

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



For details about our services, prayer meetings and special events visit our website.



Morning worship
Worshipping together in our building and at home

Sundays 10.30am

zoom
Meeting ID: 978 9592 0392 Password: highstreet



Coffee for a cause
Tuesdays 10am-12 Noon

Fairtrade tea, coffee and homemade cake.
Proceeds toward BMS World Mission.

Games Afternoon
Wednesdays 2 - 4pm
High Street Baptist Church, Tring

Baby Group
Tuesdays 10.30am - 12 Noon

For new born and non-movers

Tots
Wednesdays 9.30 - 11.30am
Indoor fun for toddlers

Junior Church
Sundays 10.30am

Church office 07977 230175 or admin@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
Revd Joe Egan 07521 513493 or joe@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
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www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

[tringbaptistchurch](https://www.instagram.com/tringbaptistchurch) [High Street Baptist Church](https://www.facebook.com/HighStreetBaptistChurch)

The difference between knowledge and wisdom...



I've recently been noticing more and more grey hairs on the head of the face that looks back at me in the mirror. Now, as someone in their late 30s and a Baptist minister, this ought not to be a surprise to me, especially when I read in the Bible: 'Grey hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life' (New Revised Standard Version). So, I keep telling myself that the grey hairs are a sign of wisdom, that the older I get, the wiser I am becoming; and yet I am constantly amazed that my 5-year-old so often outsmarts me!

We love to bake in our family and when Caleb, my son, was 3, we were baking brownies with Maltesers in them. We weighed out the ingredients, opened the bag of Maltesers, and, of course, we tried one to make sure they were OK. Caleb asked if he could have another one, and, of course, I said no, because they were for the brownies, which he was a little annoyed by. He then seemed to decide that he didn't want to bake any more, and grabbed me by the hand to lead me into the lounge, asking to watch something on the TV. So, I went to get the remote control, at which point I heard the door of the lounge close. When I opened the door, Caleb was standing in the kitchen eating the Maltesers...

It is said that wisdom is knowledge rightly applied, an example of which is that 'knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit, and wisdom is knowing not to put one in your fruit salad'. Now, of course, there was a time in our lives before we knew that a tomato was a fruit: we had to learn this truth. Once we had this knowledge, we then needed to understand more about a tomato, its texture and flavour, before we could correctly apply that knowledge and conclude not to put it in a fruit salad.

Similarly, there are many things in life where we need to continue to grow in knowledge and understanding (parenting is one of them for me!) before we can apply our knowledge correctly in context. We face many challenges and decisions in life, and we hope that we will respond to them in our journey each day with knowledge, understanding and, most of all, wisdom. However, this can be difficult at times because we all face challenges

that are unknown and unfamiliar, and so can struggle to navigate the best path through in the multitude of strands that our lives hold. I've certainly found this to be true at times in my life when I have felt as if I'm wandering through days and decisions, being a little tentative because I'm not certain or confident, and lacking a little in wisdom perhaps. However, the Bible tells us 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding' (Proverbs 9:10).

As a Christian the foundation of life is God. God is the creator and sustainer of all things, and therefore he knows how life is supposed to be. Like an instruction manual on a new appliance (or a YouTube video for those of us who never read the instruction manuals!) we need to digest how God has designed us to work, so that we might apply that knowledge, understanding and wisdom to each and every day.

At High Street Baptist Church, we're running an Alpha course in June and July that can help us all reflect on life, meaning and faith together. It will be an opportunity to explore questions about God and the foundations (the instruction manual) of the life he created and wants to give all people. It will be an opportunity to grow in knowledge about the Christian faith and perhaps seek God to guide, instruct and equip us with wisdom as we navigate each day of our lives.

This Alpha course begins at High Street Baptist Church on Monday 5 June at 7.00pm and is available for six weeks. We shall begin with dinner together, watch a short video and then chat about what we've seen, as we reflect on our own understanding and experience. It will be an informal time where we can share as much or as little as we like with others.

Let us know if you would like to attend by contacting Polly at the church office.

Oh, and one last piece of wisdom: although food, a film and chat are considered a good 'date night', Ruth (my wife) tells me that food, a film and chat at an Alpha course does definitely NOT qualify as a 'date night'!).

Many blessings

Joe Egan
High Street Baptist Church

I was clearly not wise when I was about 13 or 14. Joe's words reminded me of my own attempt 'to do a Caleb' and outsmart one of my teachers. We were supposed to bring in fruits to make a fruit salad and I (you guessed it), knowing that a tomato was a fruit - and also knowing it was not what the teacher intended - added a tomato to mine. The teacher challenged the fact that it was a fruit (dangerous...) but allowed me to use it when I explained that it was... She tasted the resulting original salad and proved who had the upper hand by NOT giving me the good mark I had hoped for. Wisdom is not deliberately annoying the teacher when you are a know-all teenager!

The Editor

TRING CHORAL SOCIETY
AND ORCHESTRA
CONDUCTOR
COLIN STEVENS

DVORAK MASS IN D
RUTTER PSALMFEST

SATURDAY 1ST JULY 2023
ST PETER & ST PAUL CHURCH, TRING
7.30PM

TICKETS: £17.50
UNDER 18S FREE
www.tringchoral.org.uk/tickets
or email tickets@tringchoral.org.uk
Tring Choral Society Reg Charity No. 276980

Standing up for freedom



The Book Club at St Peter & St Paul doesn't meet during Lent, which gives us the chance to choose a book for discussion longer than what most of can get through

between our usual monthly meetings. Nineteenth century novelists like Dickens, George Eliot and Tolstoy liked to give readers their money's worth and that means we have had quite a few books from that era to plough through during Lent.

This year, however, it was the turn of one of the greatest novels of the 20th century. Dr Zhivago runs to around 180,000 words, so we had our work cut out to finish in time. Heroically, quite a few of us did manage to get all the way through it, and the consensus was that the effort was worth it.

The themes of the novel are as huge as the word count – how society should be organised, love and loyalties to family, sexual relationships, the power of men over women, and also how we relate to the natural world. It follows the story of Zhivago, the son of a wealthy Moscow industrialist, starting with his boyhood at the end of the 19th century, when the country is still profoundly divided and unequal, despite its mainly unsuccessful struggles to adapt to the modern industrial age. Zhivago is in his 20s when Russia is thrown into the turmoil of the First World War, immediately followed by the chaos of total revolution and brutal civil war.

The young Zhivago writes poetry, but thinks that his deepest thoughts can only be expressed in the form of a novel, which he feels he will not be

ready to write until he is much older. Pasternak himself was best known before the Second World War as a leading poet, and although he wrote a few short novels before Dr Zhivago, this was his only major prose work, which he spent many years contemplating and developing. The novel itself is full of wonderful poetic descriptions of nature, and finishes with a collection of Zhivago's poems. These are not just striking and beautiful in themselves but the poetry seems related to a central theme of the novel in contrasting two visions. In the first, individuals are ruthlessly suppressed in order to achieve the impossible ideals of a completely egalitarian system; in the second, celebrated by the poetry, what is paramount is personal freedom to live life to the full in harmony with others and with nature.

And, of course, there is the love interest and Zhivago's relationships with three women, all of whom he has children by: his wife Tonya, his passionate affair with Lara, and lastly with Marina, who is half his age (a relationship airbrushed out of David Lean's film, incidentally). Reading the novel for the first time as a teenager, I too fell madly in love with Lara; reading the book for the second time nearly sixty years later I was still deeply moved. And yet – there is something deeply troubling about Zhivago's love life. It is made clear that each of his three women occupy a deep and permanent (though, of course, not exclusive) place in his heart. Still, in judging him, one has to remember the unimaginable turmoil of the times Zhivago lived through and ask ourselves: how might we have acted? Incidentally, among many features of

Zhivago's life (which echo Pasternak's own) one is that the author's love life was also rather 'complex'.

Khrushchev's Soviet Union banned Dr Zhivago and prevented Pasternak from taking up the Nobel prize awarded him in 1957 after his book was smuggled into the west and published, where it caused a sensation. This suppression of the book is hardly surprising, given its savage indictments of the Soviet system. Does it allow us insights into Putin's Russia of sixty years later? I think it does. One particularly striking example comes near the end of the novel. One of the protagonists, who has been imprisoned in a brutal penal camp for deviant beliefs, tells of how his fellow prisoners were offered freedom if they fought for six months on the civil war front. Most of these 'volunteers' died. And the Ukrainian front, of course, was manned to some extent last year in just the same way.

Simon Schama's recent three-part BBC series 'History of Now' argued that all of the arts have a fundamental role to play in the defence of freedom against tyranny. Shama discusses Dr Zhivago during the first part of the series, called 'Truth and Democracy'. It's well worth watching on BBC iPlayer, where it is still available to view. The series as a whole is striking for the passion with which Shama urges us to be vigilant today against threats to freedom, both in Russia and (just as important) the West, and for his advocacy of the part that the prophets of our time can play in standing up for freedom, just as Pasternak did in Soviet Russia.

Edmund Booth
St Peter & St Paul

Egg rolling



High Street Baptist Church enjoyed their customary sunrise service on Pitstone Hill on Easter Sunday morning. After the service the much-anticipated egg-rolling competition

took place, with prizes for best-decorated and furthest-rolled down the hill.

More traditions were maintained with a walk back to Tring, and new traditions were made with a breakaway group doing a 10km run! A reward for all was in the form of bacon butties before Morning Worship.

Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church



Who let the dads out?

At High Street Baptist Church we are blessed with a building that is used for a whole range of different groups and people. One of our more popular activities is the midweek Tots group which regularly sees forty – fifty carers (mainly mums but also grandparents and child minders) with their pre-school children come and play, draw, create, build, eat, drink and share in fun and fellowship together as children and as adults.

Personally, as a dad of two (a 5-year-old and 22-month-old) I know first-hand how valuable these groups are. They provide:

- opportunity to chat with other parents who might be going through similar parenting challenges or chat and laugh about life in general
- opportunity for the kids to play with different toys and do craft (without causing mess in the house!)
- opportunity for children to engage with others and continue to learn social skills
- opportunity to get the kids out of the house and give our partners some peace and quiet (invaluable in recent years with more 'work from home' parents).

At High Street Baptist Church we want to create another opportunity for this to

happen on a Saturday morning, and so we are now restarting a group that we

used to run, specifically for dads and father figures (grandads, uncles, male carers, etc.) to come with their children (0-10 years old). We hope this group will provide all the benefits mentioned above and more including sharing food and fun together.

There will be plenty of tea and coffee, bacon butties (and other food bits); plus a baby area, plenty of toys and including craft activities, Lego (my personal favourite!), games console, table football and much more. It's an opportunity for dads and father figures to enjoy time well spent with their children and making memories (whilst

also chatting football or whatever with other guys!).

WHO LET THE DADS OUT?

It's back!

9.30 - 11am
Saturday 13 May
Saturday 10 June
Saturday 8 July

£3 suggested donation

Dads, uncles, grandads, carers etc., bring the children and join the fun!
Tea, coffee, newspapers, bacon butties, plus plenty of toys, games, activities and screens.
Suitable for children aged 0-10yrs.

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

Dates: Saturdays 10 June & 8 July
Time: 9:30-11:00am
Where: High Street Baptist Church
Cost: suggested donation of £3
No need to book, just turn up

Joe Egan
High Street Baptist Church

TRING CHARITIES
(Registered Charity No 207805)

ALMSHOUSES IN TRING

From time to time, one and two-bedroom bungalows become available to let, for people who currently live in Aldbury, Long Marston, Marsworth, Pitstone, Puttenham, Tring, Wigginton or Wilstone.

Applicants, one of whom must be aged 55 or over, must not own their own home or have significant savings.

Applicants will be asked to supply personal financial information to prove their beneficial status.

The average weekly maintenance contribution (equivalent to "rent" for housing benefit purposes) is £107 for a one bedroom property and £126 for a two bedroom property.

If you would like to be considered for the Waiting List, please telephone Elaine Winter, Secretary to the Trustees, on 01442 827913 (weekday office hours only), for an application form or email info@tringcharities.co.uk

Personification techniques

With thanks to the children of Bishop Wood School for letting us print their creative writing.

The Storm
 Emerging from the darkness,
 Lightning lunged vigorously across a sad gloomy sky,
 Like a whip cracking.
 Her screaming fingers encroached on burnt houses,
 Manically annihilating everything in her path.
 Determined, she darted around her sleeping brother,
 Hoping to awaken her brother.
 Discombobulated, thunder awoke with a loud roar.
 Trudging angrily towards his sister,
 Raging, thunder picked up his enormous hammer,
 Urging to strike his sister.
 The people down below like ants scrambling for shelter,
 Bellowing, he wants to destroy his sister.
 By Ben I

The Storm
 Like a hot fire, lightning danced, gracefully across the cold, pitch black sky,
 Giggling mischievously, she made an ear-splitting shriek.
 Lightning sliced through the dark, moody clouds, as a wave of cunning energy rashed through her.
 She cackled out, attempting to waken her brother, Thunder.
Thunder
 Emerging from the darkness, Thunder scowled, angrily.
 He trudged across the dirt, as a feeling of rage bubbled inside of him.
 People froze to the spot, as Thunder yelled for Lightning.
 He boomed furiously, leaving gut holes, every step he took.
 How dare she awaken him??
 Today she shall meet her end.
 By Matt

THE STORM
 In the dark of night, lightning darted swiftly across the dark, gloomy sky.
 Higher than the tallest mountains, she raced with a defining scream, as she sped to the floor with a hammering smack, creating chaos.
 Feeling energetic, lightning rushes back up to the sky repeating her actions trying to annoy thunder.
 Lightning's plan worked, awakening thunder, lightning travels sharply through the wind gracefully.
 Thunder grumbled as he awoke, miserable he shook the ground making lightning stumble back.
 Thunder raws and races fast to lightning smacking them hard in the face.
 Thunder is grumpy trying to get to sleep but lightning is zooming fast.
 Lightning slaps thunder menacingly whilst speeding across the sky.
 Thunder screams once and strides to lightning trying to get her back.
 Lightning moved swiftly out the way like a fox in the night, making thunder fall.
 By Corin

Friday 7th October 2022
 LO: To write a personification poem
The Storm
 Evil lightning shoots across the stormy sky
 Trying desperately to wake her brother Thunder.
 She cackles loudly as she zaps her fiery bolts across the night.
 Her ear-piercing screams echo in the night sky.
 From his lonely sleep, Thunder is awoken.
 Furious, he stomps and thumps at her rudeness.
 Along with his angry thump and air trapped under the duvet.
 Roaring and booming, he yells at her to stop!
 Lightning holds one last flaming orb and spitefully
 She disappears into the darkness.

The Storm
 In the moon-lit sky, lightning zooms across the pitch-black abyss, feeling like she is the queen of the heavens.
 As she lets out an ear-piercing cackle, she hurls her sinister orb through the dark, stormy winter night.
 Desperate to awaken her brother-Thunder.
 Hoping for a deathly battle.
 From his deep sleep, Thunder rose awake,
 Livid, he stomps and stomps at his vile Sister.
 Miles below, little children toss and turn in their beds.
 Banging and booming he roars at Lightning to end the battle.
 Swiftly, she casts one final blazing orb and spitefully she disappeared into the distant clouds.

Poem of the month



A short poem (to be found in 'After Silent Centuries', first published by Perpetua Press in 1994) in which the author likens the gravestones ('lettered masts') in Oystermouth cemetery to ships anchored in the bay. As its name implies, Oystermouth was known for its oyster and shellfish – hence the reference to shells and shingle. The middle verse, with its harsher sounds and allusions of violence, echo the dramatic language and images of the final Resurrection in the Book of Revelation. 'Tropic Easter landfall' in the last line peacefully describes the lands of the blessed souls at rest.

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury from 2003 to 2012, was born in Swansea in 1950. He spent his early life in Oystermouth, on the Mumbles, and his family was Welsh-speaking. After theological studies at Oxford and Cambridge, he was ordained, becoming Bishop of Monmouth and later, Archbishop of Canterbury. He speaks or reads eleven languages and is well known for his theological articles, sermons and poetry. In 2013 he was made a Life Peer taking the title of Lord Williams of Oystermouth. He retired from the House of Lords in 2020. His poetry has a strong spiritual and landscape flavour.
Kate Banister
St Julian's, St Albans

Oystermouth Cemetery

*Grass laps; the stone keels jar,
 scratch quietly in the rippling soil.
 The little lettered masts dip slowly
 in a little breeze, the anchors here
 are very deep among the shells.*

*Not till the gusty day
 when a last angel tramples down
 into the mud his dry foot hissing,
 down to the clogged forgotten shingle,
 till the bay boils and shakes,*

*Not till that day shall the cords snap
 and all the little craft float stray
 on unfamiliar tides, to lay their freight
 on new warm shores, on those strange islands
 where their tropic Easter landfall is.*

Rowan Williams

Church flowers



In March this year I attended two funerals with burials in rural churches, one of them taking place where my parents-in-law are buried. I was horrified to see on their grave a plastic

flower display that was disintegrating into tiny polluting particles of plastic (we have since returned and replaced it with daffodil and snowdrop bulbs). Looking around the churchyard there were a number of other plastic flowers on graves (usually in the flower-holders making up part of the headstone) and I realised that, if left for any length of time, these too would be degrading into microplastics, too small to be gathered up and disposed of and contaminating the ground (not to mention how unsightly such arrangements look as they age in sunlight).



It struck me that this pollution is happening on church land and under the eyes of clergy and local churchgoers up and down the land and I wondered why there isn't a ban on all plastic or artificial flowers in churchyards – and cemeteries – across the country. I contacted a number of organisations to ask about this. Disappointingly, 'Caring For God's Acre' (despite its title) were completely unable to help, possibly because the office manager who replied to my online query had failed to understand what I was asking: she recommended that I contact the local vicar or rural dean and didn't apparently appreciate that I was looking at a national problem.

However, I am glad to say that A Rocha, who run the Eco Church scheme, were much more engaged. From them, I was directed to both their own report



(Church Flowers and Sustainability) and also to the work that has been done by the Diocese of Worcester. In turn, this led to the website of Sustainable Church Flowers (<https://suschurchflowers.com/>), who have a brilliant website. They quote the Church of England's 5th Mark of Mission (to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth) and on their homepage they summarise the following.

Sustainable church flowers are:

- biodegradable and compostable;
- local 'grown not flown', minimising travel miles and supporting local growers;
- seasonal; and
- foam-free: floral foam, or 'oasis', is a microplastic held together by a chemical mix and causes biological and environmental damage.



Oasis cannot be disposed of in any safe way except by high-temperature incineration; even the water from arrangements using floral foam is contaminated and should not be put down the drain!

The website also has a range of very useful resources, including samples of a parish resolution and of a diocesan synod motion. So, I am somewhat reassured that there are people within the churches who are thinking about this environmental

issue, although I am still surprised that more isn't being done to make local churches aware. I noticed that those who set up Sustainable Church Flowers in 2019 had been engaged in the Eco Church scheme within their own church and that their demonstration of eco-friendly management of flowers helped them towards gaining Silver status, so I am hopeful that this is something that will spread as more churches engage with Eco Church and are encouraged to lobby for change at diocesan and national level. It would be excellent if this meant that other local people, who are perhaps not churchgoers but have loved ones buried in local cemeteries, campaigned for a ban on environmentally damaging plastic flowers in these local places as well. (Images are from <https://suschurchflowers.com/>)

Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church



Prayers for the month

Lord, be here with us today.
 Let us hear you speaking
 with words we understand deep in our being.
 As we hear your voice, comfort, encourage, challenge and
 motivate us.
 May your Holy Spirit inspire us, unite us and guide us.
 Breathe on us afresh.
 Renew our hope in your love and resurrection.
 Speak new life to everyone, wherever they are in the world.
 Amen

The grace, love and fellowship of God
 surrounds us today and always.
 So, come, let us journey together
 in the wonderful adventure
 of worshipping God, the holy 'three in one'.

God of mercy, for your love and commitment to us,
 we worship and adore you.
 For your gentle firmness with us,
 we worship and adore you.
 For your kindness towards us,
 we worship and adore you.
 For your compassion towards us,
 we worship and adore you.
 For your support of us,

we worship and adore you.
 For your trust in us,
 we worship and adore you.

We sing to the Lord and worship with joy;
 for we never forget that the Lord is God.
 God made us and to God we belong;
 we are God's people, we are God's flock.
 We gather with each other to give thanks to God,
 we enter with praise and thanksgiving in our hearts.
 For the Lord is good, the Lord's love is eternal,
 and the Lord's faithfulness lasts for ever.
 God's story has led us, inspired and transformed us,
 called us, acknowledged us, loved and redeemed us.
 Almighty God, our voices sing your praise,
 our hearts offer our thankfulness.
 Amen

Indescribable, uncontainable God,
 thank you that you are amazing
 and love me, no matter what.
 You put the stars in the sky,
 and you know me by name.
 Thank you that I mean so much to you.
 Amen

Quiet Day at Puttenham



Looking back, we can't always work out when something began. Was it at the pricking of the initiative Celestria Bell knew she needed to make happen?

Was it her first conversation with Huw, where the idea gained encouragement? Was it the first meeting of the organising group, when tasks were allocated? Was it when the event was first advertised and people began signing up? Was it on the day, when everyone had arrived at the Cecilia Hall? Was it when our leader for the day, The Reverend Canon Alan Hodgetts, introduced himself? For some it may not have properly begun until the first prayer or piece of music.

The theme of the day was 'Cultivating Awareness' and with a mixture of explanation, Bible study, experiential meditation and music, we explored practical devices to aid prayer and contemplation. The admission by one person that they had fallen asleep during the meditation allowed us all to acknowledge that cultivating awareness can be hard work.

Eating a simple meal of homemade soup and bread helped us get to know one another. After lunch we moved to the church for some learning on centring prayer and the wheel of awareness. On the short walk to the church, Alan encouraged us to step over an imaginary line, treating it as a threshold into the expectation of encounter with God. Towards the end of the afternoon we were able to share, if we wanted to, a word, phrase or image we would take away from the day. Anne Nobbs shared the beautiful Haiku she had written (see opposite).

So we have reached the beginning again; the beginning of a series. It was always Celestria's vision that this would not be a one-off event. The next Quiet Day will be in August. If you have never been on a retreat or quiet day, this may be a beginning for you. The hope is that each Quiet Day will have a slightly different focus and may appeal to different people. Look out for more details soon.

Linzi James
St Peter & St Paul



Exploring Centring Prayer with Rev Canon Alan Hodgetts



I had been looking forward to a quiet day of reflection ever since Celestria Bell first mentioned it to me, when we were still in the dark and cold of winter. The day did not disappoint. It dawned bright, and Puttenham was showing off its spring beauty. Not only that, but Malcolm and I were both there for a rare day together without 'things to do and places to be'.

I didn't go with the expectation of anything other than time and space to think and experience; and the whole day felt like a blessing – a kindness bestowed; an accepting and comforting presence, with little challenges and bursts of humour that felt like true companionship on the journey.

About a dozen of us were considering our personal faith journey in the light of St Paul's conversion. We had times of sharing, and of nurturing a 'prayerful awareness' through scripture, prayer, time together and times alone in silence. In discussion, I realised that I did not have just one conversion experience to tell of, but expressed how I felt faith to ebb and flow by turn for me, so that I have had a number of reconnections with God. There is a particular moment I hold on to in the low times. It is an image of an occasion when I felt so full of the Spirit, so loved by God and in such a deep relationship with Jesus, that I thought, at the time, 'I must remember this moment and recall it in the times when I most doubt, so that I am reassured'.

Alan told a story about the Matterhorn in the mist: that the mountain is right there – even when you can only see cloud, and are doubting its existence. A couple of days later, I was reminded (during the reading of 'Footprints' at my friend Moira's funeral) that, as we look back on the most difficult parts of our lives and see only one set of footprints in the sand, it was then that Christ carried us.

In the quiet times of the day, we were encouraged to cultivate expectancy and to prepare to be ambushed by God! After

our lunch, we walked alone, in the churchyard. Our task was to stop at some point and choose a time to step over the stick/flower/place where we'd halted, expecting that God would be showing us something very special when we did. Of course, I was stubborn and walked past two spots God chose for me, before my creator and I laughed together about the third one, and the need for me to be reminded so often to 'Let go and let God!' In fact, it turned out that the special thing had occurred at the first one; I only realised it at the third.

It's interesting that, at the start of the day, when we had all talked about our conversion experiences, or feelings of closeness with God, many of us mentioned a link with the outdoors and solitude. Another theme for some was being in a space like their bedroom, a shower, an

upper room or a feeling of being comfortably cocooned. For all of us, it seems, the crucial part was being open to encounters with God and willing to be nurtured by the experience. We found it was important to be fully ourselves – as long as we could acknowledge the great 'I AM' in God. In one of our times of solitude, we were asked to allow creativity, and perhaps



write a haiku (a poem of 3 lines, with 5, 7 and 5 syllables.) The feelings of the day came together for me in the one I wrote:

*Longing to feel love
 I open myself to God
 I am who I am*

Anne Nobbs
St Peter & St Paul

Tring Team Parish
 with
 Blues Bar Tring
 are proud to present

'Saints & Sinners'

Friday June 23 2023

Music from the Cross to the Crossroads
 Tring Church (St Peter & St Paul) HP23 5AE
 Doors & Bar 19:00 - Concert 20:00
 Reservations - www.bluesbartring.co.uk
 on the door £10.00

Tring Brewery Bar profits and Raffle proceeds to Tring Team Parish

Our wedding

We got married at Saint Peter & Saint Paul's Church in Tring on 15 April on what turned out to be a glorious sunny day despite the earlier forecast for heavy cloud.

We wanted to get married here for several reasons: the history, beautiful architecture, mesmerizing stained-glass windows; and because of the people who made us feel extremely welcome when we started worshipping in the parish church. We were taken aback by how friendly everyone was and have enjoyed many post-service coffees, socialising with everyone.



Faith has always been an important part of our lives and we wanted to make sure our ceremony was special, as, after all, it is the most important part of a wedding! To make our ceremony a little different, and pay homage to Ryan's West Indian culture, we enlisted the amazing soulful voices of his cousins Tracey, Andrea and Melanie and a gospel band to play and sing along with our hymns as well as an amazing performance of 'Total Praise'. This was all possible thanks to Huw Bellis

and the team's assistance during our preparations which we are very grateful for.

We continued our wedding celebrations at Pendley Manor and got to enjoy the gardens in the sun with some live music, followed by a fantastic wedding breakfast and evening of dancing. We now know why people say your wedding day is one of the best days of your life!

Sophie Blake (née Shrieve)
St Peter & St Paul

Tring – and the land said to be holy



Several dozen people in Tring have visited the Holy Land. Quite a few others would like to. Still others know something of its story from a distance. My question is: what did you make of it? Where did this leave you? How do you now see things? How do we fit the land and its story into our thinking?

To answer these questions, individuals and churches usually turn to one of two perspectives. On the one hand, people are aware that Western Europe has often treated Jewish people very badly, culminating in the Holocaust. Compensating for this simply seems good and right. On the other hand, the treatment of the Palestinian people readily evokes a sense of injustice that means taking their side looks inevitable.

When you hear one of these perspectives, its narrative seems so right and the other seems so distant. This tendency to polarisation is common and

very strong. Understanding both and appreciating the life of the people behind them is difficult and rare; and we have not yet included any question about the part our own country has played in past years.

Over the last six months I have written about Musalaha in *Comment*. Musalaha, which means reconciliation, is an organisation based in the land that works to build grassroots relationships across seemingly intractable divides. Musalaha has taken note of the biblical declaration that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself and bases its approaches on the principles underlying this idea.

Well, Colin, I hear you say, now you are getting yourself into some pretty muddy waters. You hint that Britain might have got something wrong historically and then suggest Christian ideas can provide a foundation for putting the world to rights! Really?

For over thirty years Musalaha has built grassroots relationships through groups of women, young adults, children and others by using a curriculum they have developed to provide systematic

teaching to build reconciliation across communities. UK churches have become involved, some of them directly. Schools have partnered with schools in the land. One inner city academy has developed a 6th Form Course to create understanding across religious groups. One large diocese has drawn upon Musalaha's reconciliation training for its clergy.

There is no reason why people and churches in Tring should not benefit from these opportunities. To explore this more I am proposing to develop a short series of meetings in the Autumn exploring the questions I have raised above. It will start from the BBC presentations of the history of four Jewish and Palestinian families and look at what reconciliation training and experience could mean for Tring.

Colin Briant
High Street Baptist Church

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/
The Holy Land and Us -
Our Untold Stories](https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/TheHolyLandandUs-OurUntoldStories)
<https://musalaha.org>
colin.briant@hotmail.com

Stepping forward in faith



I'm sure many of us have pieces of scripture that have been formative in our lives, perhaps coming to our attention in a way that means we stop and take notice in a greater measure.

One such piece came alive years ago for me whilst sitting in the library at what was then called the London Bible College (now the London School of Theology). I could tell you today where I was sitting, where the Scripture was on the page, and how my heart was illuminated, and thumping as I read, and re-read, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I set you apart: I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

"Ah, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak: I am only a child". But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, I am only a child. You must go to everyone I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you", declares the Lord.' Jeremiah 1:4-8

I was 25, lacking in biblical understanding, as I'd not grown up in a Christian home, but with a growing awareness that when God directs it is wise to be open and respond to his direction. But just like Jeremiah I had lots of reasons why going to the nations, or speaking, were really not a good idea! Anyway, I had a course to complete, and a husband who was not, in my view, likely to want to be trundling to foreign places. But God is God, and his ways are not ours.



It was about ten years later that we knew he was asking us, as a small family with three young children, to head to

East Africa to work for an organisation called 'Wycliffe Bible Translators'. Whilst family and some friends thought we were irresponsible to take our children out of British life and education, when we returned after three years we could see how we had been growing through this time, primarily in our faith, as well as some rich life experiences.

Why do I write of that period of our lives now we are settling into life at New Mill Baptist Church? Well, primarily because it taught me that my ability to see through God's lens is always going to be cloudy. I saw problems, I felt fear and inadequacy, but those criteria are not what truly matters. We knew God had told us to go there, as now I, and my husband Andy, know God has called us here. Some of those same feelings of inadequacy still remain, but I know that my weak vessel is not a hindrance to God if I just follow him.

God plucked us out of a large Baptist church in Buckinghamshire, where I had been the Pastor of Pastoral Care, and my husband remains a mission partner for Wycliffe. He has given me a heart to journey with him to be the minister to a currently small congregation. He made it very clear, in a number of ways, that this was the place for us to live and work.

Humanly, I bring some life experiences, having trained and worked in mental health, working overseas and in the UK. I bring my life experience as a mother and grandmother. But underneath these is the journey of faith that has grown through the ups and downs of life. There have been some tough times of sickness, of uncertainty and grief, as well as times of great joy. I know with a sure and certain hope that God has journeyed with me through all those years. I didn't always see him or certainly feel his presence at the time, but God was there. I see that more clearly in hindsight. That childlike trust is what I bring to the role of minister.

I know our Father God loves all those who currently gather each Sunday at New Mill, and they need to be reminded of who they are as children of the King. But beyond our doors lies a mission field of people who probably have no idea how loved they are. It's my, and our job as a church, to let them know in words and actions that they matter to the creator of the universe, and that they need Jesus to



find their way into a real relationship with him. So, I believe God is calling me to mingle, to share, to speak out truth about him both from the pulpit each Sunday and when invited by those I hope to meet in the community over the next months and years.

Whilst the church currently runs a community café (on a Thursday 11.30-1.30), I wonder what other groups he may lead us to start or restart. I imagine there must be young parents with little tots who would value a weekly meeting point. We have the toys tucked in a cupboard from when there used to be a Toddler group, but we will need people willing to share in the responsibility of leading such a group.

Perhaps there are folks who struggle with their mental health and a support group for them might be God's design. I'd hope we will have an Alpha course at some time, and already, in collaboration with High Street Baptist Church, there are plans to work together for a course in June.

My expectation is that as I mingle and knock on doors, I'll find out what is needed. Then I expect God will show us a way to meet some of these needs.

I don't come with a big plan of action as perhaps some might do. My strategy, if that is even the right word, is to spend time in prayer and listening for God's voice and leading. As I walk the streets or knock on doors, I will be praying to meet those God wants me to.

I love working collaboratively with the other churches, and so as I get to know them, and they me, I wonder how we, as fellow believers and leaders, will be able to overlap with our skills and resources to see God's works unfold in this area. As that Jeremiah passage said to Jeremiah, and now to me, I need to rest in the truth that God is with me as I go wherever he leads.

Jackie Buie
New Mill Baptist Church

From carrot whisky to carrot soup



About fifty years ago, I started my teaching career in Chelmsley Wood, a vast new estate on the fringe of Birmingham. I was fortunate to be given accommodation in a teacher's house with two other newly qualified teachers. We became good friends. One of these girls was called Margaret and she was a superb cook. Although a Primary School teacher, her main subject at college had been domestic science.

Looking back, I can't begin to imagine what Margaret thought of me: a hopeless person in the kitchen. I could make tea and coffee, butter toast, but not much more. In fact, I was a disaster. I must have managed at college, but I'm not sure how!

Margaret took pity on me and presented me with a recipe book: to keep recipes for dinner parties etc, she said. Well, I have kept recipes in this book for fifty years – cuttings from magazines, newspapers, diet ideas and so on, but not really recipes for dinner parties.

After fifty years, this book is beyond

its best. Torn pages, sticky finger marks, scraps of paper, it reflects my own cooking interests and the changes to the way we all cook now. The very first recipe in my book is for carrot whisky. I've no idea why it is on the first page as I didn't start making carrot whisky until 1978 when home beer and wine-making was at its peak. This was followed by plum wine, damson wine and marrow wine! After that, there is a series of relish and chutney recipes including piccalilli. Margaret concocted this version of piccalilli herself and I remember her every year as I make my own piccalilli from my garden vegetables. Most of the book includes more sensible quick-cook family meals. But I do like looking through the rather odd items I kept: a vegetable curry made with tinned tomatoes and Campbells creamy vegetable soup, a fast weight-loss programme where one ate vast quantities of eggs, grapefruit, chicken and cabbage. All these odd items bring back memories of people and times gone by.

The final recipe crammed into my recipe book is titled carrot soup. Well, it's not actually just carrots, but that's all I wrote. This soup is really roasted sweet potato, carrot and ginger soup. I have made this soup for a few years,

depending on the quantity of carrots that I have in my garden in the autumn. Some years it was more carrot than sweet potato, other times there was little garlic or ginger. (I'm a 'chuck-it-all-in and hope-for-the-best' sort of cook).

After the lockdowns that so disrupted our life and social gatherings, the congregation at St Cross, Wilstone, was a much smaller one than before the pandemic. We were no longer of sufficient number to hold our harvest lunch, nor the annual strawberry tea. But we were determined to have the Lenten lunch in 2022 in the village hall as we had done for years. 'Who is to make the soup?' someone asked. I thought of my friend Margaret who once told me, 'You can make a soup out of anything'. So I volunteered to present my soup to more than just my family – and kept my fingers crossed.

The recipe is shown here – give or take a few carrots.

The soup at this year's Lenten lunch was slightly different from the one in 2022 as I double-dosed on ginger (but no one complained!).

Vicky Baldock
St Cross, Wilstone

Sweet potato, carrot and ginger soup

Ingredients

- 500g sweet potatoes
- 300g carrots
- olive oil
- onions, 2, chopped
- garlic, 2 or 3 cloves, crushed
- 750ml vegetable stock
- salt and pepper
- root ginger, grated

Method

1. Chop carrots and sweet potatoes into cubes, slosh the olive oil over them in a roasting tin and mix
2. Place in hot oven for about 20 minutes (190C)
3. Chop the onions and place in a saucepan with some olive oil and gently soften
4. Make the stock with a vegetable cube
5. After 20 minutes take the soft and almost cooked carrots and sweet potatoes from the oven
6. Add the vegetables to the onions in the saucepan, add garlic and ginger and 500ml of the stock, plus salt and pepper
7. Simmer for 15-20 minutes, adding more stock if too thick
8. Allow to cool and purée with a blender, adding stock as necessary



Welcome to Coventry Cathedral



I was visiting Coventry recently and was rather taken by this sign outside the Cathedral. I hope we could say the same about each of our churches.

'We extend a warm welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, widowed, straight, gay, questioning, well-heeled or down at heel. We especially welcome wailing babies and excited toddlers.

'You're welcome here if you're just browsing, just woken up, or just out of prison. We don't care if you're more Christian than the Archbishop of Canterbury or haven't been to church since Christmas ten years ago.

'We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, to teenagers who are growing

up too fast. We welcome keep-fit mums, football dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegans, junk-food eaters. We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted. We welcome you if you're having problems, are down in the dumps or don't like organised religion (we're not too keen on it either).

'We offer a welcome to those who think the earth is flat, work too hard, don't work, can't spell or are here because granny is visiting and wanted to look round. We welcome those who are inked, pierced, both, or neither. We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down their

throats as kids, or got lost on the ring road and wound up here by mistake.

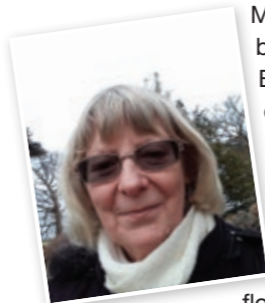
'We welcome pilgrims, tourists, seekers, doubters, and especially you. 'PLEASE COME IN!'

I did go in and did feel welcome. Has anybody seen a welcome to match this? In a church or somewhere else?

John Whiteman
Team Parish



A chance to contribute



Masterminded by Celestria Bell, the church ornamental borders or flowerbeds originated over thirty years ago and many shrubs are still flourishing. I retired aged 60 in 2015. After years in an office, I craved outdoor pursuits. Probably for the first time, I noticed the flowerbeds in the grounds of St Peter & St Paul. They contained weeds...

A week later, the weeds had not moved. Something had to be done. I contacted John Luddington, who was in charge of the grounds at the time, and he welcomed my offer to have a go with the flower beds, without interviewing my own garden! We had always been members of Friends of Tring Church Heritage (FOTCH), and this was my chance to contribute.

The flowerbeds had not been tended for a few years and there were some brambles etc. More alarming was the absence of worms: manure to the rescue! Someone gave me a talking to about parking on the church grass. I waved a paw at the sacks of manure in the back of my trusty Ford Fiesta – but that

made no impression. Other folk have been more appreciative, and I have had many welcome chats about gardening. The comment I most treasure was from a lady who said the flower beds were very 'Tring'. I interpret this to mean very natural and friendly. Many plants are divisions from my own garden, which is open this year on the afternoon of Sunday 9 July as part of the group opening for Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care.

I have roped in my husband, Peter, to help prune the apple tree over the years.

This spring, Peter removed the dead hebes and helped plant two new shrubs. People volunteer for various roles in the church. John Bly once joked that I might be digging up his ancestors in the flower bed. More recently, I caught him with his brushes and wax, off to perform routine maintenance on carved figures in the church – busy bee with his wax. There are many unsung heroes.

The star volunteers are those who mow the lawns so beautifully and edge the graves. This haircut makes

the greatest difference to the appearance of the green and beautiful setting of the church. Then there are the yew hedge cutters, whose task is once more possible now the hedge is no longer so high and wide. Ad hoc work parties are also run.

If you would like to volunteer to help maintain this green heart of Tring, then please contact Barry Ancombe: bandb33@talktalk.net, who co-ordinates the gardening tasks. Enjoy.

Helena Holliday
FOTCH member



Little, looked after and loved



It's huge. It's exhausting. It's emotionally draining. It's painful. I could be talking about a diagnosis of cancer or a bereavement; there are certainly

similarities with both those things except that the transition of a baby you have loved and cared for as your own for eight months has a happy outcome and one you have hoped and prayed for along the way.

Almost everyone who takes an interest in fostering tells us that they couldn't do it because of the pain of giving up a child at the end. I can certainly understand that position, especially now; but the joy of seeing a baby grow and thrive and flourish day by day (yes, the nights have been challenging!) make me want to do it again and again. Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

The transition process itself is something few of us relish. It takes two to three weeks of a friendly invasion. Social workers with various responsibilities visit or call or meet you on Teams. The baby's new family come to live in your space for up to twelve hours a day to learn the familiar routines so your baby, their about-to-be baby, has the least amount of trauma and distress when they move. There are transition toys, books and

videos to be used. You need a house that is clean and tidy, a fridge permanently full of food to feed the newcomers and prove that you are an earth mother or superhero (well, I can only aspire to that!). You have to sort out all their clothes and belongings and make sure they have enough of everything to make the move, so their new parents can focus on what really matters when she is in their home. You still need to fit in other work, keep on top of the laundry, perpetually take photos for the life story book and maintain a memory box. You need to bond with the new individuals, get to know them, make them feel comfortable, share everything with them, so they know the cues for feeding and changing and sleeping as well as the things you do to comfort or entertain. You have to get to know complete strangers in an unnaturally short time so that by the end they feel as if they are your family too, because this helps that baby feel safe to move on and become attached. And if you don't die in the process, you are also supposed to take hand prints and footprints and do therapy activities designed to help the transition.

In my case, I have to edit *Comment* at the same time...

The sixth child in our care, our fourth newborn baby, is going through this process as I write and will have moved to her new home when you read this. At the same time as doing all the above, we need to care for her just the same, and

make her feel that nothing momentous is happening when, of course, everything she has known, all that makes her feel safe, is about to change; and somehow, you have to find odd moments to pause and pray and treasure the gift of that child entrusted to your care and hold her for a few moments longer and reflect on how lucky you have been to share this part of her life (yes, tears are shed).

We have been very fortunate that we have stayed in touch with all our children, to differing degrees, receiving messages and photos of their progress, and visiting or being visited and going out for the day with them. They still know us and we are still a tiny part of their lives. We have also shared the child's life with people close to us who have been a huge support, and without whom we may have fallen along the way, our son Jon, and our friends, Alison and Graham. We all need help and good friends and family members, a support network, to do this well.

Even as all this is happening, emails come through advising you of another child (or several) in need of a home this week: neglected, abused, abandoned, cast out, alone, afraid, withdrawn, or any number of undesirable things... and your heart bleeds to know how great is the need in this part of the developed world for people who care and can open their homes to a needy child.

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul

The way to abundant life



Do you have gates outside your home? The gates at my theological college were locked at 10.00pm: after a night out in Nottingham, we'd end our evening wrestling with a rusty padlock to get back in.

Jesus said, 'I am the gate'. The metaphor is of a sheepfold gate in a small pen that has just one way in or out. Jesus is the gate and we are the sheep. The gate Jesus speaks of isn't to keep the sheep in, it's to let them out. Jesus is the open gate, an open gate

that leads to life-giving pastures outside the sheep-pen, an open gate with a sign attached that says, 'abundant life, this way.'

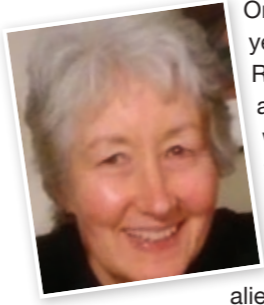
Going through the gate to abundant life can mean lots of things. It might mean beginning a process of letting go of past hurts. It might mean taking a risk and trying that role which you secretly think you'd be good at, but which you're scared of – something in your church perhaps, or something that contributes to the life of your village or town community. Do your gifts and experience mean you have something to offer as a school governor for example? We need those at some of our church schools at the

moment. Abundant life for you might include working to introduce life-giving opportunities for others; it might mean sacrificing some personal comforts for the good of others; or perhaps for you, choosing abundant life might be about slowing down, giving yourself space in which to rest and be restored.

The sign that says, 'Abundant life, this way', isn't a private sign. It's not a sign with restrictions and small print. The abundant life God offers is for anyone and everyone. Alleluia!

Michelle Grace
Tring Team

The big one



On 1 January this year, Extinction Rebellion (XR) announced that it would be changing tactics away from disruptions – which seemed to have been alienating some

sections of the general public – and instead arranging a major series of protests for 21-24 April around the Houses of Parliament in London. That they would work with the police in order to ensure public safety and to minimise potential problems meant that they were able to attract support from a very wide range of charities, NGOs, trade unions and other organisations and the four-day event was billed as peaceful and family-friendly.

Under the leadership of 'Faith For The Climate' (<https://faithfortheclimate.org.uk>), a church service at St John's, Waterloo, was arranged for the start of 'The Big One' on Friday 21 April. This brought together representatives from many Christian and other faith groups working on climate change as staff and supporters from Christian Aid, Tearfund, CAFOD, Christian Climate Action (CCA), A Rocha and many others came together to worship and to pray. Before the service at 10.30am there was a panel discussion at St John's with Baroness Karen Parminter and Bishop Steven Croft of the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee. I did not arrive in time for this, but it was one of the things that day that received coverage in the mainstream media because of an angry intervention by climate change denier, Piers Corbyn, who was politely escorted out of the church as those gathered inside sang 'Amazing Grace'. At 11.30am, as the rain returned, plans to hold the service in the garden outside were changed and people poured into the church for the start at 12 noon. As the building filled, many were left outside but everyone stood quietly to catch as much of the service as they could.

Led by Tearfund's Ruth Valerio, the following 45 minutes were inspiring and uplifting, with music from Engage Worship, contributions from children and a brief address by the former Archbishop of York, Lord Sentamu. The number of those who then set out from St John's, as the weather improved and the sun broke through, was estimated at around 1400,



Gathered in the garden at St John's, Waterloo

and with ages ranging from just 7 weeks to late-80s or more. We marched from the church to the headquarters of fossil fuel giant, Shell, on Belvedere Road, where the Salvation Army band played and the crowd sang and then chanted 'Shame on Shell!' for a short while. Lord Sentamu attempted to deliver a letter on behalf of all those taking part in the 'No Faith in Fossil Fuels' service and pilgrimage march. As Vice-Chair of the climate charity Operation Noah (<https://operationnoah.org>), I was very pleased to be among the eight signatories to that letter. However, Lord Sentamu, the Chair of Christian Aid, was turned away by security, who locked the doors to the building and called the police. Filmed as he tried to post the letter under the door of the Shell building, Sentamu described this as 'the most arrogant experience I've ever had. We want simply to deliver a letter. We're coming in peace. This is the sheer, sheer arrogance of Shell. They think they are the masters of the universe. I'm afraid they have got to change their ways.'

Leaving Shell behind, we continued on our walk to Parliament Square, arriving shortly before thousands of other XR protesters reached the area in front of the Houses of Parliament. The atmosphere throughout the day was one of solidarity, and of urgent but completely peaceful and solemn protest at the failure of corporations and of government – despite repeated assurances and declarations acknowledging the climate emergency – to take sufficient and appropriate action. It was wonderful to see so many people come together from up and down the country and to make clear that time is running out and there is now a real need for change.

While those on the marches, over the four-day protest in London, may have experienced weather fairly typical of a British April, we were aware that many parts of Asia were experiencing a devastating heatwave. Receiving almost no attention on our television screens, temperatures in Thailand



Walkers set out for Parliament Square



Lord Sentamu outside St John's

rose to over 45°C for the first time in that country's history, there was a record-breaking 42.9°C in Laos, in the capital of Bangladesh it was above 40°C, and in India, a number of cities in the north and east recorded temperatures of over 44°C. Schools were closed and there were deaths from heatstroke. As new temperature records are broken year by year, the calls for urgent action could not be more relevant.

Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church



Bokani Tshidzu, Campaign Officer at Operation Noah, addresses the crowd outside Shell HQ



Operation Noah trustees and staff reach Parliament Square



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My journey through Lent



I always look forward to Lent with some trepidation, I have to admit. I think of it as a time for giving myself a sort out, digging out festering and hidden stuff which is lurking somewhere in the deep recesses of my mind and needing to be faced, thought about, prayed about; and no weekend glasses of wine or cheeky gin and tonics to ease the process. I don't always succeed in doing this successfully but, this year, I had a 'good' Lent, and especially a 'good' Holy Week.

Going to the Ash Wednesday evening eucharist was a helpful way to begin, to get into the zone, as it were. Unfortunately, I was unable to join any of the Lent groups because of other commitments, but Edmund and I followed through the Church of England 'Dust and Glory' Lent reflections, which we both found extremely valuable. The course encouraged us to 'take a fresh look at the frustrations and failings that every day brings, seek to learn from them and grow closer to God through them'

(quoting from the introduction on the website) and we appreciated the fact that there were bite-sized chunks each day, it didn't overwhelm, and there was always a question, something to take into your life and think about. It was challenging and difficult and there weren't often answers, but as a direct result I did reconcile with someone, which was hard to do but really worth it.

I'm not often able to go to all the Holy Week talks but this year it happened that I was free for all of them. We formed a pattern of walking down to church in the dusk, always a peaceful pleasure. I'm not sure if 'enjoyed' is the right word, but I did find Huw's talks on the Beatitudes helpful, interesting, informative and thought provoking. It was lovely to gather together with a group of friendly people in the Lady Chapel, and share Compline after each talk. Leaving in silence and walking home in the dark with the evening star lighting the way was part of the process.

I always find the Maundy Thursday service, with the washing of the feet and the stripping of the altar, very powerful; and then sitting in the darkness for a while, firstly listening to Cliff Brown's wonderful chanting (after his fabulous

organ playing) and then in silence felt very emotional, almost too much to bear, more so this year than any other. I'm not sure why.

This year for the first time, I went to the 2.00pm Good Friday service, where Huw gave his final talk, on grief, which I found incredibly moving. In fact, I found the whole service extremely emotional, and totally absorbing, which I hadn't been expecting, probably because of the journey through the week leading up to it. I then went to the Sepulchre Service for the first time, and again, found it very moving. All of this meant that the Easter Dawn service, when it came, felt even more joyful to me than it normally does.

My journey through Lent highlighted to me that there are no easy answers or quick fixes. Life is hard; we fail every day so many times, but accepting that, and dealing with it, understanding yourself and knowing that God loves us all no matter what, is something to be grasped and held on to and carried within, every step of the way. And I am so happy to be part of the community in Tring, both the church community and the wider community. I know how very lucky I am and I count my blessings.

Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul

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Tring Park news



We have mourned the loss of Dame Beryl Grey, who died aged 95. It is the end of an era. She was an inspiration to generations of young dancers.

After an acclaimed professional career dancing, she took on leadership roles in the world of dance. She was a former director general of the Arts Educational School.

You may have noticed a very familiar building when ITV showed 'Why Didn't They Ask Evans?'. Filmed a lot in school in the summer holiday of 2021, written and directed by Hugh Laurie, this adaptation of Agatha Christie's coastal mystery, was reviewed by The Guardian as having it all 'a tight dialogue, a starry cast and exquisite 1930s nostalgia'.

We were very proud that alumnus Oliver Nicolas was shortlisted for the

Best Professional Debut Performance in the WatsonStage Awards. After Tring Park, he trained at LAMDA and the landed the role of George McFly in 'Back to the Future'.

Years 3-6 celebrated World Book Day with impressive costumes including Queen of Hearts from 'Alice in Wonderland', 'Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz', 'The Cat in the Hat', Annabeth Chase from 'Percy Jackson', Violet from 'Series of Unfortunate Events', Bellatrix Lestrange, Peter from 'The Detective Dog' and Tom from 'Beast Quest'!

Alumni Matt Trevor has been back and delivered a fantastic masterclass to our Musical Theatre students. Later that week our students were off to the Troubadour Wembley Park Theatre in London to see Matt in 'Newsies' who is playing the role of Henry (and cover Jack Kelly).

Students in our Encore Dance Company have had the fantastic opportunity of working with the

wonderful Sir Matthew Bourne, Kerry Biggin, Etta Murfitt and Glenn Graham, who have restaged Sir Matthew Bourne's 'Watch With Mother'. At the end of last year, our students in Encore Dance Company set off to Gothenburg to perform for one week with Swedish National Ballet School in 'Nutcracker'; what an experience! We have links going back many years.

Over the first Bank Holiday, volunteers were helping the alumni of twenty-five years ago revisit our school and their old haunts.

Twenty years ago, I had put in an application to The Arts Educational School, as was. I remember the whole experience so well, including being befuddled by the array of corridors in the main school building (Mansion). I feel very blessed that things went my way.

Sarah Bell
Tring Park

A place of art and creativity



Churches have always been places of art and creativity. Now, we might see them as more than that, but throughout history, people have made and

commissioned objects as part of faith. These things are not idols to be worshipped but ways of showing one's love of God, and how important the place of worship is.

Different traditions do this in different ways, as does the Church of England with its great breadth of living out faith. As someone who loves making things from fabric, the use of cloth in worship is something that I have always found fascinating with its links to history, to faith and to art.

Fair linen

This is a term that applies to the white cloths that are used as altar cloths and the napkin-like items that are used during Holy Communion. It is an old term that means high-quality cloth, made of linen or cotton, made as well as possible, as only the best is good enough for God. Natural fabrics were obviously the only ones that were available originally, but they can also be washed at a hot temperature which makes them more hygienic. Some would say that they can only be hand-finished (hemmed and embroidered) which of course takes a level of skill. Depending on your tradition, there is a lot of guidance (or rules!) about how far the cloth should hang down on either side of the altar or table. There are often crosses embroidered on it – quite often at the end of the table top to make it easier to show that the cloth is hanging evenly.

During Holy Communion, there are three cloths that can be used. The largest is the corporal, which is ironed so that it folds up into nine squares, again with a cross embroidered right in the middle or the middle of one side. The name comes from the Latin word meaning body, and it is there to pick up any pieces of the consecrated bread that might fall, and it is laid out so that it can be folded in on itself to protect any crumbs. The chalice and paten (the cup and plate) are placed on it. There is the purificator, which means clean, and is a smaller piece that is ironed into three long folds, and it is

used to wipe the chalice rim between users and to wipe vessels at the end. The lavabo (which means wash) towel is used to wipe the priest's hands after the ceremonial hand washing before Holy Communion.

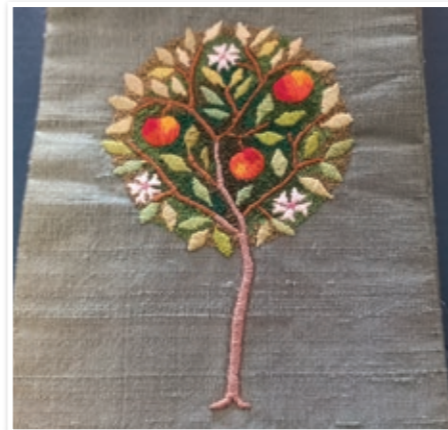
I like tradition and ritual, and to me there is also a logic in how these pieces of fabric are used – to keep clean, to protect, and an element of showing respect. Although ironing is very rarely on my list of enjoyable household tasks, there is a real pleasure in ironing a purificator ready for use. This is also a very good place to thank all those on our washing rota who, with great care, look after our fair linen.



The brightly coloured bits!

Our custom includes using different colours to indicate different points in the church year – green for ordinary time, purple for Lent and Advent (although blue can be used, and is in Tring as the previous church lighting prevented purple looking like purple), red for Pentecost, Christ the King, and various saints, and gold or white for Easter and Christmas. These colours are used on altar frontals – the fabric that falls over the front of the altar or table; on the pulpit fall (which hangs from the bookstand on the pulpit); on the burse and veil, which is a cloth that covers the chalice and paten before they are used, and a flat envelope that goes on the top and contains the corporal); and on the vestments or sacred clothes that the priest and deacons wear. The vestments are usually the stole which is worn like a long scarf around the neck, the chasuble which is the outer robe that goes over the head, and the cope, which is a cloak.

The style of the vestments dates from the 4th century onwards, and there have been many disputes over the years about whether they should be worn as well as



what style they should be. They are not worn in all Anglican churches, but for me they are an important part of the liturgy and they hold a great deal of symbolism – there are prayers to say as each garment is put on. Modern vestments also offer a wonderful opportunity for the artistic and creative to make items that reflect our faith. The symbols used on the vestments can be appliqued or embroidered and can be traditional or modern. Stoles in particular are difficult to make because of their size.

I am honoured to wear stoles that have been made by my mother and my mother-in-law, by my aunt and by a friend, and I have made them for others. There is a great joy in making a stole for another person, and for me, part of the meaning is that these symbols of priesthood are made by women, in a church that has not always seen their value.

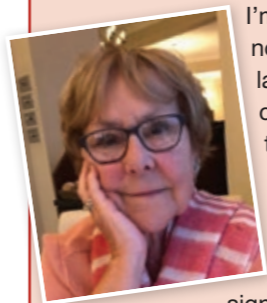
And so much else

There are so many other items in church – the kneelers or hassocks, the banners, whether for carrying or seasonal decoration, and the vast majority of these are made for our church by people who have worshipped or do worship there. These items for me add to the meaning of my worship, and they add to our history and to our community. Long may this continue.

Jane Banister, Tring Team



Words



I'm sure you've noticed how our language has changed over the years. Some words are no longer used, like 'diverted'... no, not the road sign instruction: in past times it meant 'being amused' or entertained. It's from the Latin of course, and the Italian word is divertimenti.

Gay, you remember, meant 'happy', or 'with joy', but now its meaning refers to a person's sexual orientation.

In teenage language, a few years ago when my grandchildren were at secondary school, the word 'sick' meant good. I was astonished, thinking it only meant vomit or an illness.

And when someone is 'hot' it has nothing to do with a high temperature, or physical fever: no, no – it's physical attraction, or very sexy. That, of course, is in the eye of the beholder; but you get the meaning – we can't take words literally.

So, words change, our language evolves, and for my age group it can all seem like double Dutch. We are out of touch with modern times. Some would say thank goodness, but if this is true of the last eighty years, how true is it over 2,000 years.

This brings me to the Lent meetings this year and the Beatitudes. Translation always bothers me. I mean, words from 2000 years ago, can they really mean what we think they do, today? We can

only guess at what life was like back then: no running water, no electric lights, no roads as we know them (except the pot holes that we are dealing with on a daily basis), no supermarkets... it must have been grow your own and market the excess as we had to during WWII; no buses or cars – a camel or a donkey if you were lucky, would spare your feet. It was a hard physical life. Life expectancy was short, forty years or less for most and many children died in the first two years of life.

Is that why Jesus gave us the Beatitudes? It's not surprising that the second Beatitude is: 'Blessed are those that mourn, for God will comfort them.'

In the first week of our Lenten group, we seemed to spend a lot of time discussing what 'blessed' meant. We raked over it, pulled it apart but in the end, we stopped at the word 'happy' as it is translated in The Good News Bible. But that doesn't quite express what I mean when I use it, when I say it to someone, whether through a sneeze or just 'Bless you' as I leave a meeting. A blessing can be a parting gift, as I wish someone well-being and my love.

The Beatitudes are precious and beautiful sayings. Having an autopsy on the separate words was a little over the top for me. I would have liked to know how Jesus intended them to be used within the climate of the time, a country occupied by the Romans.

Meek, I agreed, needed to be looked at. I do think that word has changed over the years. Nowadays meek is a word we connect to someone being timid and weak, but

after discussion, we thought perhaps the word had been watered down and maybe 'quietly empowered' might be a better description, that there was a hidden strength in this word, one that we have lost in our language, and it is definitely not timid. Jesus was said to be meek, but as we all know, he was not a timid character. He had tremendous strength in all he did: calling out the money lenders, overturning tables and calling for God's temple to be used for worship and not a marketplace. His blessing of generosity and kindness to women and children who were seen and not heard. I cannot imagine the effort that must have been required as he waited for the soldiers to arrest him, and the tremendous strength to go to the cross for the sins of humanity.

For four weeks we argued and dissected the meanings of these passionate words as we examined all the different translations which altered the perceived meanings. Perception is all. We read the words but heard something else. Words and times change, but in his care God wants us to thrive, to be happy, to be blessed. He wants his children to thrive. He wants our families to thrive. He wants our towns to thrive. He wants our country to thrive. He wants our world to thrive.

Imagine what the world would be like if we all followed the words of the Beatitudes.

He wants us to prosper and succeed under his care.

Brenda Hurley
St Peter & St Paul

Natural History Museum, Tring – Events in June



1st June 2023 (Thursday) Drop in anytime between 10.00 – 15.00	FREE Suitable for all ages.	Tring: Bioblitz Variety of activities investigating the Museum's grounds, mini-beasting and pond-dipping.
13th June 2023 (Tuesday) 19.00 – 21.00	£15 Suitable for adults. Advance booking required.	Tring: Evening Draw & Explore session A chance to join a small group in the stillness of the galleries after closing time. Explore, take a short tour and have time to draw some of the handling specimens.
Just a few more weeks – closes on 18th June 2023	FREE Book a free entry ticket to guarantee entry to the museum for the display. (Midweek visits are usually quieter times.)	Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year Display of all awarded photos in the 2022 competition, as well as the Rising Star portfolio and this year's Grand Title winners. Also 2 short films about the Grand Title images.

For more information, visit www.nhm.ac.uk and choose Tring – What's On.

Stephen Hearn

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Relics



It is one of the great ironies of history that Henry VIII, who was given the title of Defender of the Faith by the Pope in 1521 for his defence of the doctrine of the seven sacraments against Martin Luther's teaching about two sacraments, then went on to break with the Pope and destroy the monasteries and shrines where holy relics were kept. Among these relics were remnants of the cross. Yet at the Coronation this year, the procession was led by the Cross of Wales which contained relics of the Holy Cross given by Pope Francis to King Charles and incorporated into a new Processional Cross presented by the King to the Church in Wales as a centenary gift.

This gift is an interesting reminder of the way in which holy relics have featured as being of very great significance to many Christians, but also rejected by many others. In the case of some relics, there are questions of authenticity, but others are genuine relics. In part, relics are a reminder that we humans may have many memories in our minds and yet value things, objects, items which may bring back memories and connect us to particular people or events. How many readers still have work their children did at school? How many married women still have their bridal dresses? Things with associations of the past are valued.

Watchers of the Antiques Roadshow will know how valuable are items with connections to famous people or events – medals for war service, autographs of the Beatles, things to do with the sinking of the Titanic and so on. All sorts of things can bring back memories and so are valued. One might almost say they are like sacraments, that is, items which have meaning beyond what can be touched and felt. At one level we may think of water in baptism or bread and wine in Communion – things used with great meaning, things used to bring back memories – 'Do this in memory of me'. Or what, at a more personal and younger level, about cards for birthdays made by our children? You can, no doubt, think of many mementoes and souvenirs which have great significance for you, even

a gift from Blackpool as a reminder of a holiday.

When it comes to objects which recall the saints – often parts of them, such as a bone – it may seem a different matter. It is a mark of difference between Christians. In a sense it all started with churches built over martyrs' graves, hence the habit of calling a church after a saint, and of keeping the martyr's mortal remains in a shrine or ornate reliquary. So, our cathedral has a reliquary containing part of a bone of St Alban. I think I am right in saying all Roman Catholic churches normally have a relic in the altar stone. One problem is authenticity. Did Mary's veil survive, to say nothing of her milk? There are many relics which it is hard to believe have survived the early centuries of the church. With others of a later period, it may be a different matter. Yet through the centuries holy relics have been seen as a means of connecting with the saints; indeed, before the advent of scientific medicine, some have been invested with curative powers.

All this started because of the Pope's gift to the king of two slivers of the cross. Did the true cross survive? Golgotha, the Temple, indeed all Jerusalem, was destroyed by the Romans in AD70. A new city, Aelia Capitolina, was founded and a pagan temple built there and all Jews were banished from the area. All changed when the emperors Constantine and Licinius in AD313 met in Milan and recognised the Christian church. Constantine's mother was a devout Christian and, at a great age, visited the

holy places and founded churches on the Mount of Olives and at Bethlehem. According to later sources she discovered the cross on which our Lord was crucified. The legend goes that three crosses were excavated, one of which was declared to be the true one because of its power to heal a sick woman. In about AD380, the practice of venerating the cross started and, soon, relics were distributed in many places in the world.

Sceptics will ask how a wooden cross could survive centuries and how it can be proved to be genuine. In fact, there were so many churches claiming to have pieces of the true cross that, at the Reformation, when all this devotion to relics was attacked, it was said that if all the pieces were put together there would be enough to build a warship. Yet a 19th century French scholar did a lot of calculations as to the bulk of a cross and the volume of all the fragments put together would not result in a third of a ship!

It is all very interesting and 14 September is Holy Cross Day in the Anglican Calendar. For all Christians the cross is the symbol, sign, memento of how Christ died for mankind. As for all the relics of the true cross, one may only say 'God only knows'. Certainly, it is appropriate that we focus on the cross and the fact that it led the Coronation Procession for our present Defender of the Faith.

Martin John Banister
St Albans Cathedral



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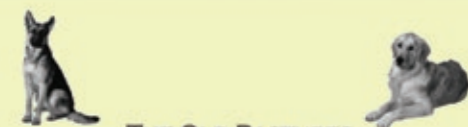
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Letter from Orkney



Hello, Hello, Hello, to the three people who read the 'Letter from Orkney' and to anyone else who comes across my inane scribblings.

Our lives are now turning upside-down as we tackle the onslaught of our wonderful guests this year, the first having just gone home. We are expecting the next sitting of my sister and son in May/June and in between we have lost our wonderful Labrador, Jasper. But the good news is that we have an eight-year-old little sweetie called 'Bella' who is very nervous at the moment, having travelled from a gundog breeding and training establishment and farm in Devon, some 900 miles from sunny Orkney. She had never been in a car or a house – in fact, never off the farm. Surprisingly she has been trained not to foul her kennel and seems to regard our house as her kennel so that is all good, and it is wonderful to have a dog around the house again.



Meanwhile, the growing season is almost upon us (we are a month behind you). So, all the roads are busy with tractors and the fields are alight with tractor lights late at night as ploughing and 'muck-

spreading' goes on at a pace preparing for planting. This will be mainly new grass for silage and storage for next winter and animal rotation.



Smallest lamb ever.

This is Edward our preaching Shepherd, retired. (The tall non-woolly one)

We are expecting a small flock of newborn lambs and their mothers shortly for the front paddock, so hopefully we will enjoy the lamb-racing and the formation of their wee gangs while the mothers enjoy a short moment of peace in between child-feeding times.

We are now seeing a discernible buzz in the community as cruise ships arrive, cafés open, camper vans arrive, and all the specialist archeological attractions open. On the incoming cruise ship arriving very early morning, breakfast is served, then they join the coaches waiting to be loaded with our American and Chinese visitors and whisked efficiently to 'Skara Brae' then the Standing Stones and finally the Highland Park distillery tour and the chance to

purchase the prize whisky at £17,000.00 a bottle. Finally, back on board for dinner and on their way to the next stop, having 'done Orkney'. When I asked if anyone buys the expensive whisky, I was reliably informed 'Yes, not only one bottle, but two: one to drink on the cruise and one to take home,' usually to America. Being

a lifelong lover of good whisky, I can't believe any drink, however good, is worth that, and sadly I would be surprised if it were even appreciated.

Our new acquisition of an electric car is turning out to be a winner. It is very easy and comfortable to drive, even for a bumbling 79-year old. It is very economical on the fuel (electricity) and best of all, it is so quiet; perfectly suited for travel around the Island as the distances are reasonable. A ride of say eighty miles, plus using the heater, lights and wipers, is well within its capacity and ends up still a ¼ power left. I don't think I would attempt a trip south in it though. 'Horses for courses' as they say in the classics.

As I am burbling on about the south, we hope to make the trip down to Tring sometime later in the year, to catch the Hertfordshire sun. Up here we are normally a blue/white colour, so let's hope for a good Tring summer. At this moment, at the end of April, we have just been baptised with a coat of frozen water (snow) soon to leave us, I hope. Negotiating snow and ice with wobbly legs and a walking stick is no bundle of laughs.

My digital writing instrument is running out of nonsense and digital ink, so I will bid you all a fond farewell from the Whitesails Rest Home for Ageing Plumbers — other crumbles welcome. Whiskies @ 6.00pm. Surprised you managed to read this far!!

God bless you, All.

Mac Dodge
Dounby Community Kirk



Snow out front 5 minutes ago

Eco-Church project in Tring Team Parish

Pre-Christmas, some of us studied an Operation Noah publication, 'Tenants of the King'. (See Nicky Bull's piece in the December/January *Comment*.) We were inspired and challenged to take action, not just as individuals, but as churches. The David Attenborough 'Wild Isles' programme on TV might also have galvanised our view. Sometimes, though, it is hard to know where to start.

At the end of January, Huw Bellis called a meeting in St Peter & St Paul, for members of the five parish churches to discuss feedback from our studies. We looked at how we might, as a parish, move forward in our desire to live and act responsibly in this time of climate change and injustice. We talked about steps we have taken so far towards improving our 'Eco-church' status – for which a Christian organisation called 'A Rocha' has created a list of benchmarks against which we can assess our progress in a number of areas:

- how we worship and aim to educate our congregations and visitors
- how we use our land and buildings
- how we engage with our local community and the wider world
- and what messages our lifestyles send to others

We shared knowledge, during the meeting, about some organisations in Tring who are already involved in 'green' initiatives, and who have also produced information or provided services that we could endorse and support:

- Tring in Transition – whose volunteers have (among other things) created a Community Garden at the Duckmore Lane Allotment Site. During the winter, they also carried out thermal imaging of people's homes, to help them identify where they could make energy savings. In May's *Comment* we published their updated list of where, in Tring, you can take items for recycling.
- Tring Radio (online) – which now airs an Eco Show on Monday evenings 6.00 – 7.00pm.
- Repair Café, Tring – Every third Saturday of the month

10.30-13.00 at High Street Baptist Church.

- Tring Farmers' Market – where you can find local, sustainable and organic food, produce and artisan crafts, on second and fourth Saturdays in each month, except December.
- Tring's own Apple Fayre – one of the large annual events under the banner of Tring Together and with the blessing of Tring Town Council. (See 'Use your LOAF' in November 2022 *Comment*.)
- Justice and Peace Group, Tring (affiliated to Churches Together in Tring) – who were the voluntary organisation behind Tring becoming a Fairtrade town and a Bee-friendly town. They also publish a list of local shops and businesses that supply or use locally-produced or Fairtrade goods, foods and refreshments.
- Sustainable Tring Thing – a collective of local people, organisations, and independent businesses united through the ethos of sustainability, who have set up working groups in collaboration with other community groups in the town.

A small group of us has met and we have begun a process of finding out how we, as churches, and as visible Christians in society, can make informed choices and educated changes that could lead to a fairer and more sustainable future. Mike Watkin is leading us, and we are calling ourselves the ECO-Church Group – but we are hoping that people in our congregations and the wider community will want to be involved in the process in some way.



To begin – here are some dates for your diaries, when you can take part in some 'Citizen Science' or 'Community Action' (see the box for a taste of what is proposed).

Anne Nobbs, St Peter & St Paul



Churches 'Count on Nature' Week 3-11 June 2023

Churchyards are important habitats, largely unspoilt, never having been ploughed or artificially fertilised, and with a wide diversity of plants, fungi, lichens and wildlife. The soil is mature, and trees are often large which means that churchyards store greater amounts of carbon than other areas of grassland. 97% of British wildflower meadows have been lost since 1947 and 1 in 7 of UK's wildlife species is at risk of extinction. (Information provided from Biodiversity section of the Church of England website.)

- We will be registering the five churches in our team to take part in an 'Every Flower Counts' survey. The plan is to encourage as many people as possible to set aside time during that week when they can identify plant life (and maybe wildlife) in our churchyards.
- Common species are just as important for biodiversity as rare ones, so you will not need to be an expert! We will aim to have information available to help you identify some of the species you could find.
- You may have heard of the 'Caring for God's Acre' charity. Results will be recorded on their online 'Beautiful Burial Ground' map which shows all sites where surveys have taken place, and the number of different species found there. Data will also be fed into the National Biodiversity Network records.
- Look out for more information in churches and on posters nearer the time.

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Cemeteries and churchyards



The subject of gravestones featured in Huw Bellis' article in the April issue of *Comment* and views on their value can perhaps depend on whether your

perspective is spiritual or historical. Gravestones also featured in a conversation during coffee at St Cross, specifically what has happened to some of the ones in the old burial ground to the north of St Peter & St Paul's Church. Vicky Baldock has very clear memories of her earlier years, living over a shop (now the Culture Bakery) in the centre of Tring, and can recall playing amongst these stones as a child; but today, many are no longer there. I found this really interesting, because I have a great love of family history and have spent a lot of time researching my family's genealogy.

One of my maternal great, great grandmothers died in 1881 and the County Burial Record reports that Lois Edwards was 'buried in Tring'. But where? There was no cemetery at that time and as the family were C.of E. I can only assume she was buried in the old churchyard. For someone who likes verifiable facts, and all the loose ends tied up, this is very frustrating!

One of the great joys of gravestones is that they can fill in the gaps in research and also lay to dust errors in oral history which have been passed down through the generations as fact. My mother, and my great uncle, were adamant that her grandmother (his mother) was one of six siblings, all born in the late 1800s in Gubblecote. Gubblecote is a hamlet between Wilstone and Long Marston and residents generally used All Saints Church, Long Marston and sometimes Marsworth, for weddings, baptisms and funerals. I knew two of the six siblings were buried in Wilstone but had no knowledge of the others. Visiting Long Marston early in 2018, I went for a walk around the village, finishing up at All Saints Church. The churchyard was full of snowdrops and, whilst wandering around enjoying the spectacle, I found four family graves – the other four siblings. I recognised all the names: I could even remember one of the 'aunts' in person, so I kept walking and looking, wondering who else I might find. I subsequently

found a fifth grave, this time listing their mother (my maternal great, great grandmother), plus her husband and two children. Two more children! Nobody had ever mentioned Sarah or Arthur. Sadly, Sarah had died at the age of 16 and nothing is known of her. Her brother Arthur had been killed in the First World War, with

no known grave, but remembered on the Thiepval Memorial in the Somme. The family had suddenly grown, and we have subsequently been able to identify Arthur as the correspondent on a series of postcards sent during 1914-15, but coming to an abrupt end in 1916. We can only assume that earlier generations of the family dealt with their grief by not speaking of the people they had lost. Today that is rectified and we remember Arthur's sacrifice by laying a poppy wreath in his memory on Remembrance Sunday.

Was the rest of the oral history correct? No, it wasn't!

The female siblings were all known by variations of their given names. Some were obvious – Emma was always called Em, Orpah was shortened to Orp (!), Ada became Ade, but Mary Ann was known as Poll, and the fifth sister was known as Carr. My mother always understood her name was Caroline, but Long Marston's grave stones proved otherwise – she was Carrie Selina. No wonder I couldn't find her on Ancestry! My mother took a lot of convincing: Carrie Selina didn't sound right, too 'posh', but once again, a gravestone provided the answer. In a far corner of the church grounds at Long Marston were two more family graves, including the siblings' own aunt, and her name was Selina.

Long Marston churchyard is lovely, partly maintained and manicured and partly left for nature. As spring turns to summer the wild flowers flourish and the area is full of butterflies and moths and other pollinators. It is very peaceful, full of birdsong, and a good place to just sit and 'be'. I visit fairly often, partly to look after the family graves and to imbibe the sense



of connection to my forebears, but also to enjoy the space.

Looking for a family headstone in Wilstone Cemetery would have yielded nothing. We have never understood why the unmarried members of the family, buried in Long Marston, merited memorials but the two married siblings, who lived in Wilstone, were laid in unmarked graves. In fact, all the Wilstone relatives lie in unmarked plots, including three very young children who all died before reaching their second birthday. Local knowledge confirms that infants were buried in one particular place in the cemetery and this ground is now preserved from future use to prevent disturbance. Children's coffins were provided by an 'undertaker' in Marsworth, usually within two or three days of death. However, the two sisters, their spouses, and the three babies are now remembered together, on a new headstone in the cemetery – the practical culmination of my family history work on that side of the family.

Many of my paternal forebears are buried in Abney Park Cemetery in Stoke Newington in London. It is part of the group known as the Magnificent Seven, which also includes Highgate and Brompton Cemeteries. Designed as a parkland cemetery, it has an 'Egyptian Revival' entrance and some wonderful ornate architecture in the central chapel and some of the tombs. Abney Park is unique in that it was never designed solely for cemetery use; it was the first arboretum to be combined with a burial ground in Europe and was meant to be an educational attraction as well. The trees around the perimeter were all labelled, from A to Z, finishing with

Zanthoxylum (American Toothache Tree). Officially Abney Park is still in use as a burial ground but is also run as a nature reserve. Trying to locate a grave is very difficult – it is a huge space and very overgrown as so much is left for the wildlife, but the atmosphere is magical. Old London mixed with modern conservation – I just need to make sure my next visit is in winter when much of the growth will have receded.

Coming up-to-date, my family still find value in placing headstones on graves, to commemorate the life of a loved one, and to have somewhere to visit on special anniversaries or none, all through the year. My parents' ashes were interred in Tring Cemetery, in a grave adjacent to my maternal grandparents. Today it is only possible to have a headstone; full sized kerbed graves are no longer allowed. But that is what my grandparents have got, and the marble stonework now

needs cleaning and re-lettering, which is very costly. So, what to do? Being practical, I want to replace the whole thing with a single headstone – inscriptions on upright stones last far longer than on flat ones – but my brother thinks the grave should remain as my grandparents chose. Stalemate! When

we eventually make a decision we are also going to have a headstone erected for our paternal grandparents, who currently have no memorial anywhere. Will future historians find clarity in the names on the stones – yes, they are all



as recorded when they were baptised, but my paternal grandparents came from London, via Surrey, so that should cause some confusion!

Alison Cockerill
St Cross, Wilstone

Quarter days



The quarter days are (in England)
Lady Day – 25 March, Midsummer Day – 24 June, Michaelmas – 29 September and Christmas Day – 25 December.

In England these quarter days were the days when servants were contracted, rents were due and school, university and legal terms started. The dates were chosen because they were very close to the two solstices and two equinoxes. The solstice and equinox days had, before Christianity came to the British Isles, been pagan festival days. The church didn't abolish pagan feast days – it took them over!

Lady Day 25 March was close to the Spring Equinox on 21 March which celebrated the Green Man and the hare, which was a sacred animal. Lady Day was the day of the Annunciation when Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth to Jesus. From 1155 to 1752 when the Gregorian calendar was adopted, the New Year started on 25 March. When the calendar changed there were eleven 'lost days' and Lady Day became 'old Lady Day' on 5 April which is the end of the UK tax year.

Midsummer Day 24 June was close to the Summer Solstice on 21 June which

celebrated Father Sun and Mother Earth. It was also called St John's Day for the birth of St John which Luke's Gospel said was six months before the birth of Jesus. Christ was born on the start of 'growing days' when light increases, whilst John was born at the start of 'lessening days' when light decreases. This illustrates what John said (John 3:30) of Jesus 'he must increase; but I must decrease'.

Michaelmas 29 September was close to the Fall Equinox on 21 September which celebrated harvest thanksgiving. It was St Michael's day celebrating St Michael the Archangel. It was the traditional day when farm and smallholding annual accounts were drawn up and marked the end of the agricultural year. It is the day when the new Lord Mayor of London is elected. The old Michaelmas Day (before the Gregorian calendar) was 11 October.

Christmas Day 25 December was close to the Winter Solstice on 21 December which celebrated the Great Mother and the Sun Child. The Sun Child is reborn at the Winter Solstice and Stonehenge is aligned with sunset on this day. Newgrange in Ireland is aligned with sunrise on this day. So the Sun God was reborn on 21 December and the Son of God was born (or at least his birth celebrated) on 25 December.

In addition, there were another four pagan feast days also converted to Christian days called cross quarter days: Imbolc on 2 February (Christian Candlemas); Beltane on 30 April (the Christian feast day of Saint Walpurga); Lammas on 2 August (the Christian Loaf Mass Day); Samhain or Halloween on 31 October (All Saints and All Souls days). These days divided the year into eight when combined with quarter days.

The conversion of pagan festivals into Christian feast days was ordered by Emperor Constantine through the Council of Nicea in AD325. Constantine wanted to unite the pagan and Christian parts of his empire and saw these feast days as a method of doing this. All his empire, whether Christian or pagan, would celebrate together. Constantine himself was a mixture of pagan and Christian. He started as a worshipper of Mithras – a Roman cult that had started in the 1st century AD. He converted to Christianity after a vision of Christ that he believed won him a major battle, the battle of the Milvian Bridge.

Scottish quarter days are different – Candlemas 28 February, Whit Sunday 28 May, Lammas 28 August and Martinmas 28 November. The dates were regularised by the Term and Quarter Days (Scotland) Act 1990. They are more similar to the English cross quarter days than to the quarter days.

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

Tweet of the month

Some people will have noticed the lack of a Tweet in the previous edition of *Comment* while others will have guessed that part of the reason was the sudden and unexpected death on 19 March of my wife, Moira. Couple this with a planned trip to Sri Lanka on 1 April and I found myself doing a number of things I hadn't expected to do before I went away, including organising a funeral and coming to terms with a sudden bereavement. I was conflicted about going to Sri Lanka but family and friends all said I should go; I ran out of time to write a Tweet.

Last year a friend had asked if I would like to go to Sri Lanka over Easter 2023 for what was primarily a mammal-watching trip as they needed a fourth person to make the trip viable. I was a little reluctant as I do like seeing birds more than other animals. However, the trip involved a boat trip to look for Blue Whale – a mammal worth seeing and maybe we'd see birds, too.

On 1 April I picked up my friend, and after an almost eleven-hour flight from Heathrow, we arrived in Colombo on 2 April, and spent that day adjusting to temperatures over 32C and serious humidity – my whole body felt like it was leaking water.

On 3 April, Dulan, our guide for the trip, picked us up in the air-conditioned

minibus and we were off. Most of the mammals are nocturnal so night drives took place practically every night for between five to eight hours! I'd thought we'd sleep during the day, but apparently not, as some mammals are diurnal! After five days and only twelve hours sleep, I skipped one of the night-drives before I collapsed. It was a good decision but I did miss a Pangolin (Scaly Ant-eater), which are very difficult to see. It was worth it for a decent night's sleep.

In the end I saw 158 species of bird, both nocturnal and diurnal, which was a very pleasant surprise and included birds I have wanted to see for years. Some were special because we really hadn't expected to see them, like Brown Noddy and Serendib Scops Owl – a scarce Sri Lankan endemic. However, this Great Stone-Curlew (*Esacus recurvirostris*), wasn't new but the views were amazing and they are weirdly-beautiful looking birds. It is a close relative to the Stone-Curlew that is a rare breeder in southern Britain on bare or short-grassed areas of downland or heathland. Anyway, Great Stone-Curlew has the scientific name *Esacus recurvirostris*. *Esacus* comes from a Greek word and means shorebird (e.g. Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Curlew), and it is indeed found on the beach, as well as inland on lakes and rivers.

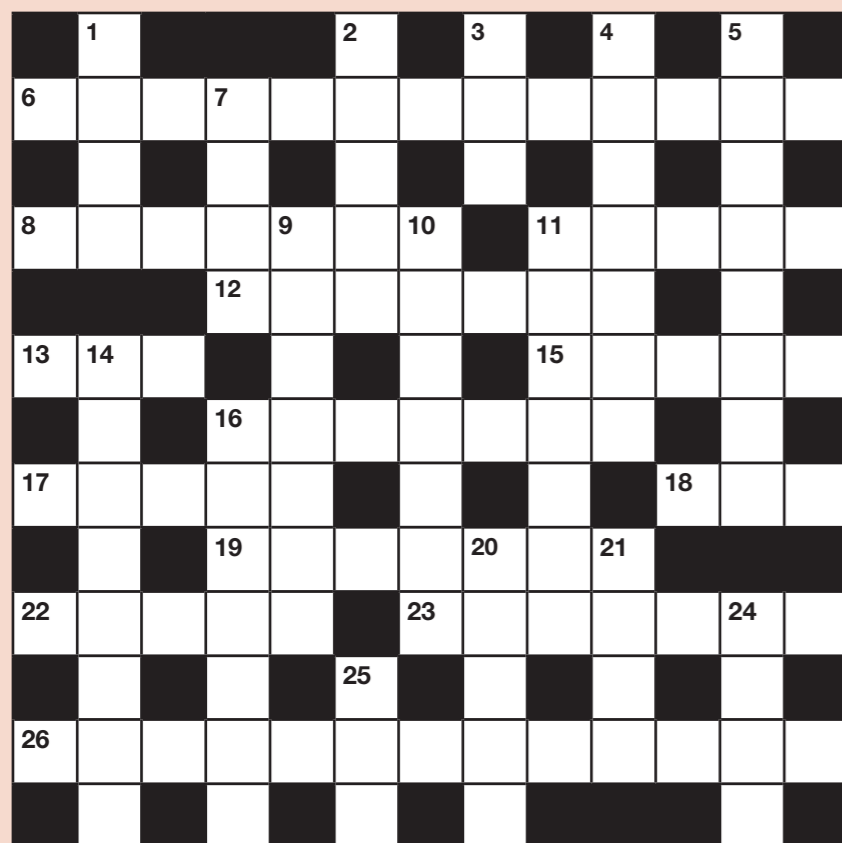


Recurvirostris is from two Latin words, *recurvus* meaning bent or curved back, and *rostris* meaning billed. So basically, this means upturned bill and *recurvirostra* is the generic name for the Avocet family of species which also shares this characteristic. Great Stone-Curlew is found across southern Iran, the Indian Sub-continent and into South-east Asia, so definitely an exotic bird.

In the end I'm glad I went and I saw lots of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, dragonflies – many of which were new. It was a welcome distraction and the mental-health benefits of nature and wildlife shouldn't be underestimated. We should protect it not just because God created it but because it is good for us in so many ways; and like God, is there when needed and doesn't let us down.

Roy Hargreaves, St Peter & St Paul

Crossword



ACROSS

- 6. Healed by Jesus (4) (9)
- 8. Patron at a Baptism (7)
- 11. 'Christ our' (5)
- 12. Piano musicals (7)
- 13. Married (3)
- 15. Jokes (5)
- 16. Dressed up (7)
- 17. Your yearly anniversary (5), and 25 Down (3)
- 18. Home of Noah (3)
- 19. Those paying rent (7)
- 22. A horse (5)
- 23. Trustworthiness (7)
- 26. Plea after each commandment (4)(4)(5)

DOWN

- 1. Musical instrument (4)
- 2. Goods truck (5)
- 3. Lyric poem (3)
- 4. Delighted (7)
- 5. A previous family member (8)
- 7. Monetary units of Japan (4)
- 9. Comforted (7)
- 10. Political Party (7)
- 11. Title of the sovereign (7)
- 14. Thrown out (8)
- 16. Takes part in (7)
- 20. New story (5)
- 21. Wise (4)
- 24. Politeness (4)

Life with Tring Red Cross, Herts 96

All was going well with the Red Cross Hall and the working detachment of Tring Red Cross when Nora Grace died suddenly in August 2003. Consternation! She WAS the Red Cross.

We then discovered that, as helpers of her original committee had aged, died or moved away over the past years, Nora had been taking on their work until she was virtually a committee of one with most of the information stored in her head.

The Red Cross members kept the detachment going but we quickly needed a new committee to raise funds to support the hall, and keep it well maintained. This committee coped with fencing, decorating, gardening and general maintenance to help stretch the Red Cross budget from Hertford. So their fundraising activities increased.

Red Cross members carried on. We ran many First Aid courses for volunteers of local organisations, and these were very popular as we trained folk from Playgroups, Scout leaders, Guiding personnel, Riding for the Disabled and other groups. We usually had a couple of 6th form students for our main First Aid courses, notably those seeking entry into medical training and we so appreciated the keenness of these youngsters.

Our presence in the district was always noted as we carried on with our usual duties at concerts, the Ridgeway Run and various activities. We still maintained our annual Red Cross flag week where we were popular in our town.

After the Tsunami on Boxing Day 2005, Tesco gave us permission to collect in their store. We were there for a week, and the generous people of Tring donated £6,000 which my husband and I wheeled to the bank in a Tesco trolley.

We heard a loud explosion on a Sunday morning in 2006. There was a huge fire which appeared to be on our doorstep at the Cow Roast but it was

actually the oil depot at Buncefield in Hemel Hempstead. I knew that as Red Cross members we would be called but the instructions were to form carloads of four and wait to be given a time for duty so that we could provide relief in relays. My carload was called for midday and to go to the evacuation centre at Jarman's leisure complex. Because it happened on a Sunday, luckily there were no fatalities, but forty-two people were injured and around 2,000 had been evacuated immediately from their homes; they needed everything from food and drink to medication, babies' nappies and dog food. The organisation at the centre was good and Red Cross members were used as support and comfort.

Another different duty was to help at a centre for newly rescued 'slaves' who had been found working illegally in the building trade and existing in dreadful conditions in garden sheds. These young men spoke no English but needed help. From 2003 onwards the new committee were fundraising with Quiz Nights, Antique Evenings, and Sunday Teas which were very popular, being held in Spring after long winter months indoors.

In 2012 we were given the news that the Red Cross wanted to spend its money on services rather than buildings. They no longer wanted to own any property but to hire a room weekly for the local Tring detachment.

But what of the building? Luckily a clause in the original deeds meant that the land given by Mrs Fells had been gifted to the town and the Red Cross had it on a peppercorn rent. They legally owned the building but not the land. There was much discussion and a lot of worry but eventually the building was returned to the people of Tring, who had raised the money to build it all those years earlier.

A few years later, in 2019, the Red

Cross decided there would be no more First Aid cover at local events anywhere in the country. This meant that after eighty years from its beginning in 1939, we could not have any Red Cross in Tring.

Like many others, I joined Tring Red Cross as a young mum, invited by Nora to learn useful First Aid. I shall be eternally grateful to her for all that my friends and I learnt and experienced; the happy times, the friends I made and the amazing thought that we were in at the beginning of the now-worldwide Paralympic and Invictus Games, as we got all the beds ready when these games started at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in the 1970s.

The British Red Cross received its first Royal Charter from King Edward VII in 1908. To commemorate this, 100 years later, 9 July 2008, his great, great grandson HRH the Prince of Wales held a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Some lucky members from Tring received invitations and great was the excitement as we discussed what to wear. On the day we travelled in a mini bus with members from Hemel Hempstead. A sea of umbrellas and gifts of plastic ponchos... it was the wettest Garden Party the staff could ever remember – but we didn't care: we were there. As we stood in diagonal rows, the royal family defied the rain, came out on time and chatted as they moved through. We had a wonderful tea, with a chance to walk around the grounds; a memory I shall not forget.

The Red Cross had many years of being a great influence in Tring. As members, we will always be grateful to Nora and the Society for all we learnt and for the experiences we had while part of this organisation over such a long time.

Shirley Blake
Wiggington Church
Ex Red Cross Centre Organiser

Parish registers

Baptisms

We welcome these children into our church community and pray for their families.

Amelie Nora Foster
Harry Austin Stitt
Alana Garside

Weddings

We offer our congratulations and prayers to this couple as they begin their married lives together.

Terence Cartmell & Katharine Alice Jones

The Loving Earth Project comes to Tring!



The Loving Earth Project was created during lockdown by Sustainable Merton. The group ran online workshops for local residents to create textile panels. They

held an exhibition of these panels in Wimbledon's Centre Court shopping centre. Since then, the project has grown into a huge national collection of textile panels and reflections which continue to be exhibited around the country and added to. The panels were exhibited at COP26 in Glasgow and were listed among 'the best cultural events in Scotland for COP26'. Other comments about the panels have included 'great joy and hope' as well as being 'thought-provoking' and 'a warning'. In February 2023 the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, welcomed the Loving Earth Project to Portcullis House. He wanted MPs to see how people have responded to things they love and the threat posed by the climate crisis.

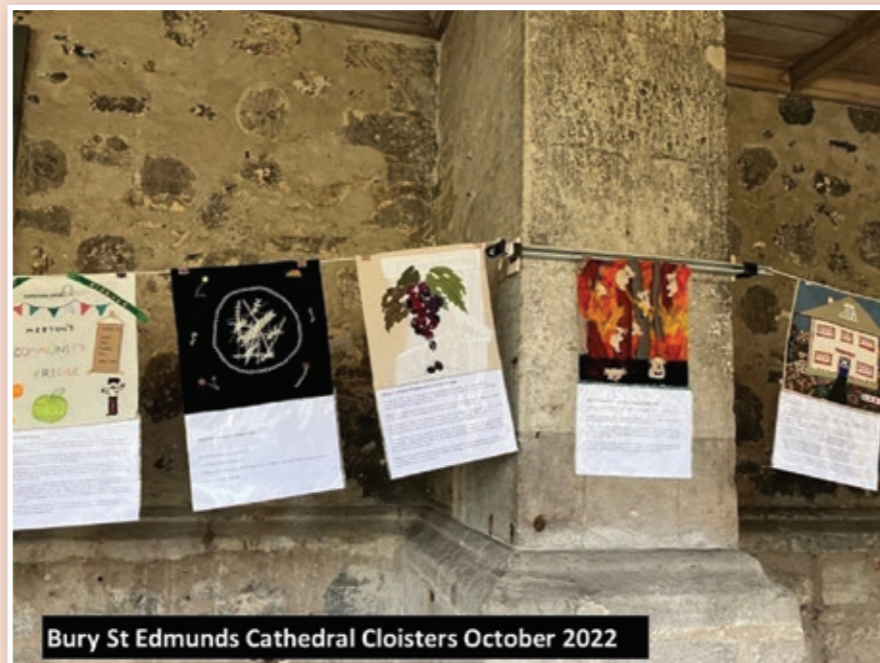
People are invited to create 30cm x 30cm square panels using textiles, wool and 'found' objects. Panels may be made using traditional techniques such as sewing, crochet, appliqué or more experimental collage and mixed media. Each panel is accompanied by a reflection – sometimes a few words, other times several paragraphs. The panels present the things we love – people, places, creatures, and other things – threatened by growing environmental breakdown. The process of creating the panels is designed to help us engage creatively and constructively with these issues, without being overwhelmed. It's also a way to share positive examples of change and why people have taken action for the sake of love. Creating the textile panels encourages conversation and a sense of community.

We are now bringing the Loving Earth Project to Tring. We are inviting you to get involved in this community textile project to build our own exhibition. Perhaps you are already part of a sewing or craft group or perhaps you just love to create things. Whatever your experience with textiles, your age

or gender we hope you will come along on Saturday 10 June to find out more and get involved. There will be materials and resources, but feel free to bring your own too. There will be some time to think about your design and how you might get started. We know that it will take more than an afternoon, so will be encouraging you to continue your panel in a small group – either your regular sewing group or a new group formed for this project. We would like to exhibit the panels and reflections throughout Tring in September (the Season of Creation).

If you'd like to learn more about the Loving Earth Project visit <http://lovingearth-project.uk> or come along to High Street Baptist Church on Saturday 10 June at 2.00pm!

Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church



Bury St Edmunds Cathedral Cloisters October 2022

In memory of Moira Hargreaves

Moira Yvonne Oldfield was born on 15 January 1954 to parents George and Pat Oldfield in Liverpool. Her younger brother, Derek, was born in 1961, just a few months before me. The Oldfield family lived in Sale for a few years before eventually moving to Hoole in Chester – where Moira's parent lived for the remainder of their lives.

Academically Moira was, in some respects, a late developer and, having failed the 11+, two years later she passed exams that allowed her to move to the local girl's high school. Her early working life was in the retail sector working at British Home Stores and, after that, Moira worked as a buyer in the rag trade in Liverpool for a couple of years where her interest in clothes and costume was nurtured. She moved with friend Leslie to Tenerife for eighteen months where she worked as a travel rep and, when she came back, she went to college where she did theatre studies, specializing in historical costumes as she didn't really like going on stage, preferring work in the wings and costume design to acting. While studying she was also involved in London theatres in backstage capacities. Having successfully graduated, Moira then gained a PGCE and, with this, successfully got a job on the Isle of Wight in what is now known as the Isle of Wight College. She lived in various places on the Isle of Wight and finally settled in Ryde where she worshipped at St James' Church.

At St James' Church she met and became friends with David Nurney and Jackie Jones; and so on 28 March 1987 Moira found herself attending their wedding at St James' Church. David is a birdwatcher and we had been good friends for several years so I also attended the wedding. When I walked into the reception, David shouted, 'Moira, this is Roy', across the whole room, causing huge embarrassment to us both.

Amazingly we met up later during the reception and hit it off and it was love at first sight. Our courtship mainly involved numerous trips for me to the Isle of Wight, but once Moira found a job on the mainland, a wedding date was set and we were married on 23 July 1988 in All Saints Church, Hoole in Chester – much to the surprise of George and Pat.

1988 was a big year, as we both

changed jobs and moved house. We looked at a few houses in Watford near to Moira's new job, but with Tring Reservoirs a perfect site for birdwatching, we found a house in Tring we could afford. Moira's new job as Senior Lecturer in retail at West Herts College, Cassio Campus, meant we could stay in temporary accommodation free for up to six months. We moved first to Chorleywood and then, in November 1988, to Tring. When we first moved in we worshipped at New Mill Baptist Church, as it was close to our new house. A visit from Eric Bianchi persuaded us to try St Peter & St Paul's Church, where we have worshipped ever since.



Moira was involved in a number of aspects of the life of St Peter & St Paul. She was quickly recruited as a youth leader in TAY (Tring Anglican Youth), and her positive impact on some of the young people of the church is apparent from the lovely comments in sympathy cards I received. Moira was also a member of the DCC and PCC on various occasions, and a sidesperson, and for a long while managed the Tea/Coffee rotas. She also became involved in the Justice and Peace Group and was an advocate of Fair Trade, becoming one of the top ten suppliers of Traidcraft goods in the country for years, helping to make fair trade tea and coffee the hot drinks of

choice in the parish church. Moira's and Revd Steve Sims' interest in drama led to the creation of A Christian Theatre Squad (ACTS), and their dramatic readings or sketches were a central part of the Good Friday celebrations for many years. Many people will also remember Moira handing out hot cross buns on Good Friday after the Walk of Witness (good luck trying to get away with too many when Moira was handing them out!).

Despite being useless at geography, and not knowing where countries were, she was well travelled and visited thirty-seven countries and saw such iconic sights as Machu Picchu, Taj Mahal, the Masai Mara and Sydney Opera House. Mostly on trips to see wildlife, she also managed to see more than a third of all the bird species in the world and, in recent years, enjoyed seeing Humpback Whale and Sei Whale in Scotland on visits to attend weddings of former TAY members.

In 1999 Moira changed jobs from being a Senior Lecturer at West Herts College to Edexcel where she became a Senior Qualification Specification Developer for public services (armed forces and emergency services). This was an important role as the qualification specification dictates what must be covered by the relevant qualifications overseen by Edexcel.

In 2007 Moira's brother, Derek, and his family, emigrated to New Zealand leading to several trips to New Zealand, normally with a stop in Australia as well. Unfortunately, by late 2007, Moira's health had deteriorated to such an extent that she was given early retirement on full pension. She still carried on with the Traidcraft stall in church until she couldn't continue and, more recently, Moira found it increasingly difficult to leave the house as her mobility decreased and she acquired new health issues. Ironically, it was not one of her many ailments that took her suddenly from us and the medical profession was equally perplexed until the Coroner's report was issued.

A number of the cards received after Moira's death said how much of a positive impact Moira had had on their lives; there can't be a better way to be remembered than that.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

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Please contact Barbara Anscombe if you would like to take a subscription to *Comment*: £15.00 for 10 issues each year. The magazine can be posted to you with an additional cost for postage at current rates.

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August

Crossword puzzle answers

From page 26

ACROSS	DOWN
6. MARY MAGDELENE	1. HARP
8. SPONSOR	2. WAGON
11. MAKER	3. ODE
12. SONATAS	4. PLEASED
13. WED	5. ANCESTOR
15. JESTS	7. YENS
16. ATTIRED	9. SOOTHED
17. BIRTHDAY	10. RADICAL
18. ARK	11. MAJESTY
19. TENANTS	14. EVICTION
22. LOCAL	16. ATTENDED
23. LOYALTY	20. NOVEL
26. LORD HAVE MERCY	21. SANE
	24. TACT



What's on in June in Tring Church

Services at Tring Church

Sunday 4th June
8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with craft activity **

Sunday 11th June
8am Holy Communion traditional language **
10am Worship for all
3pm Piano and More concert with Tring School music students

Sunday 18th June
8am Service is cancelled
10am Communion with craft activity **
We welcome Bishop of St Albans, Alan Smith who will preside at this service

Sunday 25th June
8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with craft activity **

** Streamed service on our website and YouTube

Mid-week Services in Tring
9.15am Tuesdays
Usually Holy Communion
10am Thursdays
Holy Communion in traditional language

Lots more going on



Mondays 3.30pm - 5pm
Youth Café in term time Toast, chat etc for secondary school kids

Food Bank
Monday to Friday
10am - 12noon.
Drop-off donations and collect food

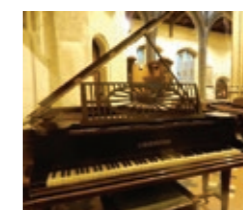


Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm
Craft and a Cuppa
Drop in for chat, cuppa and bring a craft to do if you would like to

Social Coffee
Fridays, Saturdays
10am - 12 noon,
and after Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday services



Piano & more series



Sunday June 11th
3pm for an hour's concert of music followed by refreshments.
Free but collection for church and piano expenses

Everyone is welcome to join us at any of our church services and activities.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

**The
Children's
Society**

No child
should feel
alone

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GREENWAYS GARDEN

FOR A RELAXED AL FRESCO
GET-TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF
THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

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SATURDAY 1ST JULY 2023**



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Simple Cheese & Wine Lunch
(Please book as space is limited)

**A NICE RAFFLE TO REWARD YOU!
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