

DECEMBER 2020 / JANUARY 2021 £1

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



Christmas services in the Tring Team Parish

Comfort and Joy



You are warmly invited to Christmas services in the Tring Team Parish

- Tring, Aldbury, Long Marston, Puttenham & Wilstone.

Carol Services, Crib Services,
Candlelit Communion and more,
there's something for everyone.
Let's share God's Comfort
and Joy this Christmas.

Use the QR code to find out details,
or go to tringteamparish.org.uk

Not online?

Call **01442 851200**, **01442 822170**, or **07538 888502** for more details.



Known unknowns



Throughout November and certainly in the first few days of December we were back to living our lives through Zoom. All of this video conferencing gives us a strange window onto each other's households. Jane thinks that the backdrop of the Rectory study is vaguely Dickensian and I have long since given up pretending that we live in anything apart from chaos. A person who likes order and structure would struggle here. Things are a little more free-form. However, all of us have been clamouring for order and certainty. I feel for those who like order, because even I, who live in chaos, crave certainty. One of the big things which we struggle with during

lockdowns are the unknowns. When will it end? What will the new regulations be? When will the new vaccine be ready? And that is without: how will we plan for Christmas?

This edition of *Comment* should be filled with all of our Christmas plans – but how do we plan at the moment? We had great plans for a Remembrance Sunday service in St Peter & St Paul's Church but they were cancelled with a week's notice. How much time does one put into planning for stuff when we can't be sure? Do we get our hopes up that we will be able to see family at Christmas or are we better not planning so our hopes aren't dashed?

Maybe Mark's Gospel has a little something for us. We are focusing on Mark for the coming year. One of the features of Mark's Gospel is the messianic secret. Again and again Jesus tells the disciples not to say what he

has done. Peter thinks he understands who Jesus is. He has some of the jigsaw pieces but not all of them; and with this incomplete set of pieces, he creates the wrong picture of who Jesus was. Until they had all the pieces, even Jesus' closest followers were liable to get the wrong end of the stick and proclaim the wrong kind of Jesus.

We have to learn to live accepting that we can't see the full Covid-19 picture at the moment. We cannot control everything. We live in uncertainty but we can do this because we, unlike the disciples before the resurrection, have a deeper knowledge – light will triumph over darkness.

I cannot tell you what our Christmas plans are with any degree of certainty, but I can tell you we will celebrate the birth of Christ and that light is coming into the world.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

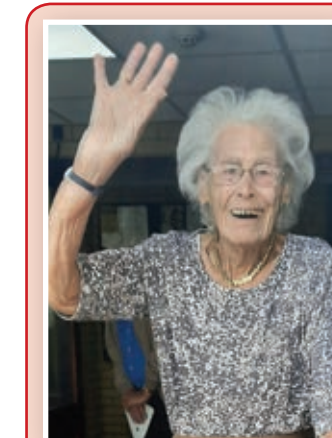
CHRISTINGLE CRAFT
Christmas Eve at 3pm via Zoom
Email admin for the Zoom code and craft pack.

www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk Tring Baptist Church
89 High Street, Tring, HP23 4AB
Office 01442 824054 admin@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

Light in the community

Create a 'light' themed window scene for others to enjoy as they walk about.

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Gwen Hewison

Sad news

We are sorry to report that two loyal members of the St Peter & St Paul's family died in November.

Gwen Hewison, who celebrated her 99th birthday during Lockdown in May this year, died peacefully on 4 November 2020 after a short hospital stay.

Daphne Nash, who would have been 92 in December, died at home on 14 November after a longer illness.

They were good friends to each other as well as being our friends. We will print more about them in the February edition of *Comment*. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

The Editor



Daphne Nash

A beginner's guide to the Moon



The Moon is the nearest neighbour to the planet Earth and proportionately (in comparison to the planet it orbits) the largest moon in our Solar System.

As a result of its closeness to earth, a mean distance of a mere 239,000 miles, it's the brightest object in the solar system after the Sun.

The Moon gives out only the reflected light from the Sun, unlike the Sun which is effulgent – giving out its own light.

From the Earth the Moon appears to be roughly the same size as the Sun, which explains why the Moon often, but not always, just covers the Sun at an eclipse.

Modern theory suggests the Moon was formed when a Mars-sized object bashed into Earth ejecting what became the Moon during the early life of the Solar System.

The Moon orbits the Earth in an ellipse around the common centre of gravity called the barycentre (not be confused with Barry Centre, the area

around the Town Hall Square, in Barry, South Wales).

All of the major planets with the exception of Mercury have at least one moon. The (now) minor planet Pluto has a moon named Charon (not to be confused with Sharon).

Roughly the same face of the Moon faces us all the time: it was not until the space age that we saw Pink Floyd's 'dark side of the Moon'.

The common name for an amateur

astronomer who observes the Moon is a Lunatic (I am a Lunatic) – if you think the people at your church are a bit weird, you should meet some amateur astronomers: I once went to a meeting of the British Astronomical Society where Sir Patrick Moore and myself were the most normal people in the room, a fairly low standard on both accounts.

There are eighty-nine references to the Moon in the Bible.

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team



Tring's first Eco Church reaches Gold!



Our green journey started nearly twenty years ago. In the first decade of the new millennium we formed a small 'Green Group' and encouraged the diaconate that

this was something

we should commit to as a church fellowship. In 2009 we achieved our first Eco-Congregation award. Eco-Congregation has since been superseded by Eco Church, which is operated by the Christian environmental charity A Rocha UK. At High Street, we gained a Bronze Eco Church award in October 2016 and achieved Silver in July 2018.

The ethos of Eco Church, as with Eco-Congregation before it, is very holistic and takes in every aspect of church life, and of life as a whole. Almost everything that we do has an impact on our environment, both near and far. We are reminded that the teaching of Christ centred on love of neighbour and

care for the poor, and that the opening chapters of the Bible tell us not only that all of creation is loved by God but that he made it and saw that it was 'very good'; furthermore, he called humankind to share in the task of caring for all of



creation. At High Street Baptist Church our mission statement is to be 'growing in the message and challenge of God' and creation care is a central part of both the message and the challenge.

In September representatives from

A Rocha visited us to make a final assessment as part of the gold award process. We are thrilled to announce we have been awarded a gold Eco Church Award, becoming the first Baptist church in the UK to do so. A huge 'thank you' to everyone who has worked so hard to bring this about, adopting an attitude of creation care at church and in their own lives. Most importantly, we will keep on doing it! We are also keen to help other local churches, of any denomination, to join this journey and please get in touch if you would like to talk about this with us.

We have a short video on YouTube which explains more about what we are doing as an Eco Church www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvgLnRvnViA&feature=youtu.be. You can read more about our green journey and find lots of useful links and resources on our website www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/eco-church/
Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church

The first lockdown?



In 1665 when the plague was ravaging Europe, the remote village of Eyam in Derbyshire went into lockdown. Alexander Hadfield, the village tailor, had received a bundle of cloth from London. His assistant George Viccars noticed the bundle was damp and opened it up letting out many fleas. Within a few days he was dead from the plague and others in the household started dying.

The rector Reverend William Mompesson, and another minister Thomas Stanley, decided on a number of measures to prevent the spread of the plague. Each family had to bury their own dead in a farm field and church services were located to a natural amphitheatre in the countryside called Cucklett Delph, which was big enough for the villagers to socially distance to prevent transmission. Most importantly the village self-isolated to prevent the disease spreading outside. Marker stones were set up at the boundaries of the village with small basins carved into each one. The basins were filled with vinegar to sterilise the money placed there by villagers in exchange for goods and medicines left at the stones.

Isolation of a population, social distancing and sterilising money – sound familiar? Tragically about a third of the villagers died in their self-imposed lockdown. A play was written about this in 1970 'The Roses of Eyam' by Don Taylor, and made into a TV movie in 1973. You can watch the film on YouTube. The name comes from the plague rash around flea bites that looked like a ring of roses. A song about this appeared in London at the same time as the Eyam isolation: 'Ring-a-ring-o-rosies / A pocket full o' posies / A-tissue! A-tissue! We all fall down.'

The story has not just gained fame as we all endure lockdown of one sort or another – it has been the subject of scientific research into immunity. In 2000, a team studying natural HIV resistance came to Eyam. They had a remarkable theory that built on the idea of inherited disease resistance. The cause of the plague, a bacterium called Yersinia pestis, was not identified until 1894 and it has never gone away, but there are pockets of natural resistance to it in Europe. The descendants of the original Eyam inhabitants were tested to provide evidence. In 2016 a study by Dr Xavier Didelot and Dr Lilith Whittles used analysis of Eyam records to show that rather than transmission through fleas, human to human transmission caused the spread and was responsible for

three quarters of the cases. The poorest families were also hardest hit, a sad fact being replicated by our Covid-19 pandemic.

Eyam is an early example of quarantine – a word derived from *quaranta giorni*, Italian for forty days. Two hundred years before the Eyam lockdown, the Venetians quarantined Dubrovnik against the Black Death insisting that all ships and people had to be isolated for forty days before entering the city.

Eugenia Tognotti, a historian of quarantine, says, 'We can learn from the past. In time of plague and cholera, well-trained and experienced public health officials were quick to recognise the crisis and launch an emergency public health response to contain outbreaks. A well-organised educational campaign to inform and calm a panicking and frightened public, and combat misinformation and fake news, is extremely important.'

This is exactly what the Reverend William Mompesson did. It was very effective and he survived, although he lost his wife to the plague. It seems we can learn a lot from a small village of around 700 people 350 years ago.

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

A survival guide for Clerics

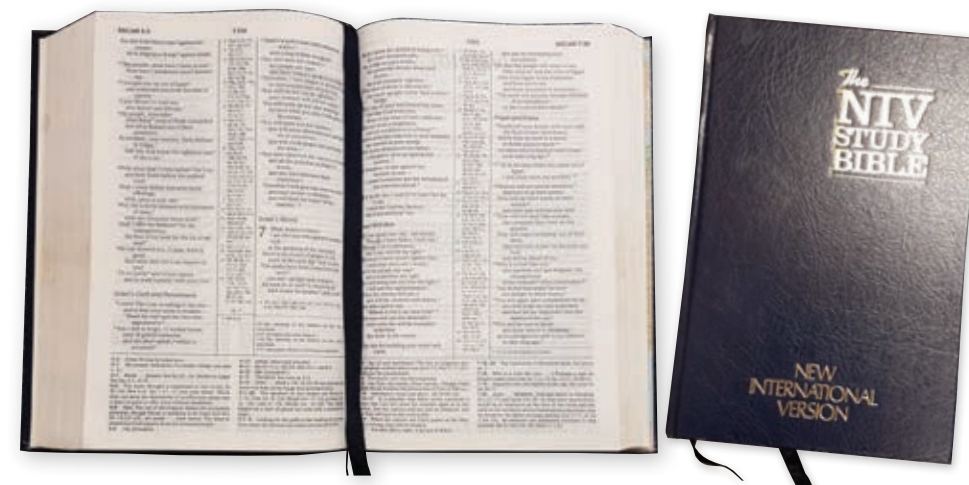


Here are ten things every cleric should have with them at all times (but nobody thought to tell you): matches, multiple sets of keys, a spare collar (card will do if desperate) – it is not unusual to forget to check the collar is in when leaving the house, so you need something; leads to connect your computer or phone to speakers; a white cloth – this can function as swaddling robes on baby Jesus, the cloth left in the empty tomb, a purificator (or, if desperate, a hankie); postcards to drop off if visiting and the person is out; cough sweets or boiled sweets – anything to deal

with that irritating tickle in the throat that can develop, as it does not look appropriate for the clergy to take a swig of the communion wine (which does taste vaguely medicinal); candles – a variety to include tea lights, Christingle-sized candles, the tail end of the Easter

candle – which can all come in useful; all-purpose shoes – smart enough to look professional, yet can cope with tramping through wet grass to check church gutters in the rain.

The Bible can also be useful, I believe!
Jane Banister, Tring Team



The 40th London Marathon

Julian Crane, Tring resident and a Trustee Director of the Ridgeway Learning Partnership, shares his experience of the 2020 London Marathon – a marathon with a difference.

The best laid plans

When my daughter, Lottie, and I signed up to run the 40th London Marathon in April 2020 we were expecting to take part in the iconic event we'd watched on TV for years, running along the famous streets of London, cheered on by thousands of spectators, to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support. But, as we all know, 2020 didn't quite turn out as planned.

After the original event was postponed, the rearranged London Marathon became an elite-only event, with the world's best athletes racing over 19½ laps of St James's Park, London. 45,000 mass participation runners were given the option to defer their place for a year, but also encouraged to take part in the 'virtual' 2020 London Marathon, running 26.2 miles in their local area. And so, on Sunday 4 October 2020, my daughter and I set out to run a marathon with a difference.

Training

Back in March, when the original marathon was postponed, the 16-week marathon training plan was shelved and filed under 'For Future Reference'.

They say it's great to be able to train to run a marathon; they say it's even better to be able to run one whenever it's required. Now, here was the opportunity to discover just how far that was from being a reality.

For many runners, it's not sustainable to maintain marathon distance training year round. For most, it's about increasing the miles week-by-week and peaking at the right time for a particular event.

Without a clear marathon date to aim for, I'm sorry to say that the summer witnessed a more 'balanced' diet of shorter runs plus tennis, cake and alcohol (in moderation, of course): not an elite running regime, but good for mental health!

The route

Living in Tring, we're spoiled for choice, with wonderful running routes in beautiful countryside with stunning views. However, keen to avoid too many

hills (somewhat difficult in the Chilterns AONB), we decided to run a marathon along the Grand Union Canal towpath.

Wolverton station, Milton Keynes, appeared to be 26.2 miles away and therefore provided a suitable starting point from which to run home. Generally, it feels preferable to be running towards home, rather than away from it, especially if that means heading towards MK!

Throughout the summer, the canal towpath had been a delightful place to run, passing locks, colourful boats and even more colourful people. But Sunday 4 October was about to prove rather different.



Water, water everywhere

After three days of heavy rain, the choice of route was looking questionable and misguided. Even before we started, I expected that the towpath was going to be rather soft in places. But I was still in for a shock.

Starting out, I was pleasantly surprised how firm the ground appeared to be. But I had spoken too soon. As we approached Leighton Buzzard the puddles grew larger and larger. And then shortly before we reached Grove Lock, the canal had burst its banks in several places and water was flooding over the towpath.



Unclear how deep the water was or what lay beneath, our pace slowed dramatically. Our marathon had turned into river wading: great fun, but not quite the original plan.

Progress became slower and

slower. Welly boots would have been more appropriate. At this rate, we would struggle to be home before dark. Therefore, at Grove Lock, we decided to leave the canal temporarily and head onto the road for a few miles, before returning to the towpath at the next bridge.

Support

In a traditional marathon event, water stations are provided every few miles. Clearly, this wasn't going to happen for a virtual marathon, so my son, Will, offered to cycle the entire route to support us, not just emotionally but also to pass the Lucozade Sport and energy bars whenever we needed them. He even managed a quick shopping trip in Leighton Buzzard when supplies ran low.

His support was exceptional and appreciated. In places, he would cycle ahead and stand on bridges crossing the canal, to applaud as we ran below. It seems performance-related pocket money really does work!

The spirit of the marathon

He wasn't the only one offering support. Whilst most people that we passed seemed oblivious to what we were doing, a good many clapped and cheered our efforts, aware from TV, radio or social media that the 2020 London Marathon had gone virtual.

The App

As with everything these days, the virtual London Marathon came complete with an App. A few days before the marathon, runners could download the official App, which would record your time and distance covered for the event and advise when 26.2 miles had been completed.

During the run, as each mile was completed, the App announced the virtual milepost you had passed and you were cheered by a virtual crowd for ten seconds – not quite the real thing, but every little helps.

However, it soon became apparent that the distance calculated by the App varied from device to device. Despite running alongside my daughter throughout, our Apps recorded different distances. For example, as she reached 16 miles, my App was registering only 15 miles completed. It may not sound significant, but in order to complete the event, each runner was required to keep going until their App recorded that 26.2 miles had been completed.

The finish line(s)

Therefore, close to Tring, my daughter was able to celebrate completing 26.2 miles in front of waiting family members. They were somewhat confused when I ran past and didn't stop, shouting that I still had another mile left to go, and if I stopped I would never be able to restart! Eventually, my App caught up with my weary legs and declared '26.2 miles completed'. Job done. Stop.

Pain

After about 16 miles, the sense of enjoyment was gradually replaced by a sense of pain, primarily in my right knee. My legs started feeling heavy and sore,



'Animal Farm'



'All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others' is probably one of George Orwell's most memorable sayings, and it is the end-point of a revolution that starts with high hopes of freedom and respect. The animals of Manor Farm are exploited and abused by their negligent owner, Mr Jones, so, led by the pigs, they decide to evict the farmer and set up a society based on justice and compassion. Their ideals are enshrined in seven commandments, the first being 'Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy' and the final summary one being 'All animals are equal'.

At first they are quite successful, and manage to repulse an attempt by Mr Jones and his friends to regain control. It is soon noticeable, however, that the pigs acquire privileges. One of the two young boars on the farm, called Napoleon, gradually accumulates power, evicting his rival boar – Snowball – and building a pack of dogs to protect him. The other animals put up with this because they are told that otherwise Mr Jones 'would be back'.

my knee had had enough, but my brain knew that not reaching the finish line was unthinkable. It was a case of mind over matter, knowing every step was a step closer to the finish, and every mile was raising money for a very good cause.

The end

The finish came as a relief rather than a celebration. Not having a physical line to cross and relying on an App to confirm that the run was complete was odd.

Whilst there was a sense of achievement and accomplishment, it felt more like a very long sponsored run than the world's greatest marathon. My legs were pretty stiff and sore for a day or two afterwards, and stairs posed a particular challenge, in either direction, but the stiffness soon disappeared.

Macmillan Cancer Support

Beyond the personal challenge of running a marathon, this was really about raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support. Cancer has become the forgotten 'C'

in the pandemic. Thousands of cancer sufferers have had their treatment cancelled or delayed as a result of Covid-19. But Macmillan has been there throughout, to provide support to patients and their families in unprecedented and uncertain times.

I am delighted that we have already raised over £3,000 to help Macmillan continue their fantastic work and we will continue to build on this amount next year.

What's next?

I've just received confirmation of my deferred place to run the 2021 London Marathon. I can guarantee it won't be on a towpath and hopefully next year it will be in London! I now appreciate just how much training will be required to run a respectable time. For the record, the wading expedition took 5 hours 46 minutes, which leaves plenty of room for improvement next time, with or without wellies!

Julian Crane

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Team/LottieandJulian>



characters in the book we especially liked Boxer, the hardworking and slightly credulous cart horse, regularly resolving to work harder, and always faithful to Napoleon. We were horrified that he was sent off to slaughter as soon as his strength failed, the promise of a peaceful retirement being forgotten.

The Book Group has continued its regular cycle of sessions during 2020, whether in person, or by Zoom, or a mixture of the two. We might add a get-together in December but will certainly meet on 24 January 2021 to share our thoughts about 'To Kill a Mockingbird' by Harper Lee. New and old participants are always welcome.

John Whiteman

Tring Team

What the Rector does in his spare time...



Pigs not in blankets...

One of the joys of Tring is quality of the sausages from the butchers in Dolphin Square. A good sausage is the pinnacle of British cuisine. Over the years the Tring Team Parish has bought thousands of these for various BBQs and celebrations.

Inspired by Gillie and Trevor and as an unexpected sequence of Lockdown, I have developed a new passion and hobby: sausage-making. As well as keeping sheep, I am part of small consortium which raises pigs. Normally they are born on Dunsley Farm, and then raised just down the road. We have a wonderful little family-run slaughter house based on a farm who normally butcher our pigs and make sausages for us. However, during Lockdown they were unable to keep up the butchering, so we have learned a new skill – sausage making!

Specialist equipment

Mincer and sausage stuffer

Ingredients

7kg pork trim / shoulder of pork, spice mix, 1kg rusk, 1.5litres iced water, natural hog casing (you can use collagen casings but why you'd want to is beyond me) makes 10kg sausages! That is a lot of sausage.



Method

Mince the meat. We have an ongoing argument here – I like a very coarse mince while Jane prefers a finer mince (and in our pig group opinion is equally divided). The meat needs to be as fresh as possible and kept as cold as possible. It minces far more easily if properly chilled.

Add in the spice mix (more on this below) rusk and water. Some folk say they like a meaty sausage: why on earth are you adding breadcrumbs or rusk? The British banger is characterised by being a juicy succulent affair and the rusk is a vital part of this. However, get the quantities wrong and with too much rusk you have a terrible product. Fortunately, this was a very small batch and they are now used to make meatballs.

Now the fun starts – stuffing the sausage. A sausage stuffer is just a big cylinder with a nozzle at one end which you force the meat through into the casing. It is extremely satisfying seeing the sausage being formed. I have yet to master linking the sausage in those chains of three, but one can simply twist them off at sausage length.

Spice mixes

When we first started, Gillie sold us his special mix. I am now beginning to move more off-piste. One of the big questions is: nitrates or not? Nitrates give the sausage their distinctive pink colour and add to the shelf life, but they don't affect the flavour too much. When making in small batches it doesn't seem essential, and I am always in favour of as few additives as possible. All that is needed is salt and then whatever flavourings you want. I think sage and black pepper is my favourite at the moment. We had a



sausage-tasting event with four friends and the apple and home-brewed cider (made by my sister) won. Personally, it was the sausage I was most excited by but most disappointed by – but at least everyone else liked it. I am looking forward to trying a Thai Sweet Chilli sausage and diversifying into Toulouse and Italian styles as well.

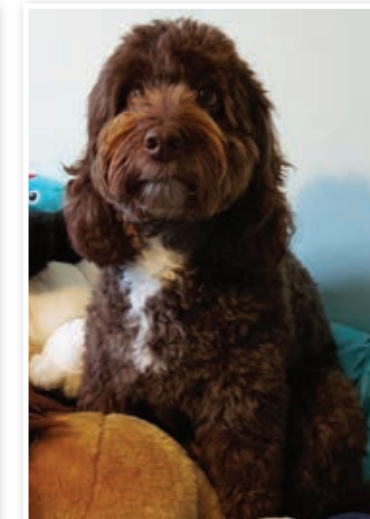
Huw Bellis,
Tring Team

Getting to know you... (gradually!)

This time last year we had just arrived in our new home, and were busily trying to keep up with the pace of preparations already afoot for Christmas at High Street Baptist Church. We were on a very steep learning curve to understanding their ways, and they were still in blissful ignorance about what they had let themselves in for in taking us on. In reality, we were all relative strangers, and were embarking on an unknown journey together of getting to know each other, little by little. Building relationships with our church family is a high priority for us, alongside seeking to connect with people in the community, and so these things quickly became the primary order of the day.

The last time God moved us to a new church was back in 2013, when we relocated to train at Enfield Baptist Church. At that stage it was just the two of us (no child or dog as yet), and establishing relationships in a large London church context was very different from Tring. Our stage of life was different, and initially as students struggling to make ends meet, we were blessed with a number of invites to join people for meals in their homes. The food was always great (it put my cooking to shame), but we quickly learned that it could be quite an intense experience of encounter too. As is the norm when you meet new people, a lot of questions were involved (which at times felt a bit of a grilling seeing as we would usually be the only 'new' people in the room), and then there were the controversial topics of conversation (such as politics) that arose over the dinner table, where there was an unintentional feeling that you were being tested a little to see which camp you were going to fall in. Essentially, some personal agendas would often be revealed, and in our position as leaders in the church there were moments of exposure and vulnerability that were probed beyond where they might be in an ordinary social situation with strangers.

This being said, these occasions to spend quality time together in someone's home were also great opportunities to connect with one another and find out



areas of common ground or interest. I absolutely love to hear a person's story, to understand more of where they are coming from and who they are as a result of their experiences in life. I always left feeling two things above anything else: that I had overindulged on food significantly, and that I had got to know the family far better in those few hours with them than was ever possible on a Sunday morning at church.

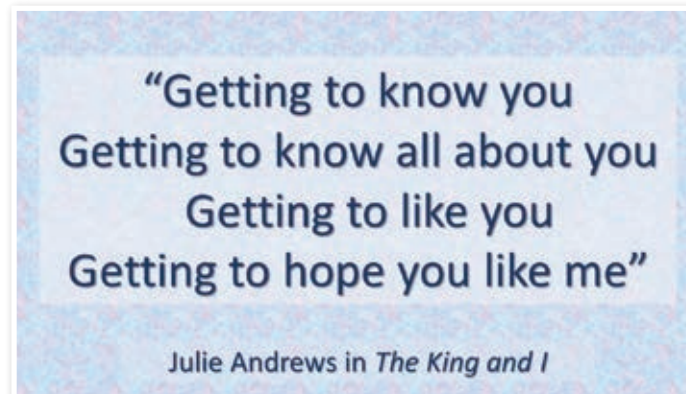
I share this because for many of us, building relationships this year has been challenging. Socially restricted circumstances have required creative thinking when it comes to getting to know new people. Since before Easter, we have not enjoyed the same freedom in our personal gatherings, and our development of relationships has been forced to adjust. Thankfully, we have had times where we have been able to meet in small groups, and this has led to quality engagement with one another and meaningful conversations. We have also spent a lot of time on the phone talking to people for long periods one-to-one, which has provided opportunities truly to listen to one another and encouraged us to open up with each other about how we are coping in the midst of such uncertainty. We have connected with our neighbours more through working from home, and chatted with people all over the place as a result of the antics of our cheeky dog and mischievous toddler (who have been a frequent

cause for light-hearted distraction). In some ways we have been brought closer as a community through what we've commonly faced and developed a kind of camaraderie and connection beyond our differences.

As a church, we have found new ways to relate to one another through the use of small group gatherings, mini-socials and online services; and it is hard to say whether our ability to establish relationships with our 'new' church has been unduly hindered or strangely helped by the events of 2020. It has certainly made for a vastly different experience of embedding into our home here from anywhere previously. In our church role we have invested lots of time into facilitating connection between people, especially during lockdowns; and as a by-product built relationships in unexpected ways ourselves.

Thankfully, we know that God is close with us whenever we feel a sting of isolation, and we look forward to continuing gradually to 'get to know' Tring more in 2021 – whatever it holds. Hopefully, we'll be connecting up with many of you too in some way during the year to come.

Ruth Egan, High Street Baptist Church



Working together to net zero



This day conference in October was due to be held at All Saints' Church, Leighton Buzzard, but instead became an online conference as a result of the coronavirus. Jointly run by the St Albans Diocese and A Rocha UK, it provided an opportunity for Christians of all denominations to come together to hear from a variety of speakers and participate in workshops. The Bishop of St Albans provided a welcome and there was a brief opening service of worship recorded in the churchyard of All Saints'. Two sessions then followed in which the Eco Church programme was described and members of Leighton-Linslade environmental groups shared their experiences. Before lunch, Catherine Ross, Open and Sustainable Buildings Officer, and Jo Chamberlain, Environment Policy Officer for the Church of England then described how the CofE's ambitious 'net zero' commitment on reducing carbon emissions can be approached by individual congregations. The lunch break was accompanied by an agapé liturgy with music for anyone who wanted to watch and listen.

I had been invited to be on a panel in one of the first afternoon workshop sessions on 'Eco Church in Practice' and just a week or so before the conference High Street Baptist Church, Tring had been awarded its Gold Eco Church status (see Polly Eaton's article), so it was a good opportunity to encourage those whose churches were perhaps only starting out on their path of integrating creation care into all aspects of church life.

That this is more important and urgent than ever before is reinforced by the CofE's commitment to aim for net zero by 2030 across all aspects of the Church. The four of us on the panel had varied experiences and all were at different stages of engaging with Eco Church but we were able to respond to questions from workshop attendees and provide some pointers as well. I have since met up with a young lady, newly appointed to a post at St Albans Cathedral, who is very keen indeed

to give greater prominence to the work of the cathedral's Eco Team and to get people thinking about and discussing the issues more widely – so this conference was a great opportunity to forge some ecumenical links.

The final session of the day was another round of workshops and I had opted to attend the one on the newly launched online tool that enables churches to monitor their carbon footprint. This will be an essential part of the CofE's decarbonising programme and the tool can be used by any church. It was recommended that we do not use 2020 when setting a baseline for the church's carbon footprint – as it

might be difficult to achieve year-on-year reductions from what may well be an abnormally low point – but looking instead at last year and then setting targets for the years ahead is certainly a good plan. The tool can be found at <https://www.climatestewards.org/resources/360carbon/>.

It would have been great to meet up with people in Leighton Buzzard, but full marks to all the organisers who managed to put together a really full and interesting online day. There will be further events to come and I do recommend all aspects of the work of A Rocha UK, and especially their Eco Church programme.

Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church

ECO CHURCH: WORKING TOGETHER TO NET ZERO

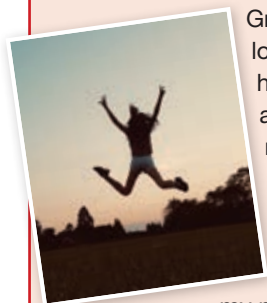
AN ONLINE CONFERENCE for churches of all denominations to learn how Eco Church can help them cut their carbon and care for creation.

SAT 10 OCT, 10am-4pm
Hosted virtually from All Saints', Leighton Buzzard
Run by St Albans Diocese and A Rocha UK

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Logos for A Rocha, Eco Church, Diocese of St Albans, and The Church of England Environment Programme.

Be a 'Glad to have a glass' person!



Greetings again, lovely readers! I have returned in all my bookish, nature-obsessed, fun-loving glory! I know you've missed me... Anyway, here's my next article for you – I hope you enjoy it and find hope and positivity in its words...

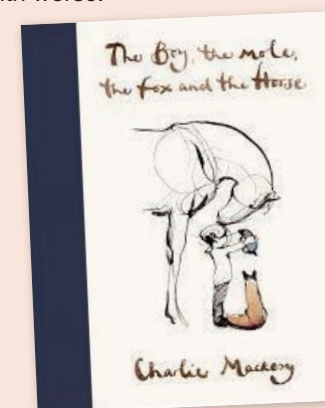
I actually got the inspiration for this article from a beautiful book that I love to look at called 'The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse' by Charlie Mackesy. I was really hoping to include some images for you here – I wrote to Mr Mackesy and everything to ask for printing permission but unfortunately he did not reply before my deadline so I'm afraid I am not allowed to print any images. However, after reading this you can look up the book and it will give you lots of lovely examples of cool art he has done.

Anyway, this book is an illustrated book following the story of a boy surrounded by nature, who meets four animals with different personalities who would usually be enemies but they all become friends. Each page has a beautiful illustration with just a few words contemplating a saying, a piece of advice or just each individual's feelings. The drawings are sketched in a seemingly incomplete yet perfectly finished way.

There are a few pages in it that I particularly like including the one that says... 'Is your glass half empty or half full?' asked the mole. 'I think I'm grateful to have a glass,' said the boy.

I know everybody thinks that this 'glass half full' saying means that you're either really grumpy and pessimistic or you're crazily upbeat and happy; but I think we all know that that's not really

the case... I mean, everybody would choose to be optimistic if it meant an endlessly happy life, but unfortunately not. I believe that this idea of just having a glass is so much more optimistic than any foolishly bright attitude anybody could have. It's a beautiful combination of being realistic, thankful and sympathetic towards others whose glasses might not have much water in at all. If you think of the refugees in the world with so little, you can just imagine their glasses to be blackened with dirty, diseased water and here we are debating whether our lives are good or bad! Wherever we look we see something that is better than what we have, and we never look back to those with worse.



Our family recently moved house – something my parents tell me has happened before, but I was very young and don't remember; it definitely didn't impact me the same way this move has.

The new house is... well, how to put it – different – and is rather eccentric in some areas (the mind lingers over the deep maroon hallway, naked lady light and black bedroom...) but my parents definitely love it, and I think the garden is amazing.

I've discovered that sometimes when changes happen it's very easy to get caught up with the negatives, especially when experiencing a major

change. (I'm looking at you, showers – or rather, the places where the showers should be, where actually one can only find a tiny bathtub, leaking tap and no privacy...). But once you've looked past the bad, you start to see the positives. In our house, that would be the numerous trees across the property, the tame robin (he follows us around and comes really close; I'm working on getting him to feed from my hand 😊) and the abundance of wildlife in the garden. We tried hard to make our previous garden as eco-friendly as possible with bird food, bug hotel, hedgehog homes, a wildlife pond and a wildflower meadow, but this garden is just so fantastically overgrown that there is wildlife and nature everywhere!

I know it can be very easy to focus on the things that go wrong, the things that are sad and cruel, you only need to look as far as the daily news to see all the worst things brought together into one 3-minute talk but we have to do our best to look at the bigger picture – to focus on the positive and use this to fix our problems. My overall message is to just remember to be a 'glad to have a glass' person and find that perfect balance of kindness, hope and common sense.

Thanks for reading my article and I hope you feel inspired and prepared to face life with hope, optimism and plenty of fun! And remember to just look up the book and see a few examples of Charlie Mackesy's beautiful work.

PS: I have been upgraded in my position within *Comment*, and am now a regular writer, so you get the pleasure of my company – through paper and ink anyway – every few months! I look forward to writing for you all and hope you enjoy reading my articles as much as I enjoy writing them!

Fern Asquith
High Street Baptist Church



Covid-safe Christingle

On Sunday 6 December there will be a service in St Peter & St Paul's Church at 4pm. There will also be an on-line recording of the service where you can join in. Everyone in church will be given a kit to make their own Christingle and those wanting to watch the on-line service can collect a kit from church on Saturday 5 December.

Book your place at the service and book your Christingles to collect at www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events.

Plans could change if numbers for the service exceed Covid-19 compliant capacity. All up-to-date information can be found on the website Christingle page.

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TEN YEAR GUARANTEE

Letter from Orkney



I am writing this as Boris is about to announce a second lockdown for England. Although the rules for us in Scotland are different from England, I closely follow the announcements for those south of the border. I worry about friends and family, and the impact these rules have as they change. I hope that by the time you read this the situation will be such that it will be possible for some type of normal Christmas to take place.



In Orkney the eerily quiet summer has given way to an even more quiet winter, at least in terms of people. In respect of weather, we have the usual ferocious winter gales which are anything but quiet. It is as a result of these gales that we are now the proud owners of a polycrub. You can Google it (other search engines are available) and see these constructions are made in Shetland and are essentially

the far north equivalent of a poly tunnel. The frame is made from redundant pipe from the aquaculture industry and is then covered using thick polycarbonate. They can withstand winds of up to 129 mph – which is just as well in windblown Orkney.

Although the crub was erected on site by a professional installer, Mac ably assisted by my good self, has been fitting it out. This has involved huge amounts of thinking, planning and hard physical labour. This week alone we have shifted nearly 4 tons of sand and gravel-type material, 88 building blocks and 40 large paving slabs. Given that Mac had a major heart attack less than three months ago, this has caused me a certain amount of worry while watching him lifting heavy weights around. However, so far so good and it would seem there's life in the old dog yet.

Nothing has yet been grown in the trugs (raised beds which are on legs, designed to help our poor old backs, made worse of course by the work on the crub), but growing plans are underway. We intend to grow vegetables that we eat regularly, and so with this in mind here is a recipe which I'm hoping we will be able to recreate next year with mostly home grown produce! I'm nothing if not optimistic.

Mac and I wish all our friends at St Peter & St Paul a Christmas full of hope and love, and we pray that 2021 will bring better times to us all.

Carrie Dodge, St Mary's Scottish Episcopal Church, Stromness

Roasted Mediterranean Vegetables (Serves 4)



Heat oven to 200°C/180°C fan, 392°F, gas mark 6

- 1 red pepper roughly chopped
- 1 green pepper roughly chopped
- 2 onions roughly chopped
- 150g button mushrooms roughly chopped
- 5 sun dried tomatoes in oil roughly chopped
- 1 courgette sliced then quartered
- Garlic, as many cloves as you like, finely chopped
- Handful of green or black olives chopped
- Handful of fresh basil leaves torn into pieces
- 2 tablespoons of Pesto sauce
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Gather all the ingredients together as above, plus any others that take your fancy, throw them into a roasting pan, give them a good stir around so everything is nicely coated with the olive oil and pesto. Roast in the oven for 30 mins or so.

Stephen Hearn

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Songs of Praise



On Whit Sunday 1971 Songs of Praise was broadcast on television from St Peter & St Paul, Tring, presented by Peter West, cricket commentator and compere of Come Dancing. He introduced Tring to viewers as being 'close' to Cublington, one of the controversial prospective sites of a third London Airport then being considered. The broadcast was a recording, made in early March; we rehearsed on one evening and recorded the following evening. Inside the church it was very

cold. The west doors stood wide open to allow for cables linking the cameras inside to the control van outside and in those days there was no screen at the back to block off the tower (and the cold night air) – that screen still stood at the east end, separating the chancel from the nave.

What did we sing? There was a programme, printed on yellowish paper, but this was copyright, and we were ordered not to keep it.

On the day of transmission a group of us gathered in St Martha's Lodge to watch the broadcast IN COLOUR, with the then curate, Revd Gerald Drew, and his wife, Jane.

Some of you were also involved – what do you remember?
Carole Wells, St Peter & St Paul

Parish registers

Funerals

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

George William Tottman 75

David Reynard 86

Glyn Porter 46

Margaret Lynch 86

Gill Wright 67

Mary Baker

Helen Birnie

Ethel 'Gwen' Hewison 99

Betty Bate 97

Daphne Nash 91

A season of social distancing



It is very hard to be mindful of other people's seasons when you are in the midst of your own. I have often been most touched by people who seem to 'hit the nail

on the head' with an empathetic comment, when they seem at a very different stage from myself. It seems natural that our friends are those who are going through similar stages of life to ourselves, as we meet them when we are doing similar things. But church seems to transcend these moments, by bringing together people at very different seasons of life. It is even more wonderful when friendships really blossom between such people.

I remember when I first heard the term 'season' in relation to our lives. A friend of mine was struggling with her three children under the age of three. She had no time to herself, felt exhausted and saw

way unite us. We remain in a season of social distancing and fluctuating restrictions and rules. For some it means being more alone than ever, reluctantly leaving the house for essential planned activity. For others it is the busiest time of their career: driving, caring, making, serving, stacking. For some it is a time of financial insecurity and devastation. Whatever our experience we have found ourselves in 'unprecedented times' which are somehow morphing into 'the new normal'.



Church in the time of social distancing

Despite the differences we have experienced, it has felt like there has been a unifying aspect to Covid-19. Schools, businesses and churches have been looking around for ideas of how to set up one-way systems, track visitors' names and arrange 'sanitation stations'. At High Street Baptist Church, like other churches, we have had to respond, adapt and innovate. Technology has come to the fore and iPads and Zoom codes (none of us had heard of Zoom in January!) have



no end to it. She recounted how she had shared this burden with another friend, who had responded with 'it's just your season'. This older, wiser person had the experience of time, and knew it would pass. Her comment, however, did not comfort or support, but hurt like a knife to my friend – who felt even more alone.

Maybe I'm slow on the uptake, but only now do I realise how true it is. We do have seasons, and they do change. Change is inevitable. As I write, we are currently in a season none of us would have predicted at the start of 2020. This year we have seen a pandemic wrap a virus around the world and in a strange

been scattered about the community. Chairs have been positioned differently



and we have used tape measures to check the layout.

Doing things differently

Some of our most prominent festivals such as Easter and Harvest have had to look very different. We are now worshipping together in a hybrid service: in church and live on Zoom. We love to wave to each other at the end of the service! One of our annual fellowship highlights has been the Bake-Off competition and this was reinvented this year with a Bake to Bless activity and a live Zoom baking session led by our very own Piquita.



Since we have been unable to open for our kids' groups we have created the Activity Garden for bookable slots for families to have sessions of outside play with toys. This has proved very popular and is appreciated by parents and carers seeking things to do in the current climate. We have also moved our recycling area outside to enable people to still donate those bras!



Relying on God in all seasons

I guess the thing about the natural seasons is that they change. The long days of summer do become shorter and leaves drop. The cold, wet and wind give way to buds on trees and new growth. None of us really knows how long this social distancing season will go on for, but it will pass. In the meantime God is still



right beside us and ready to listen and guide.

My thoughts about seasons led me to the song 'Turn, turn, turn' by Pete Seeger (1959) made famous by The Byrds in a 1965 cover version. I must confess, I didn't actually know the lyrics were straight from the Bible, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, until more recently. What a good reminder that these times do change, morph and evolve.

A time for everything

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church

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High Street Baptist Church
Growing in the message and challenge of God

Light in the darkness

Sunday 13 December
3pm Remembering loved ones service (Church)

Sunday 20 December
6pm Carol concert (Church and Zoom)

Christmas Eve
3pm Christingle craft (Zoom)

Christmas Day
10am All-age celebration (Church and Zoom)

Please get in touch if you wish to book for these services.

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TRinging out with handbells in 2020



This business of face-coverings all seemed to be rather a joke in March 2020, and so the hand-bell ringers had their photo taken outside church as a light-hearted reaction.

This carried on for a couple of months, and then in July we heard that we might meet again; so we worked out a compliant layout in the Church Hall, completed the risk assessments and met again in person. It hardly mattered whether



we could ring the right notes at the right time (although we could!), it was such a thrill to be together.

During the school summer holiday we were able to continue using the parish hall, taking turns so as not to exceed the recommended number – we kept the ‘rule-of-six’



We were celebrating seven years ringing together, and busily practising for one of our frequent outings to entertain groups of people across the parish and beyond. All too soon we learnt that this was very serious and we had to stop our weekly meetings very abruptly. All our future gigs were cancelled. We kept in touch, of course, sending greetings and YouTube videos of other hand-bell ringers – some better than us, and some not as good.

In April we were very adventurous and progressed to this Zoom stuff. The fancy technology was a bit of a challenge for some of us, but we didn't give in.

even before it became a rule. In September we were pleased to have to give the hall back to the pre-school groups, and so we sorted out a layout that would work in church,



wearing masks and limited to six each time. Then in October we started being allowed to stay and chat over a cup of tea or coffee, all Covid-19-compliant, of course.

And now, we've started practising Christmas carols. We hope to be able to play them with others, but we enjoy re-learning them together. We are very pleased that we have kept together, whether 'TRinging' or just in fellowship, whatever Covid-19 has thrown at us.

PS, new TRingers are welcome: get in touch!

John Whiteman
St Peter & St Paul and TRingers

Remembering at Tring Park



Tring Park School approached Remembrance Sunday last month with a reminder of the First World War poppies centenary display, focusing on the story of a Tring Park estate worker, Henry Arthur Davey.

He was injured during the Battle of the Somme Offensive during July 1916. He died of spinal wounds seven months later, having become paraplegic. He joined a

Bedfordshire regiment aged 20, only a few years old than our own 6th Form.

By the end of just one day's fighting, the casualty list was extremely long, his regiment alone having lost 330 officers and men. Our pupils made a poppy for each of them and this decorated the entire academic top corridor: 2nd and 3rd Form students worked very hard to make this happen. It proved to be a most meaningful display not only because of its overall impact, but also in its creation.

Sarah Bell
Tring Park School



Gaudete, gaudete! Christus est natus!



Although this song was first published in 1581 in a collection of Finnish Carols, those of my age may remember it being sung by Steeleye Span in 1973 (it got to No 14 in the charts!).

The Choir of The Hospice of St Francis, of which Veronica and I are members, sing it a cappella at Christmas concerts. We sing this and other carols to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas Day, 25 December. But is this correct?

In Rhodes the winter solstice (or birth of the sun after the shortest day) was fixed as 25 December in 283BC and the Romans took on this date as their official winter solstice after Julius Caesar's calendar reforms of 46BC; until the reforms, the solstice had been the 23 December. The Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 312AD and in 313 he issued the Edict of Milan decriminalising Christianity and paving the way to his becoming the first Christian Emperor. Many historians believe he only converted to buttress the Roman Empire – he wasn't baptised until he was on his death bed.

Constantine, as the Christian Emperor, had great influence on the early church's decision to make the official date of Christ's birth the same date as the Roman Winter Solstice, thus neatly combining the celebration of Constantine's original divine patron Sol Invictus (the unconquered sun) with his new divine patron Christ. Until this fixing of Christmas, the early church had not agreed a date for the birth of Christ. It was variously thought to be sometime in January/February or in November. The fixing of 25 December was a date in the Julian Calendar (the one introduced by Julian Caesar in 46BC) but this Julian Calendar was superseded by the Gregorian Calendar introduced by Pope Gregory in 1582. This calendar treated leap years in a different way so that today in 2020 it is ahead of the Julian Calendar. This means that Christ's birthday is 25 December in the Gregorian Calendar and 7 January in the Julian. Just to thoroughly muddle you up, the first day of the year in most of Europe before the Gregorian Calendar was March 25 or Lady Day which was the first day of the new year in the Julian Calendar!

Most Christians celebrate the birth of Christ as 25 December, but 7 January is the date for celebrations in many Orthodox churches who still work to the Julian Calendar, mainly those in Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Jerusalem.

There are a lot of UK traditions surrounding Christmas – the giving of Christmas presents, mince pies and Christmas pudding. As with Christmas Day, there are many variations.

Christmas presents are to remind us of the presents given to Jesus by the Wise Men, and in the UK are put out late on Christmas Eve by Santa Claus (or Saint Nicholas) to be opened on Christmas Day. In Germany, Sweden and Portugal the presents are opened on Christmas Eve, and in Germany the presents are brought by the Christ Child. Some presents are opened very late – in Spain and Mexico they are opened on 6 January and brought by the Wise Men; and some very early – 5 December in the Netherlands and 6 December in Belgium and the Balkans.



Mince pies and Christmas puddings in the 14th century were more of a soup and only became pudding like when plums and other fruit were added to make a solid pudding around 1600. In 1644 it was banned

by the Puritans along with the whole of Christmas! Mince pies originally contained minced lamb and were in the oval shape of a cradle with the topping crust representing the blanket over Jesus.

The Puritan ban on Christmas was enforced by soldiers in London, seizing any Christmas food they found and, in the whole of the UK, all shops had to stay open on Christmas Day and church services were banned. As a hangover from this, in Scotland Christmas Day did not become a Public Holiday until 1958. When I was a boy most shops were open on Christmas Day, although everything closed on New Year's Day! In 1660 all the Puritan laws were repealed; Christmas was reinstated and Christmas pudding and mince pies were allowed.

In our family all our grandchildren have mixed parentage, UK plus Colombian, Iranian, Polish Senegalese and Spanish/German!

In Colombia celebrations start with Candle Day on the 7 December, the main meal is on Christmas Eve night and 28 December is Innocents day – a day of games, jokes and pranks (as our April Fools' Day). In Iran Christians start a fast on 1 December (eating no meat, eggs, milk or cheese), which lasts until a great feast of chicken stew on Christmas Day. The only presents given are clothes for the children. Polish Christians fast on Christmas Eve until after sunset when there is a great feast of twelve traditional dishes. The children don't go carol singing until 6 January. In Senegal, although the country is 95% Muslim, Christmas is celebrated by all, with more Christmas trees being bought by Muslims than Christians! Muslims often come to the traditional Christmas service in churches. In Spain the main celebrations are on Christmas Eve and 6 January when most presents are opened and street parades featuring the three Kings are held. In Germany Christmas trees have been very important for hundreds of years (Prince Albert brought them to the UK) and the Christ Child brings the presents. The Christ Child is usually a young girl and takes part in street processions.

So Veronica and I have a rich 'heritage' through our grandchildren and wish you Merry Christmas, Feliz Navidad, Christmas MobArak, Wesołych Świąt, Frohe Weihnachten and Joyeux Noël.

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

Christmas at 'Westbury'



Throughout my early life, Christmas was a wonderful occasion. I'm afraid there were no church services or any religious element to the family Christmas when I was a child in the 1950s – just good family time.

Every year until I was almost 13, my family spent Christmas at 'Westbury', 94 Western Road, Tring; the home of my grandparents. Grandad owned a shop in the High Street, above which I lived. Over the road was Arthur's Ladies and Gents Hairdressing also owned by the family, where Grandad, and Rhoda (my mum's sister) worked as hairdresser's.



Nana and Grandad had gradually redecorated 'Westbury', Nana sewing all the curtains and chair covers, and Grandad wallpapering. He had also spent a great deal of time outside, creating a rose garden and vegetable plot. He built a greenhouse and raised pond. The house consisted of three reception rooms and five bedrooms, a walk-in airing cupboard, enormous bathroom, scullery and kitchen with larder and cellar. There was also a billiard room. Outside, apart from the garden, were various outhouses; a garage, toilet, stable (used as a coal shed) and a small two storey building which Grandad used to store all his tools and garden equipment. It was a grand house when it was built around 1900.

As a young child, I, along with my brother, spent many afternoons there playing in the garden and visiting for tea on a Saturday with Mum and Dad. But Christmas was something special. The family went to stay there for three or four nights starting on Christmas Eve. We

had to share a bedroom with twin beds in it. We were not the only visitors for Christmas: my aunt and husband came and stayed for a while too.

There were large decorations all over the downstairs rooms and a Christmas tree that was often eight feet tall in the lounge. There were candles on the Christmas tree that were lit sometimes! Special dishes and bowls that seemed to come out only for Christmas and special occasions were filled with fruit, nuts, dates and figs. This was a time when oranges and satsumas were seasonal. There were even grapes! Nana had a basic form of central heating in the house, massive pipework with a few radiators and a fire in the kitchen stove and in the lounge and dining room. All very cosy.

On Christmas Eve we were always bundled off to bed at our usual time so the grown-ups could 'get ready' for Christmas Day! In reality the presents were set out under the tree and our stockings filled, the turkey prepared and the large dining room table, which sat up to sixteen people, was laid and then everyone sat down to have a drink. Despite being determined to stay awake and see Father Christmas, I never managed it. Either I was awake for a long time when trying to sleep, or I woke very early in the morning and lay awake for what seemed like years waiting for an acceptable time to open my presents!

Stocking presents could be opened any time after 7.00am, or so mum said. In reality that was far too late and we were often allowed to open them slightly earlier, provided we kept quiet.

With hindsight, we were so lucky that Grandad owned a toy shop and we probably didn't realise at the time that we were spoilt for toys compared to our school friends. Grandad was good at repairing broken things from the shop so that for us they were as good as new.

At about 10.00am, Aunty Nell and Uncle Cecil arrived for the present-giving ceremony. They lived in Aylesbury and were Ethel's sister and brother-in-law, my great aunt and her husband.

We gathered in the lounge and Mum gave out the presents. We weren't allowed to open any until they were all distributed. There were different styles of opening presents. My brother ripped them all open quickly while I looked at each in turn. If there were something very special, I was in danger of leaving the

others still wrapped. Mum had to keep tabs on who had sent what to whom as we were engulfed in presents from many aunties and uncles, some of whom were really only good friends of the family. Nana was the youngest of nine, and when I was really small, I used to get postal orders from several of my great aunts and uncles.

Whilst my brother and I played with our toys, the grown-ups had coffee and mince pies, specially made by Aunty Nell to her own recipe.



Lunch, always at 1.30pm, was taken in the dining room around the large table. Other members of the family would arrive for a pre-lunch drink; most I have forgotten, but regular visitors were Aunty Hilda and Uncle Jack (another of Nana's sisters and brother-in-law) who owned a furniture shop in the High Street where the 'Save the Children' shop now is. There was Aunty Nance, the widow of one of Nana's brothers, who also lived in Tring.

The meal was a sumptuous feast of turkey and all the trimmings. The adults drank wine and we were allowed fizzy drinks, not something we had as a rule! The Christmas puddings had silver sixpences in them and we were always reminded to take care. Funnily enough, no one broke teeth or swallowed a sixpence.

We had to be finished by 3.00pm for the Queen's speech which all the old relatives listened to avidly. If we were sitting there around the television, we were expected to be silent or to leave the room. The afternoon was then given over to the television for a while and a cup of tea! Mum, Dad, Aunty Nell, and sometimes Nana, would then play cards with my brother and me. These were games played for money! We learnt so

that we could join in the 'serious' card games that took place in the evening with all the adults.

Aunty Nell was a fierce card player; she pretended to have no skill, then at the last moment, would pull out a joker or other trump card to win the game, clearing up the piles of old halfpennies that were the prize. The games were called Jacks and Sevens, Queens, Pontoon, and Farmers Glory. The latter could lose you a lot of half pennies if you weren't concentrating!

Boxing Day was a little more relaxed, but often with other visitors calling for morning coffee or afternoon tea. Mum always tried to get us to write our 'thank you' letters in the morning so that we

were out of the way when Grandad and Dad organised a sweepstake for the horse racing in the afternoon: the King George VI cup.

Uncle Den and his wife Francis often came over on Boxing Day from Wendover and they brought with them lots of ideas for party games with balloons and jelly!

Did it snow at Christmas? Well occasionally, but often it was just cold. For years I was convinced that Father Christmas landed on top of the large front porch, slipped in through the window to deliver our presents and ate the mince pie left by the fire for him!

Vicky Baldock
St Cross, Wilstone



Christmas Worship with St Martha's Methodist Church

13th December – 10.00am Carol Service

25th December – 9.00am Christmas Day Service

27th December – 10.00am Christmas Worship

Because of social distancing, places are limited. If you'd like to join us for any of our services, please contact Rosemary Berdinner on 01442 822305 to book a place.

We are also worshipping each Sunday online with All Saints' Church in Berkhamsted using Zoom. If you'd like to join us, please contact Rosemary Berdinner who will be able to let you have the link.



Where are we going and what's it all for?



'A cold coming they had of it...' These evocative words are from TS Eliot's celebrated poem 'The Journey of the Magi'. It is a famously bleak poem

and addresses those essential questions that trouble all of humanity – 'why are we travelling, where are we going, what's it all for...?'

All in all it's not a particularly comforting message but it does take us to the root of the human journey – perhaps especially this year.

This season of the year, starting in Advent and ending in Epiphany, is one where we more usually focus on Christmas itself and it has ever been thus in our Western church. However, in early Christian times and still today in the Eastern church, the objective of the journey that starts in Advent has not been Christmas Day but the festival of Epiphany. Traditionally held on 6 January this celebration of the manifestation of God as a baby was the focus of the whole season.

Perhaps, in a sense, Epiphany is still the fulcrum on which the cycle of our Christian year is balanced and around which it turns. The manifestation of the Christ it entails – with a newborn child as God – is the point of revelation that spurs us on. It is also the end point of our Christian journey – rather as it was for the Magi. The realisation is always a shock

that what we are seeking is not a 'King of human splendour' – no one wise in the ways of the world – but an innocent child who reveals the nature of God in all of us. Perhaps the journey of the Magi is a metaphor for our restless human lives.

The Journey of the Magi was a journey of exploration and faith, seeking an unknown destination, and has been the subject of many paintings. The two shown here are remarkably different but each carries the same message and they were both painted just a few years apart in the middle of the 15th century.

Epiphany

Just one single glimpse of relief
To make some sense of what you've seen ...

Taylor Swift

'The Journey of the Magi' by Sassetta was painted in 1459 in Sienna and rests today in the Met Museum in New York. It is but a fragment of a large altar-piece and its seemingly primitive style throbs with the passion and frustration of the human journey of restless discovery. This is a raw and restless humanity, ever seeking the truth.

'The journey of the Magi' by Gozzoli, the most celebrated fresco artist of the Renaissance at the time, was painted between 1433 and 1435 and remains today exactly where it was painted. It is on the walls of the Magi Chapel in the Palazzo Medici in Florence. The whole room presents different aspects of this journey and the rendering is anything but primitive. The highly refined brushwork,

the stunning composition and the glorious colours represent not only the journey of the Magi but also different members of the Medici family in all their splendour: a religious narrative with a strong political message embedded. This is the human journey represented as a triumph of fine achievements, wealth and power.

Both paintings are graphic narratives which accomplish what only great art can – a complex message delivered in a single image. Look deeply into the pictures and you will find all the concerns and distractions of the human condition – each individual engaged with his own agenda despite the shared nature of the enterprise.

As before in these articles, I have argued that for me graphic art is the highest level of communication as it packs its whole power into a single moment of comprehension.

Having started with TS Eliot's famous (and rather depressing) story of the Magi's journey (which has to be one of the most respected poems written in the English language) I have set myself quite a challenge.

Both the poem and the paintings are not just representations of an ancient (perhaps mythical) journey celebrated over centuries in religion and storytelling, they are also allegories of our human journey through difficult times to an unknown destination. We journey in faith not quite knowing where we want to – or indeed will – end up.

As Christians, each year is a journey

which takes us forward from the beginnings of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany all the way through the season of Passion and the Ascension and back to the beginning with God revealed in the infant Christ. A journey 'there and back again'. Whatever their religion, all human beings are engaged in a similar journey of life, and in all circumstances, the end-point is unknown.

In this particular year, we and the whole world are engaged in a particularly challenging journey through a terrifying season. This journey through the pandemic has an unknown destination and all we can do is travel in hope that somehow or other we will reach a comforting destination. It therefore seems particularly apposite that we should focus in this Christmas and Epiphany season on the 'The Journey of the Magi'. Like

those kings of old we may find it 'a cold coming... just the worst time of year for a journey... and such a long journey...'. 2020 is a pretty tough year.

I therefore thought you might find the words by Taylor Swift particularly relevant – written because of the pandemic of 2020.

Taylor Swift wasn't even born when TS Eliot died, and I have no idea whether she has ever been to Florence or the Met Museum, but it seems to me that the words of her song 'Epiphany' are particularly appropriate in this article. She published the words in July 2020. She is linking the struggle of humanity during Coronavirus – and the support given by health workers who care for us – to the struggles of humanity over time in the wars throughout history – and the help given by those who fight for us. She is

talking about solidarity with all humanity when she says 'With you I serve; with you I fall down'.

Powerful stuff! And I find it very poignant that she should call this work 'Epiphany'. I usually tend to argue on behalf of the power of the graphic to communicate complexity most effectively. However, on this occasion, I think that our two 15th century artists, arguably our greatest English language poet and undoubtedly one of our most successful popsters, have all done an excellent job.

Let us hope that for each of us, our Journey of the Magi ends in a year of hope renewed – and of reconciliation. Surely that is the message of Christmas and Epiphany.

Grahame Senior
Tring Team



The Journey of the Magi (Gozzoli). This entirely different style of art from the high renaissance shows the same human journey with all the complexities and hierarchical distractions of the rich and famous. It remains today where it was painted on the walls of the Magi Chapel in the Palazzo Medici in Florence. It presents the human journey as a historical narrative dominated by the rich and famous. Guess which one is Lorenzo the Magnificent?



The Journey of the Magi (Sassetta). This evocative painting is a fragment of the full altar piece originally installed in Sienna and is now in the Met museum in New York. It shows the Magi as a typical 'band of brothers' journeying together but captivated by their own internal considerations. For me it strikes a real image of our shared human journey.

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Christmas past and present



What do a Viking helmet, a blonde wig, a large black false beard, a clockwork monkey beating a drum and a model of Elvis, which, if wound up, sang 'Jailhouse Rock' have to do with Christmas?

In my last parish, at the Christmas Eucharist it was my habit to preach about Jesus as God's gift to us. To illustrate this I would show from the pulpit a present or presents I had received. Of course, the family played up to this with funny and unexpected presents. The only trouble was that when I wound up the clockwork monkey, I was unable to switch off the drumming and had to call up one of the children into the pulpit to turn it off! This theme for a Christmas sermon, I later learned, was copied by one of my curates, and we heard about it from parishioners of his whom we met, by chance, on holiday some years later. But this is recent history.

My earliest recollections of Christmas are vague, but include a party given by the Bishop of Liverpool for clergy children and a school party, for which we made paper doilies. I cut mine in all the wrong places and spilt my drink (dandelion and burdock) over the tattered fragments. This was Christmas 1944 and no doubt, the food included bread and butter and jelly. I also remember the broken tree decorations (probably glass, not plastic) we put around the tree because, being just after the war, new decorations were not available in the shops. Christmas dinner was chicken – the only time in the year we ate chicken. It was one of our own chickens and my grandmother gutted it, to the great interest of us children. The other thing I remember from these early Christmases is the village Panto – not the modern glamorous ones with celebrity actors but the village Am Dram. My father often wrote the scripts, adding appropriate references. Two local men, Roland and Eric, were our village Eric and Ernie and their drinks greatly helped their adlibbing; and glamorous girls sang the songs of the day.

What is of note is that Christmas is still the most widely observed of Christian festivals, and this celebration seems to have started in the 4th century. In eastern Christendom there was a link

with the Epiphany and still 6 January is more important than the 25 December for members of the Orthodox Church. Commemoration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord, because of the association of the Passover with the events of Easter, is based on the lunar calendar, and this explains the annual variation in the date. But the date of Christmas is fixed by the sun and is generally thought to coincide with the pagan winter solstice, which marks the beginning of the increase in day length. Apparently in the early days some of the old ways persisted and people turned to bow to the sun as they entered church at Christmas. It is easy to see why people felt the need for activities and customs to brighten the long, dark days of winter and to celebrate the promise of Spring.

Apart from the celebration of Christ's Mass – the Eucharist – we are familiar nowadays with other Christmas devotions and customs. We have Carol Services – the word 'carol' implies an accompanying dance. The most well known of these is the Nine Lessons and Carols started by Bishop Edward Benson in 1880, and performed in a temporary building at Truro while the new cathedral was under construction. Its association with King's College, Cambridge, dates to 1918, when Dean Eric Milner-White revived the service and started the now familiar choral tradition. It was first broadcast in 1928. Nativity Plays have long been a favourite in school and Sunday Schools, but the idea goes back to the Middle Ages, and they are a great opportunity for dressing-up, acting and new songs and carols. We also now have Christingle services, though they can be used apart from Christmas. The symbolism of the orange and the candle are useful teaching aids, but modern Health and Safety concerns mean a worry about small children and lighted candles!

St Francis of Assisi in the 13th century is credited with making the first model of the crib and probably the most noticeable change since my youth has been the way in which

a Crib Service has become the best attended service in many churches. Held on Christmas Eve, it fills a useful time gap for the young and conveniently marks the starting point of the celebrations. Midnight Mass used to be a crowded service, but there were always attendant worries about drunks disturbing the worship, though the change in the Licensing Laws made quite a difference. Nowadays, with the ease of transport, many regular worshippers are away for the major festivals of Christmas and Easter. So, in 2020, what changes will Covid-19 bring?

Changes are nothing new. In 1214 when the first-known incumbent of Tring celebrated Christmas, he carried on the tradition of Masses in Latin, and few made their Communion – that was limited to Easter Day. What about 1550 when the first Book of Common Prayer was introduced and the services were now conducted in English? Some objectors to the new services in Devon described them as like Christmas games! And what about 1647 when the Puritans banned Christmas as it was being observed too riotously? And 2020 – how will it be different from 2019? No carol singing?

All this and no mention of Father Christmas with or without reindeer! Whatever our experiences we realise that, through the years, some things change and others become essential. We would be surprised nowadays not to see a Christmas tree in church. Which Christmas cards do we choose – churches, Nativity scenes or robins or snowy landscapes? Both of these customs only date to the 19th century but we now see them as essential parts of the celebrations.

Martin Banister
St Albans Cathedral

Scarecrowid-19



Tring's Own Apple Fayre 2020 looked a little different from previous years. On Saturday 10 October, instead of the traditional parade through town, organisers came up with a Scarecrowid-19 Scarecrow competition. The aim of the competition was to create a humorous scarecrow. Tring did not disappoint! The entries lined up inside the grounds of St Peter & St Paul and there was a steady stream of visitors throughout the day. The competition was judged by the Town Mayor of Tring, Councillor Mrs Roxanne Ransley, and Jo Jameson, the competition organiser. The Justice & Peace Group were delighted to be awarded first place for their bee-keeper scarecrow and the children's section was won by Dundale Primary School.

The bee-keeper scarecrow drew attention to the current 'Make Tring a Bee Town' campaign, which is gradually

gaining a lot of interest in the town and surrounding villages. The 'Make Tring a Bee Town' campaign aims to try to create more and better wildflower areas for bees and pollinators. If individuals, the local authorities, schools, churches and businesses all play a part, this can be achieved together.

The Justice & Peace Group would like to hear from people who have specific suggestions as to how particular areas of publicly owned land might be managed to benefit pollinators, and from schools who would like to create wildflower areas.

More information about the campaign is available on the Justice & Peace Group website, www.justiceandpeacetring.org, including downloadable leaflets. Please do share what you are doing already and what you think could be done in Tring and District so together we can 'Make Tring a Bee Town'!

Email Justice & Peace Group secretary Michael, michaeldemidecki@gmail.com, or share your activity on Facebook or Instagram www.justiceandpeacetring.org #maketringabeetown #actionforinsects
Polly Eaton, High Street Baptist Church



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Comment highlights



It has been of extra benefit to receive *Comment* this year: something to look forward to, especially seeing familiar faces of those whom we may not have seen for a long time.

There are always plenty of

interesting and varied articles. Picking out highlights is difficult but I have chosen two. The first is all the 'waving' photographs: so good to see so many familiar faces. The second is the articles from the people whose lives have been turned around by DENS. I would be interested to read more of those.

Thank you to all involved in *Comment* production.
Alison Bickerton, St Peter & St Paul

A beginner's guide to cricket



Cricket is the best team sport in the world: subtle and intelligent, which is why some people don't like it.

It is unique amongst team sports in that

while it is played by 11 people on each side, when you are out there batting, it is you against the whole of the other side, who are trying to get you out; and sometimes, such as Derek Randall in the Third Test against Australia in 1977, or myself in about 1970, the guy batting at the other end for your side also seems intent on running you out.

The aim of the batting side is to get as many runs as possible by striking the ball as far as possible while the aim of the bowling side is to get you out, usually by bowling you out, catching your hit before it touches the ground, running you out before you make the other end, leg before wicket, or the wicket keeper stumping you out when you stray down the pitch.

Cricket has the richest number of stupid place descriptions: Short Leg, Long Leg, Fine Leg, Square Leg, Deep

Square Leg, Cow Corner, Cover Sweeper, Silly Mid On and Silly Mid Off (if you have ever fielded in either of these two last positions, you will know exactly why they have these names).

The 'Bible' of cricket is Wisden Cricketer's Almanack, published annually since 1864 which includes an index of unusual occurrences, such as how a match at the Oval was stopped three times by a thunderstorm, then by a fox and then by a goose (but what can you expect from Surrey?).

There are two mentions of cricket in the Bible: 'Peter stood up with the eleven' (Acts 2:14) and the other is Jesus' condemnation of lazy and ineffective slow bowling: 'They toil not neither do they spin' (Matthew 6:28).

It is estimated that the largest worldwide television audience for any sporting event EVER was for a cricket game between India and Pakistan in the World Cup of 2019, held in that well-known sub-continent venue, Manchester, where India won.

In the British professional game, T20 (Vitality Blast) cricket takes place often in the evening under floodlights with each side having 20 overs of 6 balls each where one-day matches often last from

11.00am to 7.00pm-ish with 50 overs per side; in the First Class game, counties play each other over 4 innings over 4 days with each side trying to get 10 of the other team out twice; in International Cricket, the First Class matches or 'Tests' are allowed 5 days to get a result.

My greatest triumph on the cricket field was during that biggest grudge match, The Staff v The Boys in 1984 at Mountbatten School where I top-scored, took one wicket with the measly two overs the captain allowed me for my devastating spin, but most importantly of all, I did not drop a catch off the bowling of the Head of English, who would never have let me forget it if I did.

England's men won the Cricket World Cup (50 Overs) in 2019 while England's women have won it three times, in 1973, in 1993 and most recently in 2017 where, in the words of the great Max Boyce, 'I know, 'cos I was there'.

Jon Reynolds, slow right arm bowler Tring Team

If you can share your expertise in any subject in just 10 sentences, please send to comment.magazine@gmail.com or post through the door of Anno Domini, 18b High Street, Tring.

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Telling the Christmas story – again



It is no news to *Comment* readers that, when not putting together the next edition of your magazine, I commission Christian books for children, edit them, find illustrators

for them, proofread them, sell them to publishers worldwide to be translated into nearly 60 languages and place the print orders for them to be printed in China or Singapore and carried to publishers in places I have barely heard of around the world.

This year has been a struggle for all children's publishers, and particularly of Christian material. If bookshops have suffered because they have been closed, and when allowed to open, people have been slower to return to them, you will understand that their warehouses have remained full of books they bought not knowing that a pandemic would hit the

world this year. I don't sell individual copies of books to families or friends with children, I sell thousands of books at a time to the publishers worldwide who sell them to the bookshops. So if the warehouses are bulging and bookshops are struggling, you will understand that our job has been

even more challenging this year. The estimators, printers, binders and packers of those books and the freight-forwarders are also struggling to find enough work and no doubt also the paper producers and every one of the people involved in the supply chain – all representing another family somewhere in the world experiencing unlooked-for difficulties impacting the people they love and their communities.

We have nonetheless continued to find people who have needed to reprint books or to take risks on new books we have continued to produce. Of all these, Children's Bibles have continued to be our bestsellers, including those that are given as gifts for baptism or first communion. One of these was for the language of Kirundi, which – as I am sure you all knew – is one of the languages of Burundi, a country nine times smaller than the UK and one of the smallest in Africa. Exciting! I also heard from a Hungarian publisher: 'Your new Bible has been selling for nearly a month now and



it proves to be one of our bestsellers of the year! Our church has just launched a campaign to present each kindergarden in Budapest with one copy of this book in order to share Christian culture with children age 3-6. This book is a useful tool for sharing God's Word.'

But Christmas books also feature high up in the list. Then, in October, I was asked – as I am by someone somewhere every year, which could be from Australia or the United States just as easily as more locally – whether a United Reformed Church in Dorking could use one of our books for their Christmas service this year. Of course, I said yes: but this time it was for a virtual Christmas service. How sad that it has come to this! I am only thankful that the illustrated books we have been producing for all these years are still useful and hope we will be here for years to come to fulfil this need.

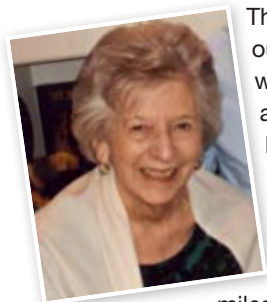
**Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul**



This book, 'A Child's Bible' in English, has printed 14 times and sold 67,000 copies in Japanese alone to-date.



Virtual trip to Bolivia



The morning after our arrival in Puno we had to be up at 5.30am for our boat trip on Lake Titicaca and the reeds were still stiff with frost. The lake is 140 miles (225km) long and 45 miles (72km) wide. We were going to visit the Uros Indians who live on floating islands made out of reeds which reach to the bottom of the lake. They don't keep animals or grow crops, just fish and hunt. Incredibly, there are schools and even a hospital on the islands but the people prefer to treat themselves with herbs. The inhabitants don't pay taxes or for water or electricity and they receive 50% of the tourist revenue.

There are twenty-five islands in all



Reed boat by floating island

and it was a peculiar feeling stepping out on to the first one as it gave way and shifted under you, like a water bed. Apparently after rain it can get muddy and more layers of reeds have to be laid down. The name of the lake derives from 'titi' meaning feline and 'caca' meaning grey, and their beautiful reed boats have carved pumas' heads at the front. The boats last about three years and are then recycled into the islands.

The Indians revere the condor in the sky, the puma on the land and the catfish in the water. Llamas are an important part of their culture and they call a constellation near the Southern Cross 'Llama eyes'.

Walking around the island we saw their very primitive cooking pots and pans and an old woman grinding maize between two huge flat stones. I bought two vibrantly coloured wall hangings for the grandchildren.

We then returned to the hotel and had to go up the steps very, very slowly. Puno, which was founded by the Spanish in 1668, is 13,000 feet high (3,962 metres), as is the lake. After lunch we collected our hand luggage and left in the

coach.

We were now approaching the Bolivian border and our guide Alfredo told us that although Bolivia lost its coastal territory to Chile in a war in 1879, they still have a navy on Lake Titicaca! The management of the lake is divided between Peru and Bolivia. At the frontier we had to queue to go individually through emigration, and were sorry to leave Peru.

We stopped for lunch at the original Copacabana! Apparently a Brazilian man was shipwrecked in the harbour, and swore that if he was saved, he'd give a portion of his land in Rio and name it after the Bolivian town. Part of that land is the famous beach. After lunch we returned to the lake on a hydrofoil and stopped at Sun and Moon Islands, each of which had temples and their own legends. On our return to the hydrofoil we were given the Inca blessing! We were all sprinkled with water from the Fountain of Youth and had to repeat the Inca commandments 'Amasua, Amamulya, Amakalya', which means 'Do not lie, do not steal, don't be lazy!'

Quite a few of the group were suffering from altitude sickness with upset stomachs and bad headaches and others were very tired. I was lucky as all I experienced was a shortness of breath if I moved too quickly and a permanent thirst. I consumed gallons of 'agua sin gas', still rather than fizzy water.

The following day we left for La Paz and drove up past El Alto, which had the highest airport in the world with the longest runway – five and a half kilometres. The engines lose 25% of their power due to the oxygen level, so need more time to take off.

La Paz is the highest capital city in the world, its centre being at 11,000 feet (3,352 metres). On our two-hour tour we saw the main square, with the usual statue of some liberator, the Cathedral (Nuestra Señora de la Paz) and the Palace of Government outside of which were guards in red and white uniform. We also drove through very steep and narrow streets, the houses being mainly 16th century, before dropping down to south La Paz at 9000 feet (2,743 metres) where the wealthy people live. There were lovely houses, some with window grills and high concrete walls, surrounded by swimming pools, tennis courts and – of course! – the highest golf club in the world! There is one state university and several private ones.

We then drove through a high gorge of sandstone cliffs to Moon Valley, an incredible place composed of masses of crags of clay which change shape continually as rain wears them away. Its name was originally La Paz Valley, but when the astronaut Neil Armstrong saw it in the 1960s he said it looked like the landscape of the moon. Our guide added, 'We had to take his word for it!' It was really quite creepy and I wasn't sorry when we left it.

On the way back to La Paz we visited two Indian markets which stretched



Moon Valley

for block after block. Indian women with babies on their backs sat on the pavements in front of their stalls. They were selling fresh fish from Lake Titicaca, as well as guinea pigs (a delicacy!), grain, eggs, watches, spices, bowler hats and much else! There are 200 varieties of potato and five of peanuts. There was also a black and white magic stall selling, among other things, llama foetuses to bury in the garden for good luck. You had to ask permission to take photos, since many of the Indians believed the camera drew out their souls.

The next morning we had time for a last leisurely look around and visited the Cathedral where a service was in progress. We left the hotel at 12.30 and drove to El Alto airport, which is called John F Kennedy, and shortly after, took off on the very long runway (a nerve-racking experience!) en route for Brazil.

Anthea Fraser
St Peter & St Paul

Big Church Read



In September 2020 the first Big Church Read was launched with the book 'The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry' by John Mark Comer. A group of us from

High Street Baptist Church signed up and meet weekly, on Zoom, to chat about the latest chapter and share our progress. It was fun to be on the journey together, listening and learning from each other and going deeper with our faith. It was also pretty cool to think that there are groups all around the country doing the same.



The Big Church Read is a new initiative by Hodder Faith publishers and St Andrews Bookshop, Great Missenden. They are encouraging churches, organisations or individuals to commit to read through a chosen book together at a chosen time, meeting in small groups either in person or online to talk about what they've read. The website is expanding with more resources for small groups to study.

How does it work?

Once you've signed up you are sent a reading plan, which means you'll be able to read through the book as a group over a 4- to 8-week period. Each week during the Big Church Read, a video is released

in which the author of the chosen book will talk you through the themes in that week's section. You can either meet as a group to watch this together and then discuss the chapters you've already read, using the video as a reminder, or be inspired by the video to read the chosen

sections in the week ahead, so that you can meet again the following week to discuss it. Some questions are provided to get your discussion started!



What's the next book?

The Big Church Read plan to run three books a year and you can either join in live or start at any point once the video and resource material is live. There is no cost to take part, aside from getting hold of the book, and all of the content and resource material is provided directly to you once you let them know you're taking part. The next book will be 'How to Pray' by Pete Greig, launching early 2021. Visit <https://thebigchurchread.co.uk/> to find out more and sign up.

Polly Easton
High Street Baptist Church



Bah, humbug!

What will happen if... Christmas, as we know it, is cancelled? What will we miss?

For us it is family – not being able to be with our families in Manchester.

It is, as church choir members, not being able to sing in carol services, not being able to go carol singing in Residential Homes and perform in carol concerts. We do love to sing the carols, both traditional and new, with gusto!

We love to go out for Christmas lunches with friends from the groups we belong to and to attend Christmas parties!

All these things we will miss in 2020 if 'Christmas is cancelled'.

Sending Seasons Greetings to the *Comment* Team and all who remember us from our Tring days.

Ian and Rosamund Drakes
formerly St Peter & St Paul

High Street Baptist Church

Growing in the message and challenge of God

Light in the darkness

A warm welcome to all at our **Christmas drop-in sessions** at High Street Baptist Church. Come and light a candle or just enjoy the atmosphere.

Every Wednesday 2-4pm

Friday 27 November 6-8pm

Saturday 5 December 4-6pm

Thursday 10 December 6-8pm

Saturday 12 December 3-7pm

Friday 18 December 6-8pm



A multi-lingual family



Our Tring Park family is a multi-lingual one: several different languages are spoken among our students and teachers. We currently have learners studying not only our curricular languages French and Spanish, but also Italian, German, Arabic, Chinese and Russian.

In the last few years, students have been able to complete GCSE or A-Level qualifications in many different languages including Turkish, Polish, Welsh and Japanese. This wide variety shows the multicultural nature of our wonderful school.

As part of a link between our MFL Dept and PSHE Dept to celebrate the European Day of Languages in September, we have conducted our regular languages' audit.

Languages spoken in our school

include: Afrikaans, Arabic, Catalan, Cantonese, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Welsh.

Language learning opens the door to a deeper understanding of different cultures. Speaking several languages is one of the best exercises that your brain can get to maintain cognitive function throughout life. Furthermore, as many alumni will testify, it helps with work and travel opportunities.

The performing arts world is full of people with linguistic abilities. Actor Will Smith is a Spanish speaker as is Ben Affleck. Due to her German mother, Sandra Bullock is bilingual in German and English. Colombian singer Shakira, due to her heritage, speaks English, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese as well as Arabic. These are just but a few examples of the importance of learning languages.

Sarah Bell
Tring Park School



Covid-19

The whole world is gripped by an uncertain future; perplexed, feeling helpless about the unknown. 'What's going to happen?' 'When will it end?' we ask; many are anxious – confusion is shown.

We look to the experts – the medics and scientists; hear daily statistics which always sound grim. We're ordered to lock down and keep well apart; even to friend's homes, we're not allowed in.

Then what of the mask that is hiding our face? Comical? Yes, but it holds back the bugs. Then many are subject to 'test and to trace'; And, for all of us there are no kisses or hugs.

It all seems unreal, normal life is suspended; Government advice not quite understood. Life becomes fearful for those living alone; there's family tensions, many working at home.

Jobs lost, business closures, many futures uncertain; no socialising, for some, is so hard to bear. People die daily, the bereaved suffer heartaches; some, so distressed, utter, first time – a prayer.

'Is there a bright side?' Yes, let's try to be positive; so many kind hearts offer strangers real aid. We're in this together; arms reach out in friendship; let's all keep the rules which the government made.

Let's pray that a vaccine, tested well and quite safe will quickly be found and produced by the million; Remembering those countries that are far worse than we are, send vaccines to others by maybe a billion.

Though outlook looks gloomy, let's try to be careful. It may help us all if we are more prayerful. It's no good if we all just become blameful. So smile! Live in hope – and let's all be cheerful!

John Young, Akeman Street Baptist Church

Piano and More



The Piano and More concert on 8 November went through three incarnations!

It was planned to be Leon Bosch conducting the Icknield

Ensemble, in a programme which included me playing Beethoven's own arrangement of his violin concerto for piano and orchestra. It became obvious earlier in the summer that we wouldn't be able to do that so then the concert morphed into Helen Godbolt playing cello with a small group of five other string players. They had a lovely programme in store, and it would have fitted the Rule of Six – but then the second lockdown happened, and at the last minute they couldn't do it.

They preferred to wait until they could play the concert to an audience who were present, so there was once more the prospect of November without a concert.

Then I started to think that an autumnal programme on Remembrance Sunday might be good, and Vivianne and Peter Child were willing to live stream it. Having established that we were within the guidelines, we were good to go.

Edmund quickly put a poster together, I sorted out a programme (and of course then had to practise it!), Trish Dowden

and Janet Goodyer were brilliant at helping with publicity, and Edmund was a brilliant page turner! It worked! I was able to play to friends and family in Wales, Scotland, California, Luxembourg and Ireland and various places in England, as well as to Tring parishioners. Apparently a whole ward in High Wycombe Hospital watched it!

It was a very moving experience for me, and a lot of people said that it helped them through a grey lockdown afternoon. The healing and sustaining power of music is so powerful, and I felt the presence of God in the church with me as I played.

If you missed it and would like to listen, you can find

it on the Tring Team Parish website for the next couple of months or so.
Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul

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All you need to know about moth traps

After my last article about moth traps, I was asked how to make a safe trap by a *Comment* reader. First I should say that you don't have to use a moth trap to see moths and some moths aren't attracted to moth traps that use light anyway.

Generally people think of moths as being nocturnal but there are a number of moths that are active during the day. Some are diurnal – so a light-based moth trap isn't going to work for those species at all and some nocturnal species just don't seem to be attracted to light so they don't end up in the trap.

Go out and look for diurnal moths. For instance, the Six-spot Burnet is quite easy to see in July or August between Pitstone Hill and Ivinghoe Beacon. In the past I used to catch moths in nets to identify them, but I prefer to use my digital camera to take photos and although that might leave some moths unidentified, I don't disturb them as much and can identify them later at home.

For some moths, such as clearwings, the best way to see them is to purchase pheromone lures and use those to attract the moths to you. Pheromones are emitted by females and artificial versions are now produced which attract males of the species during the day and you can buy a trap to hold the lures or just watch the lure and see what arrives.

However, we are talking about light-based moth traps and at the moment there are three or four main types of moth traps in use around the UK – although you can use some fairly rudimentary alternatives to these if you so wish and I will explain about those too.

The main types of trap are the Heath, Skinner, Robinson and Bucket traps. The Heath trap is a collapsible rectangular box with a light above a funnel. The Skinner trap is larger than a Heath trap and is also rectangular and generally, but not always, collapsible. The other main difference is that a Skinner trap has a slot usually made of two sloping panels, usually made of glass or Perspex, that form a shallow V just below the light. The Skinner trap catches and generally retains more moths than a Heath Trap, but fewer than a Robinson. The Robinson trap is a large, round container that is usually plastic and usually has a funnel. Finally a Bucket trap is unsurprisingly made out of a bucket, usually plastic, and would normally use a funnel – basically a smaller version of a Robinson trap. Generally a Robinson trap is the most

expensive and generally catches and retains more moths than the others. A bucket trap is cheaper but can be better than a Heath trap. A quick, cheap and easy way to attract moths to your garden is a white sheet hung up and a small UV torch pointed at it. However, how many of the moths would still be on it in the morning is a good question.

There are four types of light that are used with the above traps and you can pretty much use all types of light with all types of trap and they are Mercury Vapour, Actinic (fluorescent



Heath Moth Trap



Skinner Moth Trap



Robinson Moth Trap

tube), Compact fluorescent and LED (Light Emitting Diode). While moths are attracted to lights, they are particularly attracted to lights that emit high levels of ultra violet in the UVA frequency range – although a combination of lights seems likely to be the best arrangement. Mercury Vapour lamps are currently thought to be the best at attracting moths: they are usually 125W or 250W and so require mains electricity, or a generator and ballast control gear and so are not very portable and use a lot of electricity. Although still available to purchase, they are no longer manufactured as they contain mercury gas which is toxic if inhaled. Actinic lamps are fluorescent tubes which emit high levels of ultra-violet (UV) light and operate at lower wattages than Mercury Vapour lamps and so consume less power and can be used with mains, generators or even 12-volt rechargeable batteries. Compact Fluorescent actinic lamps are like household low-energy bulbs but emit higher levels of UV light and are as effective as higher-powered actinic lamps. They can be operated using mains electricity or a 12V battery and an inverter. Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) are lightweight and can consume much less power and so can easily be used with batteries. They are a good DIY option and aren't susceptible to rain damage as they are more robust and don't get as hot. LEDs are a relatively new technology and low power lamps may be erratic in performance and catch very little compared to the other types of lamp. However, recent research has revealed that using a UV, green and blue LEDs in combination operate on the three frequencies that moths' eyes function at is very good at attracting moths. A professionally-made device operating at 15W, using a fraction of the power of a Mercury Vapour lamp, is lightweight and can feasibly be powered by a battery. It is also thought to out-perform Mercury Vapour lamps.

For most people the choice of light source is probably more important than the type of trap – particularly if you are only going to have one trap. While Mercury Vapour lamps are thought to be the best at attracting moths, they are very bright and need a great deal of power and so are more awkward to use without a mains supply. There is probably little point in choosing Actinic (fluorescent tube) over Compact fluorescent as

the compact fluorescent is as good at attracting moths as the Actinic but uses less power and so is more flexible in that it is more portable, and being more compact can be more readily used in all of the traps. LEDs are lightweight, don't use much power and so don't get as hot as other lamps, are very flexible and can be bought in a wide variety of formats: individual LEDs, strips of LEDs and lamps made up of LEDs (usually cheap).

Cost, size, weight, portability and number of moths you want to catch and are likely to catch are all factors that you need to consider when deciding which type of trap you want to buy or make. The type of lamp you want to use will also influence the trap type. All types of lamp can work with all types of trap but some combinations will work better than others and some don't really make sense.

One last thing to consider is a rain guard to protect your light source – most are made from clear plastic sheet and rods to hold it above the lamp(s). Rain guards can be bought but if making it, remember that it must be transparent to let the light through and made of a material that doesn't block the UV light that is so attractive to the moths. If you have a mercury vapour lamp a rain guard is essential as the lamp gets so hot it will shatter if rain hits it. Fluorescent lamps,



Merveille du Jour



Barred Sallow

be they tubes or compact, should also be protected by a rain guard but an LED lamp may not need one depending on its construction.

Once you have your trap you need to decide when to put it out and how often. Without doubt, May through to September have the greatest number and variety of moths flying about. However moths are about in every month of the

year – Autumnal Moth, December Moth, Winter Moth and Spring Usher give a clue to this. Some weather conditions are better than others. More moths seem to be caught on calm, warmer nights when the Moon is either obscured by clouds or just not very bright. Light rain can be more productive than a dry night but heavy rain will probably be a waste of time – although the most moths I have ever seen was in a Colombian rainforest in a deluge that had been almost continuous for five days. Really cold nights aren't any good but moths out in the winter are used to cooler temperatures than those that are out in the summer. If I think the moths will get harmed by the wet in the trap, I don't put my trap out. However, you can build drainage into the trap so this ceases to be a concern.

It is fair to say there are hundreds of moths that you are unlikely ever to see if you don't use a moth trap. Merveille du Jour is a lovely pale pastel green moth with a black lattice that is seen in September and October and its name translates from French into 'wonder of the day'. Barred Sallow is a beautiful pinkish/purplish and yellow/orange-yellow and flies from September to early November.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

All I want for Christmas is...



If you ask any well-brought up child from a Christian family what is the most important thing about Christmas, they will say something similar to 'It's when we remember the birth of Jesus'. If you ask them what else is good about Christmas, they may well say 'Presents and chocolate'. Their favourites might include Fry's Chocolate Cream, Cadbury's Bournville Dark Chocolate or Rowntree's Aero, all three made by companies which were founded by Quakers.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, British Quakers founded a whole range of businesses, manufacturing everything from shoes to biscuits. But it was the success of the Quaker confectionery companies – Cadbury of Birmingham, Rowntree's of York, and Fry's of Bristol – that left the strongest impression on the public. Unlike the oats, which are

Quaker only in name and have no link to Quakers, these businesses were rooted in Quakerism in their early years.

Part of the reason that Quakers chose the confectionery business was due to matters of conscience. Cocoa and sugar appeared to be ethical alternatives to alcohol, seen as a cause of great moral evil to Quakers of the time. The companies were primed to succeed as Quakers had already built up a reputation for business integrity, thanks to their faith-inspired insistence on fair pricing and paying off debts.

During the Victorian era, the popularity of chocolate catapulted the three Quaker confectioners into public prominence. They experimented with new flavours and styles, and also adopted innovative approaches to business. George and Richard Cadbury chose to build houses, parks and recreation centres in Bourneville, Birmingham so that their workers had comfortable accommodation away from city smog. The Meeting House there is a wonderful, prayerful place. Quaker

employers also pioneered pension schemes and lobbied Parliament for improved labour laws.

The Quaker confectionery families have left behind more than just Dairy Milk, Fruit Pastilles and Peppermint Creams. They also founded charities and philanthropic foundations that continue today. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust and the Barrow Cadbury Trust all work on vital 21st century concerns, ranging from poverty to democracy. George Cadbury's Birmingham home, Woodbrooke, is now a treasured study centre for people who wish to deepen their Quaker practice and faith. I have used the excellent library there and at the Quaker Meeting House in the Euston Road.

As you munch your Christmas chocolate, give a thought to the Quaker pioneers of decent working conditions for factory workers.

Jon Reynolds
Tring Team

Herds, viruses and immunity



The study of microbes or bugs is one side of a coin, with the study of immune mechanisms, including antibodies, being the other side.

I was introduced to the study of both of these areas, and since then, with better probes and tools, the accumulation of knowledge and insights has been massive. An unexpected finding is the way immune cells migrate and colonise different organs, with age-dependent changes being of particular interest. The shifts in emphasis in immune mechanisms with maturation and ageing probably explain the differing susceptibilities of youngsters, adults and the elderly to Covid-19.

Robert Koch (1843-1910) robustly defined the causative relationship between bugs and disease. His work marked an end of attributing diseases to foul smells and putrefaction. Koch's ideas can be applied to viruses, as well as bacteria. In contrast with bacteria, which are about one tenth of the thickness of a human hair, and visible under the microscope, viruses are around one thousand times smaller, and only individually visible under the electron microscope.

The basis of immunity is that the body recognises all that is itself and is exquisitely sensitive to antigens – chemical substances – that do not belong to 'self'. For our purposes, these are foreign antigens e.g. on or in bacteria and viruses.

For most people, Covid-19 has never been 'seen' before by the immune system, which must start work from scratch. Covid-19 immunity has to be generated or acquired; it is not innate. Specialised cells resident in multiple sites within the body can and do signal the presence of foreign antigen. In the case of Covid-19 these are principally in the linings of nose, throat and lungs.

Readers may remember that after a short delay pioneering transplants invariably withered. White blood cells called 'T' cells and their associated chemical products were found to attack the transplanted foreign tissue. Alongside tissue-typing, understanding the 'T' cell response paved the way for

improving tissue transplantation. The process is termed 'cellular immunity' and is important in combating Covid-19 infections.

Other white blood cells, 'B' cells, had already been found to produce circulating antibodies to microbes recoverable from serum. Their role in Covid-19 is possibly more nuanced. Together 'T' and 'B' systems constitute cellular and 'humoral' immunity.

The British Society for Immunology name fifteen classes of immune cells, and the acronyms describing constituent cells, chemicals (cytokines) and functional units run into the hundreds, hinting at the system's complexity, whose full description is beyond the scope of this article.

We note that an 'antigen' is any substance that causes the immune system to produce 'antibodies' against it. Antigenic substances that arise from one's own cells, by a trick of immune engineering, do not trigger an antibody response: they are in a special category; otherwise there would be an immunological catastrophe. Antigens include proteins, peptides, lipopolysaccharides etc. etc. In the case of Covid-19 a protein associated with its 'spike' has antigenic properties, useful diagnostically and potentially therapeutically.

The consequence of an effective immune response is to quickly recognise and bind to antigens associated with invading bugs, e.g. Covid-19, with a view to preventing them from hijacking cellular machinery, multiplying and ultimately infecting other people. Intrinsic to the defence process is the chemical disabling of virus machinery and removal of all their associated components from the body, both circulating ones and those that have been taken up by host cells.

Immune cells containing fragments of virus are destroyed as necessary 'collateral damage'. In the case of Covid-19, lung tissue is also at risk. Excessively vigorous immune reactions do occur in some people, including with Covid-19, resulting in the massive release of chemicals called cytokines which cause damaging inflammation. Why some people exhibit this response and others don't is currently unknown. In fact, idiosyncrasies exist in various components of the immune system, some being tied to ethnicity, conceivably a contributory biological factor to ethnic

susceptibility to Covid-19.

The ensembles of antibodies that can be produced are wide-ranging, and the process of fine-tuning the ones that usefully latch on to harmful bugs inspires awe. Once an effective immune response has been mounted, an immune memory of the response is established. The benefit of this memory is that on subsequent exposures, the antibody response, be it 'T' cell or 'B' cell occurs quickly. Without the memory, every infection would appear to be new, and repeatedly gain a harmful foothold: we would be very ill very often.

The basis of vaccination is that a representative antigen from what might be a very nasty bug is presented in a harmless form that nevertheless raises an immune response. The response can be via antibodies and/or 'T' cells. Subsequent exposure to the parent nasty bug quickly triggers the remembered, engineered immune response, and ideally the ensuing illness is knocked on the head.

The gold standard for an effective vaccine is that it does no harm to the recipient, and blocks the disease on subsequent exposure to the virus. The ethical constraints on finding a vaccine are obvious. The extreme case, deliberate exposure of volunteers to a deadly virus to find out if a candidate vaccine was effective, would be beyond reckless; chance exposure after a vaccination would be more nearly acceptable. But some indication that a useful vaccine was being offered would ease these concerns. Such a path exists: taking samples from vaccinated volunteers and looking for Covid-19 antibodies and relevant 'T' cells goes a long way to ticking these ethical boxes. There is reason to anticipate efficacy if immune blood responses are detected in the laboratory. Subsequent immunity on exposure to 'wild' virus then clinches the question of efficacy.

Technical terms are part and parcel of all specialised domains. In immunology, the term 'herd' is unfortunate, since 'herd' is associated with animals. 'Community' would be a better word. Its pejorative connotations have been deeply unhelpful in lay discussions. However, in immunity, 'herd' refers to the vast collection of individuals possessing susceptibility – for whatever reason.

For a disease to be self-perpetuating there must be a substantial likelihood of an infected individual or member of

the herd, bumping into a susceptible individual thereby passing the disease (virus) on (and on).

If the majority of the population is immune to or has been somehow immunised against the disease, the disease (virus) cannot find a new home, and it dies out. This is the basis of 'herd immunity': the proportion of immune individuals has to be high to prevent transmission. Unvaccinated people can

then be freeloaders with only a minor risk of infection.

As a footnote, the prevalence of antibodies, revealed by blood tests, across the nation can provide insights into how much silent and overt spread of Covid-19 has occurred. National programmes are underway and can provide additional data on how the nation is faring. For maximum usefulness, the volunteers should be truly representative

of the population, a goal which is hard to achieve. The point that testing people who do not have symptoms is an essential element of any such scheme has been made many times but perversely often not achieved.

Mike Sherratt, Corpus Christi

This article is not intended to be comprehensive, but where details have been glossed over, accuracy has hopefully been preserved.

Beethoven: idealism and humanity

When we were asked for a short article about our thoughts on completing the cycle of Beethoven's violin and piano sonatas for the Piano and More series, it was surprising how difficult it was to pin these down.

Some things were clear... It was a wonderful project, which we both eagerly embraced. Playing a complete cycle of works involves identifying closely with the composer on this journey – one becomes

part of their life, as it were. Beethoven's nobility of mind, his greatness of spirit enriches us all, so working on these sonatas was pure privilege.

There was also the rewarding experience of working for many hours with a close colleague, sharing ideas in long discussions ranging over any number of topics, not just music. Many cups of coffee (and glasses of wine) were enjoyed in the course of many, many hours' rehearsal.

It was while we were rehearsing for the concert for 11 October 2020 that we realised completing the cycle meant a very different thing to us than it had at the beginning. While we were working towards a final concert in March, we were anticipating a culminating sense of achievement, of completion and fulfilment, and were looking forward to a celebratory discussion afterwards with the many friends who had travelled this epic journey with us, and who had contributed so much towards the feeling of camaraderie and warmth that surrounded us at each concert.

But as we all discovered, the world



as we knew it came to an end early in the year. Along with all the other restrictions, anxieties, losses and deprivations, there was no more live music.

It was both a shock and an excitement when we heard in late summer that St Peter & St Paul's Church was allowing – encouraging! – concerts to resume. After a long break, it was hard to imagine how one would feel in what had become an unfamiliar situation. And there is no doubt that as well as the world being a very different place, we were all, to one extent or another, different people. It simply wasn't possible to have been unmarked by this worldwide, devastating experience.

So 'completing the cycle' had meanings undreamt of when we so blithely entered into the project a year or so back. The significance of the greatness of Beethoven's idealism and humanity resonated with us in a time when these virtues had become highlighted during the months of lockdown. Family, friends, kindness,

hope, tenderness and care for our fellow human beings were all things that had re-assumed their rightful place in our lives.

The Kreutzer sonata with which we completed the cycle perfectly encapsulates the mixed feelings evoked in us all during the harshness of the lockdown months – the anger and resistance so forcefully portrayed in the opening movement... the sublime melody of the slow movement calming our spirits with its rapturous

embellishments... the final movement bringing uplifting joy and optimism.

Sharing this great music with the audience was always a wonderful experience, but the concert on 11 October this year was especially precious. Playing in the spiritual space of the church, with its beautiful acoustic and lovely piano, gave us back the feeling of what life really means, not only to us as musicians but also as human beings. Thank you for giving us this opportunity.

Kathron Sturrock & George Salter



Tweet of the month

Carrying on from last month's Tweet, the third day on Shetland had been amazing seeing an ultra-rare Tennessee Warbler, an Arctic Warbler and a really close Otter – could it get better than that? One thing different about this year on Shetland compared to previous recent years was a prolonged run of easterly winds coming off mainland Europe, so it looked possible.

Our fourth day on Shetland was wet and windy so we stayed local and checked sites nearby but didn't see much. Despite looking, the following day there wasn't a lot on Mainland Shetland until a White's Thrush was reported at the southern end of Mainland.

White's Thrush has a history with me in that the first British one I saw in 1999 was seen briefly so when one turned up on Shetland in 2014 I spent hours watching and photographing it. Normally this forest-loving, predominantly Asian thrush is generally shy and elusive, but this one wasn't and walked around happily feeding in a garden in the open. This bird, combined with the Siberian Rubythroat I saw a few days later, convinced my friend John to start coming to Shetland. So naturally we headed south to try to see it, but spent several hours failing.

Anyway the following morning we successfully saw the White's Thrush – both in flight and perched. So, flushed with success, we headed even further south to Sumburgh Head. We checked a couple of quarries and they had lots of migrant birds in them, nothing unusual, but a good sign. We then decided to walk the drystone walls as well. So with us either side of the first wall, we'd walked about 150 metres when two birds flew out of the wall. One flew across to the middle of the meadow and stood in view. We looked at it and John took photos and we thought it was Lanceolated Warbler. I then rushed round to his side of the wall while he kept an eye on it. As I got to John, the bird flew across the rest of the meadow to the wall on the other side. So we headed across the meadow to a point about 20m from where it landed and walked slowly towards it. At first we couldn't see it but then: there it was on top of the wall – a definite Lanceolated Warbler!! Normally they walk around mouse-like on the ground and there are tales of them walking



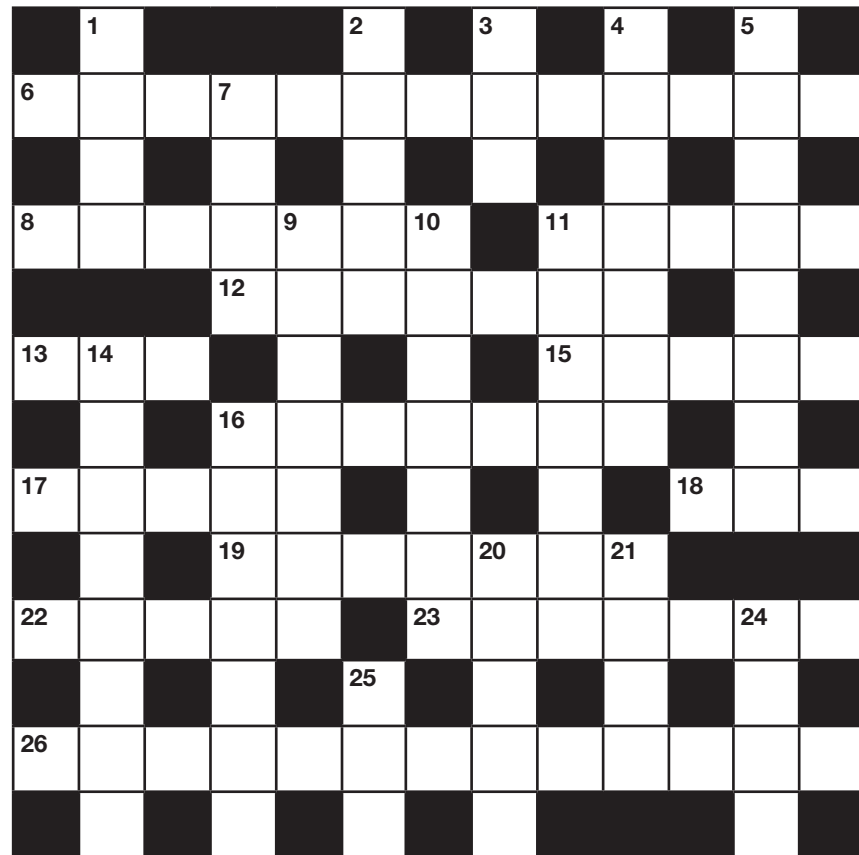
unseen between people looking for them. This rarity is the ultimate skulking bird and over 80% have been found on Shetland. It is slightly larger than a Blue Tit but a streaky brown bird and this particularly showy bird was very popular with birders while it was there. To cap it all off we saw a previously elusive Kingfisher, a Shetland rarity, on the way back to our accommodation. A perfect end to a perfect day.

So the two best days on my trip were seeing the Tennessee Warbler as described last month and finding the Lanceolated Warbler. You might think as the Tennessee Warbler was new for me in Britain that would be the best day, but no, it was finding the elusive Lanceolated Warbler. It made me happy just to find it but was even better when other people told me how much they had enjoyed seeing it too. The Tennessee Warbler was like someone else telling you about God and the Lanceolated Warbler was like finding God for yourself – both are great but finding God for yourself is better.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

Crossword

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 6. XMAS Carol (4) (2) (1) (6) | 1. Large jug (4) |
| 8. Type of XMAS cooking (7) | 2. Mountain range (5) |
| 11. Helped (5) | 3. Rascal (3) |
| 12. Not at all difficult (7) | 4. Asked to meet for XMAS (7) |
| 13. Request (3) | 5. Jesus's last title (8) |
| 15. Appears to be (5) | 7. Time of XMAS (4) |
| 16. Changed (7) | 9. Pope's cathedral in Rome (7) |
| 17. Beneath (5) | 10. Factor of splitting (7) |
| 18. Attempt (3) | 11. Agrees (7) |
| 19. French dance (7) | 14. Hope we see lots at XMAS (8) |
| 22. Comfy couch (5) | 16. Fine vestments (7) |
| 23. Repeated musical phrase (7) | 20. Final sum (5) |
| 26. Holds some XMAS presents (9) (4) | 21. Source of the wise men (4) |
| | 24. Frozen (4) |
| | 25. XMAS dinner. I ... it (3) |



Answers on page 38

Tring School new build



The project to rebuild the majority of Tring School is now well underway. Work started in May 2020 to prepare the ground for the erection of a temporary two-storey building containing

thirty-five classrooms, labs, offices and amenities. This construction was completed in late August enabling the staff to move in at the end of the month with students being in the classrooms from 2 September onwards.

The students and staff have all been hugely impressed with the quality of the new facilities and they are far superior to the old buildings they have left behind. The rooms are large, bright, warm and have a high specification of ICT in every teaching space.



Now that we have relocated half of the school into the temporary accommodation, work has begun on demolishing some of the old buildings. Watching this happen has fascinated many of the students!

The demolition will be completed this Autumn and then we can move on to building the new school. The three-storey building will be constructed by Bowmer & Kirkland and will be one of the most sustainably designed schools in the country with additional facilities to support the pastoral care and emotional well-being of the students. A local



benefactor has also committed to fund expanded sports facilities to encourage more participation in physical activity and exercise.



The new facilities will include science laboratories, design and technology facilities, art rooms, classrooms, new dining room, learning resources centre, sixth form centre, a four-court sports hall and an activity studio. Every single teaching space will benefit from new and high-quality ICT equipment. The front of the new building will be some 65m further back from the road and reducing the impact on the local community has been a key element in the exterior design and landscaping. Every single element of the new school has been carefully considered and meticulously planned.

In terms of the here and now, it

has been a massive task to make the school conform to all of the Government guidelines for Covid-19. This would have been challenging at the best of times but given the restrictions of the new build programme on top of the virus it really has led to a lot of headaches. However, we've taken everything in our stride! We have the students in their year group bubbles conforming to one-way systems, staggered meal times, face covering rules, a meticulous cleaning regime, extra staff on supervision duties and a whole raft of other actions and measures. As with the provision of our online learning when schools were closed earlier in the year, we believe we've gone above and beyond in doing everything that we possibly can in the best interests of the students and the staff. The environment is safe and secure and well organised.



The plans for the new school buildings can be seen on the school's website along with drawings and a virtual 'fly-through' showing both interior and exterior views. I really do encourage you to find a few minutes to watch the fly-through as it's brilliant!

Rod Gibberd, Business Director
Chief Operating Officer for the Ridgeway Learning Partnership



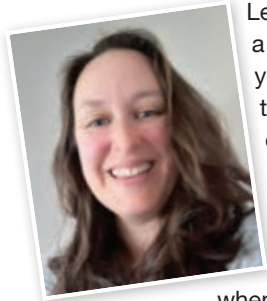
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Honesty over silence



Let's be honest for a moment... This year has been tough! Each of our experiences will have been unique, but for many of us there will have been times

when we will have felt overwhelmed by the circumstances we're facing. Given all that has gone on, 'it is OK not to be ok'; however, despite this fact, we so often forget this message of truth that we say to others when it comes to ourselves. One of our priorities at High Street Baptist Church in the wake of 2020 is intentionally investing in our personal well-being, and working to raise awareness of the importance of our being honest with each other about how we are doing, so that we can stand together as people in mutual support more effectively.

In the New Year (2021) we are planning to host a 'Wellbeing Group' for the local community in partnership with a charity called 'Kintsugi Hope' <https://www.kintsugihope.com/groups.php>. They exist to provide safe and supportive spaces for people who have been, or are overwhelmed by the challenges they have experienced, and work to promote more acceptance and understanding of emotional and mental health in our communities. These groups are designed to be spaces where there is no shame or embarrassment in admitting that we struggle at times as human beings, and facilitate reflection upon issues such as disappointment, loss, anxiety, anger, perfectionism, and resilience, as well as suggesting tools to help us to cope with these things when we encounter them. Our Wellbeing Group in Tring is open to all, and no previous contact with a church is necessary; so if you or someone you know might be interested in this, then please make contact with us, so that we can answer any questions you might have about it without any obligation (email: ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk).



Even if the 'Wellbeing Group' itself is not something for you at the moment at this Christmas season, whatever your circumstances we want to encourage you to think about how you can strengthen your own wellbeing using the five areas above as a guide. For example:

- Take opportunities to honestly share yourself, and also listen to others in conversation, rather than remain in isolation.
- If you're able to, wrap up warm and get out for a wintery walk (perhaps you'll see some of the 'community of light' displays in people's windows along the way that might encourage you).
- Think about the simple things in life that bring you joy and grant yourself permission to incorporate them into your routine.
- Maybe even try something new.
- Consider what you can give yourself, because of the unique person you are and the abilities you possess.

Reflecting in these five areas how you can invest in yourself this December (even if you are used to primarily focusing on others) can ultimately help you to strengthen your own wellbeing, and this in turn will enable you to be a greater blessing to others this season.

In 2021 you will no doubt hear more from us about our wellbeing project, but in the meantime, you can find more links to resources and contact points for support on the wellbeing page of our website: <http://tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/well-being>.

Ruth Egan, High Street Baptist Church



Back where we belong



When my mother-in-law died I obtained her copy of Patience Strong's Thoughts for Every Day. In November I came across this one.

*Yearning for familiar things and all you've left behind
 Haunted by the memories that linger in the mind
 Thinking, thinking all the time of home and family
 The place that seems so far away, the friends you never see.
 Looking forward to the day when you can go once more
 up that path you know so well to knock upon the door.
 To knock and know that you'll be welcome, in your heart a song
 happy in the knowledge that you're there where you belong.*

Let's pray that 2021 sees us all 'back where we belong'.

**Alison Bickerton
 St Peter & St Paul**

Waving not drowning

The photos we have of *Comment* readers variously waving at us in one of the lockdown editions of *Comment* this year were a cheerful sight. They reassured us that others were all really 'out there' even if we couldn't see them.

There is no January edition of *Comment* but if you would like to wave or raise a glass or greet others in some suitably festive way this Christmas or new year, and send me a photo, we will try to cheer each other up as we begin 2021 and put 2020 behind us.

The Editor

Dark clouds ahead?

Last time you heard from us, we wrote about our first holiday since we arrived in Australia, a fun trip exploring the coast two or three hours north of Sydney (with koalas aplenty). This will be a rather less light-hearted piece, about the impact coronavirus has had on the Australian economy, particularly the university sector, where we both work.

Towards the end of that trip, we received the sobering news that three members of the executive group that runs the university had been made redundant. These included both John's immediate line manager and the most senior academic on the Sydney campus, who was in charge of the search that hired him last year. We were shocked about the treatment of two people whom we had really grown to like: being given 48 hours to say your goodbyes and clear your desk is not the norm in the university world. This was even more upsetting for us given the fact that the institution we work for is supposedly founded on a distinctly Christian ethos. What is more, this has turned out to be only the first phase of a major ongoing 'restructure' (to use the term that organisations use to describe the process of firing people). We are only part way through this process, and it remains to be seen whether our own jobs will survive. A Voluntary Redundancy programme has generated less than half the staff savings the Vice-Chancellor has said that he wants. All Deans are on now notice, and a review of research structures (which includes John's role as a Research Institute Director) is next.

Where has this come from? As you probably know, in terms of public health, Australia has done relatively well over the COVID-19 period. Despite the second wave in Victoria – which has seen



friends of ours in Melbourne go back into lockdown, deeply worried about their children's mental health – death numbers across the country are low (905 at the time of writing, with the vast majority of these in Victoria). But this has been achieved in part by effectively shutting both the international border and several state borders. At the time of writing, those of us living in New South Wales could in principle visit South Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, but not Queensland, Tasmania or Western Australia. And nobody, at the moment, would want to visit Victoria. There is currently even a physical border between greater Melbourne and the rest of Victoria, labelled 'the ring of steel'!

Crucially, the international border closure means that international students are unable to travel here. The pandemic has laid bare that the economic model on which Australian universities operate depends far too heavily on the fees paid by international students, especially from China (on which country the

Australian economy in general is far too dependent). One source claims that 70% of postgraduates at some Australian universities are from China, a model that one senior academic of our acquaintance compared to running a public health system on the fees of overseas visitors paying for plastic surgery. Across the university sector, we are seeing the worst jobs crisis in living memory. Although the first to get hit were, as usual, the weakest – teachers on casual hours, with no job security, are the easiest to cut – the carnage has long since spread much further than that. An estimated 1 in 10 non-casual university staff have already been made redundant this year, while in research-focused posts (such as John's) the figure is far higher: about 1 in 4. More is predicted to follow. So, we are trying to make the most of life in what are extremely unnerving times. Although this is a worrying place to find ourselves in so soon after such a big move, we are well aware that our situation – and far worse – is replicated across the globe, as business after business goes under. We may survive, though whether to stay will depend not only on whether we get the choice, but also whether the jobs available to us after the restructure bear any resemblance to what we signed up for. Either way, given the uncertainty of our visa situation (see an earlier piece in *Comment*), it is possible that our stay down under might be shorter than originally planned! Watch this space.

If you want to get in touch with us, please contact the editor or connect with us on Facebook.

**John Lippitt & Sylvie Magerstaedt,
 formerly St Peter & St Paul**



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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 34

ACROSS
6. AWAY IN A MANGER
8. GRILLED
11. AIDED
12. EASIEST
13. ASK
15. SEEMS
16. REVISED
17. UNDER
18. TRY
19. GAVOTTE
22. DIVAN
23. ROSALIA
26. CHRISTMAS TREE

DOWN
1. EWER
2. ANDES
3. IMP
4. INVITED
5. REDEEMER
7. YULE
9. LATERAN
10. DIVISOR
11. ASSENTS
14. SUNLIGHT
16. REGALIA
20. TOTAL
21. EAST
24. ICED
25. ATE

High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



Morning worship

Sundays 10.30am

zoom

Meeting ID: 978 9592 0392

Worshipping together in our building and at home.



Light in the darkness

Visit our website for our special events throughout December.

Visit our website for Worship at Home resources, updates of services and special events.



Start the Week

Mondays 9.15-9.45am
Meeting ID: 100 710 735

A prayer meeting using liturgy from the Northumbria Community.

zoom



Our doors are open for personal prayer

Wednesdays 2-4pm

Quiet space * music *
candles to light * social distancing
Please wear a face covering
(these will be available if you do not have one)

Recycling area is located at the left hand side entrance to High Street Baptist church for bras, plastic milk bottle tops, baby food pouches, pens, spectacles, mobile phones, stamps and batteries.



Worship at home YouTube Sermons, all-age talks and other videos are available on YouTube

'High Street Baptist Church, Tring, UK'.

 Kids Activities @High Street Baptist

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

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www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk



#tringbaptistchurch



High Street Baptist Church

Tring
enjoying life Together
at Christmas



BRINGING
THE HIGH STREET
home



Weekend 12th & 13th December
3-7pm, Tring Town Centre & Online



Christmas shopping and festive market stalls in your High Street.

Open churches, sparkling lights and Father Christmas.