornerstone of his belief was the Bible. Zwingli appealed to scripture constantly in his writings. He placed its authority above other sources such as the ecumenical councils or the Church Fathers, although he did not hesitate to use other sources to support his arguments and had made a study of them. In 1523 Zwingli spoke denying that an actual sacrifice occurred during the Mass, arguing that Christ made the sacrifice only once and for all eternity. Hence, the Eucharist, Communion, Lord's Supper or whatever name is used, was 'a memorial of the sacrifice'. He used various passages of scripture to argue against the traditional view or Luther's views, the key text being John 6:63, 'It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh is of no avail'. Zwingli's approach to the interpretation of scripture and his

understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist was one reason he could not reach a consensus with Luther.

Zwingli's views had an influence well beyond the Swiss cantons including in Great Britain where he influenced the Anglican church. The 1662 Prayer Book's Communion service is a typical Anglican compromise designed to accommodate differing views. This is best illustrated in the words said when the bread is given to each communicant: 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life: Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.'

The first section up to the colon reflects a more Catholic and Lutheran understanding of Communion. The second half is pure Zwingli and what I believe. It seems the most straightforward approach to what happens in Communion. According to this view, there is nothing special that happens to the bread and wine, but in remembering with faith the death of Christ on the Cross, something special may happen to me. I am not, however, in the least bothered if you prefer the first half of the sentence above. While important – it might influence your views on 'virtual Communion' or who can lead the service of communion – it is not the most important thing in our faith, which can be summed up in the words of the prophet Micah: 'God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team

The promise of hope

Just after Easter, I found one of the coloured stones at Tring Parish Church, painted with Easter hope. This was wonderful to me to find one as we had asked High Street Baptist members to paint them when we were planning the Walk of Witness.

Sadly that didn't happen, but the stones were scattered around with that message of hope anyway. I took this away with me and dropped it into a dear friend who was missing church and friends so much, particularly close

to Easter and the anniversary of her husband's death. She was isolated at home so it was a reminder so it was a reminder to her that she is not alone and of Christ's promise of hope.

**Janet Goodyer
St Peter & St Paul**



What is heaven like?



What do we mean by heaven and what does the Bible tell us about it? Like so many important and familiar words, it has a variety of meanings. It is used of the sky, the place where God

is, and, consequently, where Christians hope to end up. It is also widely used of anything pleasurable – a lovely day is heaven to be out in; chocolate can be ‘sheer heaven’ and it is used of all sorts of desirable goods or experiences.

We read in the very first verse of Genesis that God created the heavens and the earth. In verse 8 the word just given as ‘heavens’ becomes ‘sky’ in a modern translation. In biblical Hebrew the word ‘heavens’ (usually plural) is interchangeable with ‘sky’. It is a reminder that for most of human existence, it was thought that the earth was at the centre of the universe with the sky, or heavens above, and some sort of underworld below. Obviously God is above humans, both literally and metaphorically, in human thought. Indeed, we still talk of the heavens or the sky interchangeably. The Age of Enlightenment and modern science have vastly changed our perception of the earth, the world, the sky, the heavens, the universe and so on. Yet we still find it convenient to think of God ‘up there’ and heaven above the clouds. So, for Christians, heaven is ‘where God is’ or where God is, that is heaven; and after this life we hope to be with him in heaven – and all this although we know that God is with us now on earth.

When we turn to the Old Testament we find, perhaps to our surprise, there is very little about eternal life. In the Old Testament, as a whole, life after death and any hope of going to heaven hardly gets mentioned. What matters is this life – being God’s people on earth, obeying his laws and worshipping him and handing on life to the next generation. After death we continue in our descendants, and that is why barrenness and sterility are considered as afflictions. God dwells in heaven, makes himself known, speaks to some, and possibly appears to some. He speaks to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and others. God, for example, appears to Jacob who has a vision of angels ascending and descending on a ladder

and ‘The Lord stood beside him’. This took place at Bethel (meaning ‘House of God’) where Jacob sets up a stone, a pillar which ‘shall be God’s house’. Later God is imagined as dwelling in a tent, a tabernacle in the wilderness and centuries later in the Temple.

Both Old and New Testaments share the idea of God dwelling above in heaven and yet believing that on earth there are places regarded as his house. God dwells in heaven, we live on earth. It is what happens when we die where differences appear.

In the Old Testament, as far as the subject is mentioned, the dead are in Sheol, Hades, the Underworld, living a grey shadowy existence regardless of what sort of life the individual lived on earth. It is not heaven as Christians think of it. A few individuals were apparently taken up into heaven. Enoch (Genesis 5) ‘walked with God and he was not, for God took him’. Elijah was taken up into heaven (2 Kings 2). All the patriarchs and prophets died and rested with their fathers. One might say that was that. Both Hebrews and Greeks thought in terms of a shadowy existence rather than any kind of judgment. Sometimes people tried to communicate with the dead but this was forbidden by the Law of Moses. Saul did ask the Witch of Endor to summon up the spirit of the dead Samuel, but it did him no good. So, until the latest books it was thought that death led to a long sleep; one lived on in one’s family. However, in Daniel 12 we see how ideas have changed when we read ‘many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt’. In the Apocrypha, in books like Wisdom and Maccabees, there seems to be a development of ideas of immortality or resurrection.

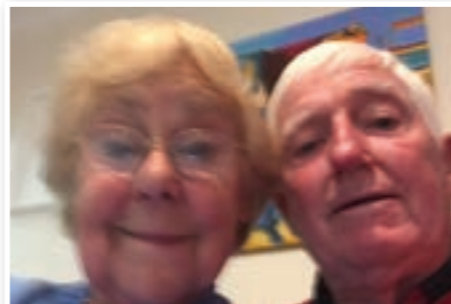
In the New Testament all is different. We are familiar with a distinctive hope and belief that we will reign with God in heaven. Our Lord triumphed over death in the Resurrection and we pray that we shall ascend to heaven in heart and mind and with him continually dwell. We are also aware of the idea of judgment and the separation between sheep and goats, of Dives and Lazarus, heaven and hell and so on. It matters how we behave on earth. The Book of Revelation is a series of visions of things to come, of what heaven is like. Some visions are terrifying, some are comforting – we shall be with

God and there will be no more crying. Revelation is otherworldly in its language. It is all in the future.

We need to bring together the two Johns. John, the Gospel writer, teaches that eternal life starts here and now through our faith in Christ. If we believe, we have life, not just *will have* life. Revelation, on the other hand, is about life in the future when we shall be with God and there will be no more death or crying but ‘God will be Our Father’. Heaven is the presence of God. It is both present and future.

In our worship there was a form of absolution which talked of bringing us to eternal life, but now the word used is keeping us in eternal life. Now, but not yet, is the paradox of the Christian life. We are the Body of Christ but we still pray to ascend into heaven to dwell continually with Our Lord. We live in a particular time and place but God is beyond time and space. We think of God reigning in glory above the clouds and also as with us here and now. We are to enjoy the life he has given us but also look to the life where ‘there is no more death; mourning and crying will be no more’.

Martin Banister, St Albans Cathedral



Memories are made of this...

‘Bloody old vicar!’ were the first words I heard as I rode my curate’s bicycle into Clapham High Street on the first day of my first curacy in 1961. They came from a group of teenagers. I was taken aback, not by the swearing or the Vicar bit, but the OLD – I was just 24. A good baptism of fire!

Clapham Parish Church is situated at the East end of Clapham Common in South London. It was built by the Clapham Sect in the 18th century, led by the slave reformer, William Wilberforce. There is even a picture of him freeing the slaves in the East window. It always looked to me like a poor man’s St Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square, with fine pillars outside and in a very good site. In his diaries Wilberforce talks about going at weekends to ‘my country retreat in Clapham!’ In 1961 Clapham was a multi-racial, working class parish, with high rise flats, multi-occupancy housing and much unemployment... Just the place for me to cut my curatical teeth and learn about the real world.

There were three curates and a deaconess based in one church. The Rector, ALWAYS called that by everyone, was a tall distinguished-looking man. He often looked rather severe and made sure all the staff pulled their weight – but he had a very good sense of humour. At the weekly staff meeting, names of those to be visited were allotted, and each staff member was expected to knock on the doors of a particular street, regardless of whether they came to Church, over a fortnight. A report was expected on everyone visited and you had to leave a printed note of welcome with the family to invite them to worship with us.

You never knew what to expect. I knocked on a door one day, which was opened by a man in a vest, saw me and said, ‘Blimey. I’ll get the wife!’ Another occasion I was invited into the kitchen and the man of the house, on seeing my collar, immediately hid the bottle of beer he was drinking under the table – thinking I would be shocked!

I had ‘success’ with one family, who were on the edge of the criminal fraternity; two daughters had children with unknown fathers, one of the sons had been in jail and the father was a heavy drinker. Anyway, they promised I would see them at Evensong the next Sunday. To my amazement they all



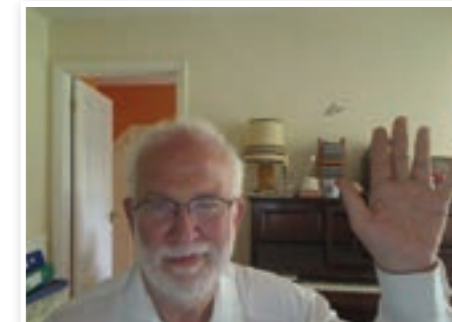
rolled up and the Rector nearly fell over in surprise! They were by no means regular attenders, but they did come occasionally and I helped find accommodation for one of the girls. When we were leaving the parish, Jenny was in the flat and Mrs L turned up and brought a leaving present of a hideous red plastic jug! She handed it over and said ‘He’s not a bad old b***** is he love?’ For once Jenny was lost for words!

The 14-26 Club was my main responsibility. This was an Open Youth Club for young people of those ages and attracted over 100 every Tuesday. We had a good bunch of youngsters who came to Church and a number of young people who were usually on bikes and wore black leather, known at the time as Rockers (who nationally were usually in conflict with the Mods, who dressed in tight jeans etc and rode scooters). They often fought at Ramsgate, Margate, Brighton and other seaside resorts on Bank holidays and no Club could have both the groups as members! We had Rockers and, to be honest, they caused very little trouble to us until one fateful night when one boy drew a knife on another (VERY unusual in the early 60s). I was called over to try to sort things out. It was the only moment I have really felt afraid for my life. I knew if the boy thought I was afraid (which I was!) that could be dangerous. So I stared him out and said, ‘John, put that knife down and leave now’. He hesitated and glared back at me but did drop the knife and walked out. Sadly he later went to prison for grievous bodily harm, and his probation officer said I was lucky, as the boy had ‘the killer instinct’!

The joys of being a curate...

More stories to follow.

Ian Ogilvie, Tring Team

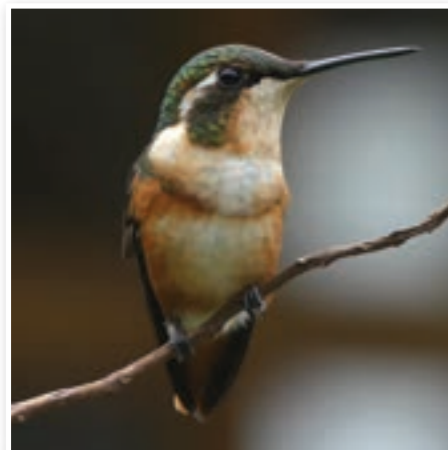


Colombia, more than coffee and cocaine

This is part three of an article that began in the May and June editions of Comment.

In a change to our Colombia itinerary, we went up to the Rio Blanco Reserve a day early as we had been warned that the day we originally planned to go there would be very busy and going there earlier meant we were the only group there: it was wonderful. This reserve is owned by Aguas de Manizales, a local municipal water company and indeed the local guide was employed by them to take people round to show them the wildlife here. The reserve's altitude ranges from 1,300 metres (4,265 feet) to 2,300 metres (7,545 feet) and was comparatively dry. It is also another of those Antpitta spots I have mentioned in Tweets and where I saw the trusting Green-and-black Fruiteater that I mentioned a few months ago. Although Chestnut-crowned, Bicolored and Brown-banded Antpittas were very much the target species, before seeing them we did spend quite some time at the feeders watching the Hummingbirds. As the reserve was the first place we had visited on the Cordillera Central of The Andes, it was no surprise that different species of hummingbird rose to prominence; Buff-tailed Coronet and White-bellied Woodstar were the two commonest species at the feeders next to the reserve's visitor centre.

The Buff-tailed Coronet ranges from 1,500 to 3,200 metres in altitude and is found in subtropical and lower temperate forests – I like this species because their name describes them perfectly and they are easy to identify. The Woodstars are a group of small Hummingbirds: by that I mean most of them are less than 7cm (3 inches) long. In Colombia the White-bellied Woodstar is the Woodstar found at the highest altitudes from 1,500 to



White-bellied Woodstar



Western Dwarf Squirrel

3,500 metres, so ranges into temperate forests and up to the Paramo, and was quite at home at this comparatively low location. After we tore ourselves away from the feeders we saw the Antpittas and many other good birds and another highlight was seeing Western Dwarf Squirrel particularly well and even managing to photograph it.

Our penultimate day in Colombia was spent above 2,800 metres (9,186 feet) and up to just over 3,500 metres (11,500 feet). The morning was spent at the Hacienda el Bosque, which is about 2,800 metres above sea level. It is a farm that has recently diversified into wildlife tourism. The two young brothers who run it are farmers but also know their wildlife and certainly know their birds. They have turned their farm into an important stop on any birdwatching tourists' itinerary: although it is currently an option on the tour we were on, I am sure that in the future it will be incorporated into the tour.

There were many specialist bird species to be seen here and this is where I saw Rufous Antpitta and Crescent-faced Antpitta (as described in my Tweet a few



Buff-tailed Coronet

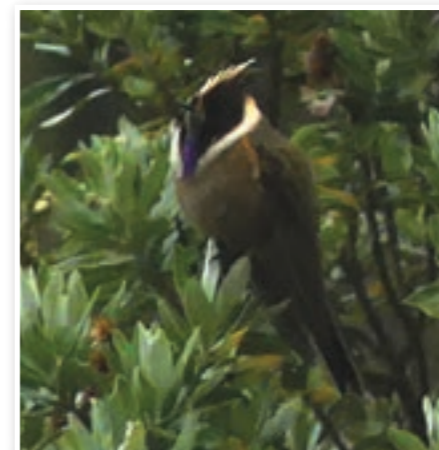
months ago). At this farm I also saw nine species of Hummingbird that I didn't see anywhere else on this trip. This included the iconic Sword-billed Hummingbird with its amazingly long bill. The other eight species only seen here were: Black-thighed Puffleg, Mountain Velvetbreast, Shining Sunbeam, Great Sapphirewing, Tyrian Metaltail, Viridian Metaltail, Purple-backed Thornbill and Buff-winged Starfrontlet. Some of these were high altitude specialists like the Black-thighed Puffleg, Shining Sunbeam and Great Sapphirewing, whereas the others were at, or close to, their upper altitude limits.

After lunch we headed up into the Nevados National Park and the Paramo. The first part of the drive took us up through the clouds and the upper temperate forest before we got to the Paramo which was a mixture of elfin forest, boggy areas and moorland. We were hoping to see a number of Paramo specialities while we were here, but the bird top of everyone's wish list was Buffy Helmetcrest. It is an amazing-looking Hummingbird with an amazing name – and that is saying something for a Hummingbird as people certainly were inventive when thinking of names for these beautiful birds. There are four species of Helmetcrest – three of them are endemic to Colombia and the fourth is endemic to north-western Venezuela. They are all high-altitude specialists and the Buffy Helmetcrest is the easiest to see and is found no lower than 3,200 metres (10,500 feet); this is slightly lower than the other two Colombian Helmetcrests! The Helmetcrests are so called because the males have amazing crests that are almost vertical and they also have what looks like a beard. In the case of Buffy Helmetcrest, the beard is less obvious than the other two, which actually have beard in their name. There



Shining Sunbeam

is a tendency to think of Hummingbirds in hot tropical forests, well, that is not always the case. When we were in Nevados National Park it was cold and wet for most of the time and we actually had to shelter from a hailstorm at one point. Fortunately we could look for the Helmetcrest from the partial shelter of the visitor centre and at this point we were 3,500 metres (11,500 feet) above sea level. The birds up at this altitude are tough and have to cope with sub-zero temperatures at times and can't stop feeding just because of the freezing rain. It took us more than an hour to find a Buffy Helmetcrest and we didn't see it for long, but we all saw it and it was worth



Buffy Helmetcrest

every minute of waiting in the cold and hail.

By contrast, the next day was our last day and we visited some lagoons; it was very hot and sun cream was the order of the day. Interestingly we only saw one Hummingbird the whole day – a Green Hermit!

Colombia is a wonderful country with beautiful scenery and wildlife and while there it was easy to think of Genesis chapter 1:31 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.'

**Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul**

DENS bike project re-opens!

We are delighted to announce that our Bike Project is reopening, after being shut for the duration of the lockdown.

Our Social Enterprise team have been working hard to ensure social distancing best practice.

Participants, maximum of three at any time, will be kitted out with full face visors and will be refurbishing bikes within separate pods, using separate tools.

Until other lockdown measures are introduced, our Day Centre, Open Space and other Social Enterprises remain closed.

Demand for bikes is currently high. If you are looking for a bike, please email Simon on socialenterprises@dens.org.uk and he will put you on the waiting list.



We Miss You!



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A snapshot of our corner of Bucks!

If you read last month's *Comment*, you will know that, like Janet Goodyer and others from the Tring Team, I walked a half marathon that turned out to be more than 20 miles to raise money for Christian Aid. The sponsorship and kindness of friends and church family meant that together we raised in excess of £10,380.00. Thank you all!

I don't walk any distance for pleasure at any other time in the year. I walk, if at all, to get somewhere. So you could say that some sacrifice has been involved over the past five or six years when I have walked the Megastick Walk (and had blisters to show for it). This year the sacrifice was in not walking with other church members and not sharing the barbecue and conversation and sense of 'family' at the end. But the walking this year was no sacrifice at all – it was the highlight of the week. Christian Aid week fell in the driest May on record and even though there were some high winds and blossom showers for some of it, the blue skies, warm sunshine and early morning birdsong, the hare bounding through the barley, the weasel running across my path, the red kites, sky larks, grey wagtails – brought a huge sense of wellbeing in an otherwise stressful period.

Since my geography and sense of direction is wanting, my husband and son Jon were kind enough to walk with me and also raised funds for Christian Aid. Since our home in Cheddington is in Buckinghamshire and the Oxford Diocese, apart from the canal paths and bridges, we took in many fields and footpaths with cow parsley, vetch, cowslips and hawthorn blossom, in order to visit the outside of Churches seen only as we had driven past before. I have lived in this village for thirty-three years and this year, for the first time, I have explored the area round about and wished I had made time to do it before.



St Giles in Cheddington was originally a 12th century Church with a 15th century tower. We tried to worship here thirty-three years ago – think what you would



all have gained if we had not been asked to move into the next diocese by the then Vicar!

St Mary's in Pitstone is that sad thing, a redundant medieval Church. Set on a hillside, below the Chilterns but above the village, it's a 13th century Church with a tall tower. It has been restored so it is far from dilapidated and is open on Sunday afternoons in normal circumstances so we will try a visit later in the year. The Churchyard is peaceful with beautiful views and while we were there, Mr Jellis, whose family had lived in Pitstone for 300 years, generations of them having been buried in the Churchyard, was there cutting the grass.



St Mary's in Ivinghoe dates from 1220 on a site where there has been a Church since Saxon times. The tower dates from after 1400 and apparently it has rose windows and an angel ceiling. Worth a visit after lockdown! There was also a woman tidying graves there – her family too had lived in the village for generations.



St Peter & St Paul's Church in Wingrave dates from around 1190. The tower is 13th century and the font is apparently Norman. The 15th century roof has protective angels with shields!



St James in Aston Abbots is on the site of a much earlier Church but it was built in the 16th century. The village is 'famous' for housing the exiled President of Czechoslovakia during WWII and many Czech soldiers.



St Nicholas in Cublington is a very pretty Church which was rebuilt using the old stone and timber when the whole village moved in 1341! It was rebuilt in 1400. It has an old parish chest which is apparently the oldest in Buckinghamshire.

St Mary's in Mentmore dates from the 12th century but the current Church dates from the 14th and 15th centuries. It is next to Mentmore Towers, another Rothschild property.



All Saints in Wing is a bit special. It was built in the Anglo-Saxon period, 8th-11th century and is one of the oldest surviving Churches in England. The apse and the crypt date from the 9th century and there is one Anglo-Saxon window on the eastern gable. It has a very attractive lych-gate and the public footpaths run along two sides of the Church.

The countryside around these Churches is stunning, particularly in late Spring. Our plan is to make this a habit, taking in a different village walk and a new Church each Sunday.

Annette Reynolds, St Peter & St Paul

A taste of faiths

We recently commemorated the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe. What did you find the most significant part of this major event? For me it was not the fact that we could not have the planned celebrations, nor was it the excellent virtual event. It was the images, which have been shown many times, of the liberation of the concentration camps.

I have not been to Auschwitz, but I have visited a smaller camp in Riga, the capital of Latvia. It had similar rooms with collections of shoes, false teeth and other possessions of those who died there. As my plane took off to return to Moscow, I started reading the *Odessa File*, which is about what happened to the Commandant of the Riga camp after the war. Reading about what he had been responsible for brought the book to life in dramatic fashion.

My first experience of other faiths started when I was a teenager in West Yorkshire. Our church youth group organised a visit to the main synagogue in Leeds. I was with some of our female members and proceeded to follow them up the stairway. I was suddenly aware that one of the stewards was shouting at me to come down as only women and girls go upstairs; men and boys stay downstairs. What do I remember of the service? It was long. We left after around two and half hours and it was still going strong. Also, people were arriving, walking around and greeting their friends whilst the rabbi was reading and preaching. (I am not sure how this would go down in our churches!)

Some of you will remember that several years ago, the Rector invited an Iman from the mosque in Aylesbury to come and give a talk about Islam and its relationship to Christianity. More recently, we have been making visits to Manama, the capital of Bahrain, as our daughter, Helen and our grandchildren are living there. During our first stay, we visited the Grand Mosque and were made to feel very welcome and taken around by a lady steward. I only had to remove my shoes, but Margaret and Helen had to wear burkas.

While we were being shown around, an Iman went to an alcove and began the noon call to prayer. Margaret glanced at her watch and noticed that it was only 11.40am. After we had finished the visit and were studying the books and

pamphlets, which we were encouraged to take at no charge as we were their guests, she asked about the apparent difference in timing. The explanation was that the timing of noon prayers is controlled by the sun rather than by the clock. The furnishings inside the mosque were very beautiful and came from several different countries, including Irish wool carpets, Italian marble floors and walls, and Venetian glassware.

My own spiritual journey has oscillated between Anglicanism and Methodism. I was baptised at St John's Parish Church in Roundhay, Leeds. I went to a Methodist Sunday School and Church in Morley, where I was received into membership. When I met Margaret, I attended her Anglican Church in Birkenhead where we were married. When we moved to Barrow-in-Furnace, we were invited to the local Methodist Church, Margaret being roped into help run the church Brownie pack. When we came south, we lived close to the Parish Church in the village of Over, about ten miles NW of Cambridge and worshipped there. I became involved with the Sunday School. A slight problem arose when I was invited to join the PCC. I was being welcomed into my new role when somebody asked if I had been confirmed? Oops, I had not.



As being accepted as a full member of the Methodist Church did not equate to being confirmed, this was probably the shortest time that anybody had been a PCC member. During the following year, I had one-to-one confirmation classes with our Vicar, who had been a missionary in China, before being confirmed in Cambridge. I was then invited again to join the PCC.

When we announced that we were moving to Tring, the Vicar wrote to the Revd Donald Howells advising him to look out for us as we could be useful members of the church community. When we arrived here, he and Ralph Seymour visited and made us feel welcome. We started by being involved with the Sunday School along with Ruth Wren and Susan Van As, daughter of a former Churchwarden and headmaster of Bishop Wood School. Forty-four years later, we are still here.

Ted Oram, St Peter & St Paul



Dementia UK provides specialist Dementia support for families through our Admiral Nurse service

Our mission focus in July and August is specialist charity Dementia UK which is expertly designed to serve the needs of those living with dementia.

Admiral Nurses are expertly trained by the charity to provide a truly specialist and caring service to help people live in the present with dementia and face tomorrow's challenges with confidence.

We can help with donations and fundraising and there are some brilliant ideas on our website (www.tringteamparish.org.uk/our-charities) Please support our summer mission focus however you can.

Visit the website www.tringteamparish.org.uk/our-charities or speak to Janet Goodyer on 01442 824209 or admin@tringteamparish.org.uk.




Face-coverings for Dementia UK

On one of the Covid-19 daily updates, it was advised that face-coverings could be beneficial to protect against the transmission of coronavirus. That got me thinking, and maybe this was a way to use up some of the off-cuts of material I had collected from various craft and dressmaking projects over the years. I hoard material just in case I may need it one day! So maybe that day was coming soon.

As we were awaiting news about when we may be allowed to open our Churches and whether we would need to provide some sort of coverings,



the planning started. Later it was announced that they would be needed on public transport and the World Health Organisation was recommending them: even more demand I thought to myself! I mentioned it to some of the Craft

and a Cuppa ladies on our Zoom chat and some of them had already made their own; and so the idea took off. We decided to ask for donations to Dementia UK as it is a cause close to our hearts and our Mission Focus for July and August. We all watched various YouTube instructions and have come up with patterns that suit each of us, sharing ideas along the way.

If you would like one of these face-coverings, please contact me on 01442 824929 or jjgoody@ntlworld.com.

Janet Goodyer
St Peter & St Paul

Nell Goodman remembered

I first got to know Nell when I joined the congregation at High Street Baptist Church back in 1983, when she must have been about ten years younger than I am now. I was a relatively new mum in my late 20s and was very glad to have found a family-friendly church.

When I think of Nell, I particularly think of her apparently boundless energy. Back then she was very involved in the church's Sunday children's work – in a position that was then called the Sunday School Superintendent. She continued to be involved with the church's children for many, many years and I recall her teaching a group, including probably a couple of my own children by then, the action song, 'Father Abraham Had Many Sons'. It was fun, fairly boisterous and invariably ended up with lots of laughter as we all failed to keep up with the proper actions.

But children's work was only one of the many things Nell was involved with – she led the weekly Women's Fellowship, which I believe had started many years previously as a group for mothers at home with their young children and in time had become a group of the older ladies whose children had all flown the nest. She was the local organiser for Christian Aid and during my years as the Area Treasurer in the late 1990s I learned just how much work that involved for her as each annual collection week came round.

There were many other positions and she was recognised by Tring Town Council for all her local work as a recipient of their Community Award some years ago. Underlying all that Nell

did was her strong faith and she was in Church every Sunday morning – unless she happened to be away on one of the many excursions she enjoyed, either by coach in the UK or occasionally overseas.



Nell cutting the ribbon at the re-opening of the Church garden in late summer 2005

Always smartly turned-out, she only made a concession to wear flat-soled shoes when, in her 80s, she had suffered a number of quite nasty falls. Even then, she took the teasing about looking as if she had gone a few rounds with Frank Bruno in good part and was back in Church as soon as she was steady on her feet and long before the bruising faded. One of her favourite leisure activities was line dancing and she must surely have been the oldest lady attending for a number of years before she eventually gave it up. Nell was unstoppable!

There must be a story behind it, and perhaps another reader will know what that is, but she was always known as Nellie Goodman until shortly after her husband Bernard's death in November 2001, when she made it known that we should instead call her Nell – had Bernard perhaps been the one who always called

her Nellie? She missed him greatly but it did not dim her energy, and from the start of High Street Baptist Church's Friday Café she was a member of the team: waitressing regularly on a Friday lunchtime and helping to clear all the tables after all the diners had left. She did this until she was in her late-80s and only reluctantly 'retired' but even then continued to provide delicious apple crumbles week by week right up until earlier this year.

Nell was the matriarch of a large extended family and she would regularly tell of the birth of yet another great-grandchild or great-great-grandchild. However, she was also very independent and continued to live on her own even during the last year or so when it became clear that her memory was not as reliable as it had been. After being unwell at home for a few months, Nell was admitted to hospital on 11 April and died on 17 April 2020, at the age of 93. Although her death was unrelated to the coronavirus, the restrictions caused by the pandemic had a huge effect – as it has, of course, for everyone who has been bereaved during this period. Only a small handful of her family was able to attend the funeral held at Aylesbury's Berton Crematorium, although many of us were able to watch the service via a live relay. However, when gatherings in Church are permitted once again, there will, I am sure, be a huge turnout to thank God for the life and service of a very special and much-loved lady. Rest in peace, Nell – we miss you.

Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church

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Please contact the Treasurer if you would like to take a subscription to *Comment*: £10.00 for 10 issues each year. Contact Barbara Ancombe if you would like it posted.

Articles, photos and publicity adverts for the next edition should arrive with the Editor no later than the 1st of the previous month.

COMMENT DEADLINES

- 1 January
- 1 February
- 1 March
- 1 April
- 1 May
- 1 June
- 1 August
- 1 September
- 1 October
- 1 November

Crossword puzzle answers From page 26

ACROSS

1. RECOMPENSE
8. SERMONS
9. APRON
10. NOSE
11. NEWCOMER
13. FAITH
14. TASTE
16. CONTRITE
17. ODDS
20. NOTES
21. PREFACE
22. BEFRIENDED

DOWN

1. RISEN
2. CHRISTIANITY
3. MOON
4. EASTER
5. SCARCITY
6. PROMISED LAND
7. UNTRUE
12. PHARISEE
13. FECUND
15. STUPOR
18. SPEED
19. CEDE

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