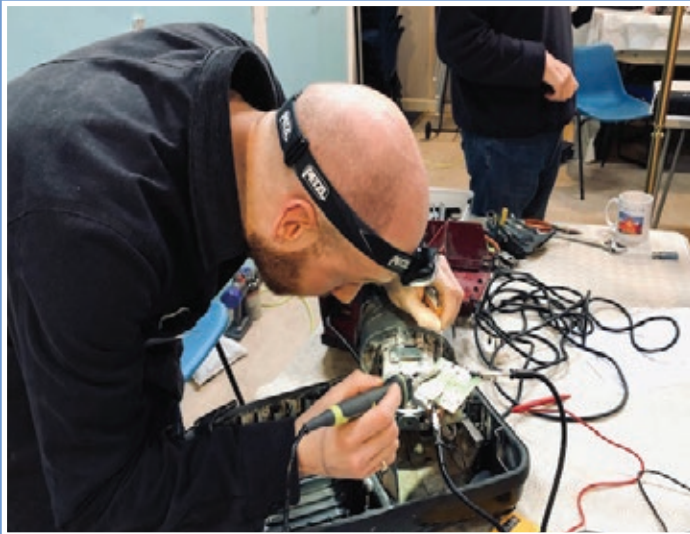


COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



What's on in May in Tring Church

Services at Tring Church

Sunday 7th May

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with craft activity **

Bank Holiday Monday 8th May

2pm Coronation Celebration Service followed by party for all in the churchyard until 6pm

Sunday 14th May

8am Holy Communion traditional language **
10am Worship for all

Ascension Day - Thursday 18th May

10am Holy Communion traditional language
8pm Holy Communion

Sunday 21st May

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with craft activity **
3pm Piano and More concert

Sunday 28th May

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

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 21st May



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.

Who are you looking for?



One of the best-known post-resurrection stories is John's account of Mary Magdalene in the garden when an unrecognised figure greets her in her grief.

Jesus' question to her in many Bible versions is often translated as: 'Whom do you seek?'

This phrase has always jarred for me. It isn't my Jesus. St Peter & St Paul's Church is full of grammatical fascists. I will pick up my children when they say 'My friends and me are going out tonight...' 'My friends and I!' I will shout back at them. One of Jane's pendants is to tell us 'People are hanged and paintings are hung'. I worried about her and knew she was distracted by her recent diagnosis of breast cancer when she failed to shout at the TV when Lucy Worsley told us someone was 'hung, drawn and quartered'. 'Hanged' I was expecting to hear (and Lucy should have known better). What is your bête noire? Is it an errant apostrophe, a misused comma, less instead of fewer, different to instead of different from...?

Poor old Annette always has to spend a disproportionate amount of time making my submissions for *Comment* intelligible. Grammar helps with the precision of communication. It matters. A comma can change the meaning of a sentence. The right word in the right place is important. It's why grammar fascists are needed. Everyone needs a good proof reader.

And yet communication is so much more than grammar. We know exactly what is meant by 'my friends and me'. There is no ambiguity in meaning. Communication has been achieved. These days, on lorries on the motorway, you will find a warning saying 'flammable'. The word should be 'inflammable' but for those not as articulate, there is a danger of misinterpreting that as 'un-flammable'. For the sake of clarity, a word is butchered. Sometimes by hanging onto a particular way of speaking, we are alienating rather than welcoming.

So, back to Mary in the garden, in her grief, at the end of her tether, no patience left for anyone, cross: someone asks her, 'Whom do you seek?'

Whom do you seek?! Speak normally

man! Can I help you? Who are you looking for? What are you looking for?

My Jesus is much more populist. He speaks to us directly. He is one of us. He communicates directly with us. It is for that reason that I have come to the conclusion that each of the Beatitudes should properly start not 'Blessed are the...' but 'Happy!' The Greek word means happy. In English it is almost universally translated as 'blessed' but I wonder if that is a mistake.

Imagine Jesus preaching 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for they shall receive the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who grieve for they shall be comforted...' It doesn't have the same immediacy of 'What are you looking for? Happiness? Aren't we all! I will tell you who is happy: those who are at the end of their tether. Why? Because that is when they will encounter God. Then they will be happy. Those who grieve will be happy because they have LOVED, and they WILL be comforted!'

It strikes me that over the countless times I have read the Beatitudes, I never once stopped to think what the promise of 'blessedness' was. It was a meaningless word to me; and lo and behold, it actually meant happy.

Ah, but what does 'happy' mean? I know that happiness can appear shallow or transient. I know 'stuff' happens. But am I seeking happiness, fulfilment, purpose, contentment? Yes, all of these. Does this change what I think about happiness? Yes. Does it make me think more deeply? Yes.

Am I seeking blessedness? I don't

think so (if it means 'saintliness', certainly not). I have this great fear that at times we can act as Jesus' gatekeepers by not understanding what he came to say; by using inaccessible language, and by not thinking what it means for ourselves. The words in whatever version of the Bible we use are not the living word of God. Jesus was the living word, the word made flesh, who came and dwelt among us.

He communicated with us and he gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. The living word of God is exactly that: it is alive. That scares us. We want to be in control of it. No one likes change. We were comfortable with what we learned at Sunday School and now we find we have to learn it anew, again and again and again.

The rabbinic tradition is helpful. They have the text which you can always go back to; then they have the interpretation of the text, which is kept alive through debate. The duty of those of us who call ourselves 'church' is to communicate the truth of the gospel. We must keep on wrestling with meaning. It is never acceptable to say 'that is the version I grew up with'.

Words change, but who is in control of them? Language is changing; it is alive, dynamic. Just because you grew up with 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit', it doesn't mean you can't embrace 'Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer'.

God asks, 'Who or what are you looking for?'

What do you answer?

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

Everyone is warmly invited to

Tring's Coronation Party

Monday 8th May from 2pm to 6pm
at St Peter & St Paul Church, Tring

A place for all



Although Americans celebrate Mother's Day in May, in the UK, we pause in Lent to rejoice on our journey to Good Friday and Easter with Mothering

Sunday: a day of mixed feelings for many. For me, Mothering Sunday, both personally and pastorally, is a minefield.

For many, Mothering Sunday is hard: for those of us who grieve the loss of a child or a mother; for those of us who never knew our mother or our children; those of us who have complicated relationships with our mother or our children; and for those of us who

long to be parents but can't and now won't. For others, Mothering Sunday is a welcome acknowledgement of the experience of motherly love, and a time of joyful family gathering.

We brought all of that with us as we worshipped together in March. We didn't need to pretend that everything is lovely for everyone, because we're not part of church for a nice, sentimental time together. We are a community of faith, acknowledging the joys and pains of life, rejoicing and weeping with one another.

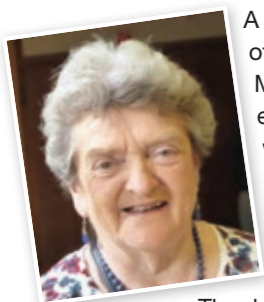
The conversation between Jesus, Mary and John at the cross offers us much. Jesus says to Mary, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to John, 'Here is your mother' (John 19: 25-27). There's something profoundly world-changing

going on in those few moments. The final thing Jesus does is to bring Mary and John together. In the shadow of the cross, a new family is created. Through Jesus, a new community comes to life.

In church, we gather as the body of Christ, bearing one another's burdens and sharing one another's joys, to worship our God of love and inclusiveness. We listen to what the Holy Spirit has to say to us, and we learn from the life of Jesus Christ. That isn't to say it's all neat and tidy – we know that's not the case. But it is to say that there's a place for us all, and that we all play a part in sharing the mothering love of God.

**Michelle Grace
Tring Team**

Poem of the month



A sonnet, one of Donne's Holy Meditations, which expresses the writer's doubts, fears and spiritual unworthiness with startling passion and simplicity.

The rhythm is irregular, the language is breathless and excited and throughout there is the background imagery both of warfare and, at the end, of romantic affection. Notice the abrupt beginning (a favourite of Donne) which emphasizes the urgency with which he pleads not to be excluded from God's love.

John Donne was born in 1572 in troubled times. He was the son of Roman Catholic parents at a time when it was dangerous to be a Roman Catholic: his brother died from plague, having been imprisoned for sheltering a recusant priest.

He studied at Oxford and Cambridge but was forbidden by his religion to take a degree. He studied Law for a few years then, after travelling abroad, he joined the staff of Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. However, after four years he was forced to leave in disgrace after marrying against his employer's wishes. He spent some years in poverty and was ordained priest in the Church of England in 1615 and appointed Dean of St Paul's Cathedral some six years later.

In his day Donne's poetry, though not published, was widely admired by his friends, and, apparently, the people of London flocked to hear his sermons. His work was hardly read in the 18th and 19th centuries but became popular

*Batter my heart, three-person'd God; for, you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy:
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

**From 'Holy Sonnets' (14)
John Donne, probably written in 1609**

in the early 20th century and he now has an established place in English literature. He died in 1631 and was buried in the churchyard of St Paul's.

**Kate Banister
St Julian's, St Albans**

Quiet Time

Need space to contemplate?

Pop in to

St Martha's Methodist Church

Chapel Street/Park Road, Tring

Every 3rd Saturday of the month between 10am and 3pm

(circumstances may cause variations in times)

further information from: **Gill 07909527306**



A force of nature at the heart of our community



Congratulations to Trish Dowden on being awarded The Tring Town Council Community Award! 'Councillors have really noticed the huge and sustained work that Trish does on

behalf of Tring and they are truly grateful,' said Mayor Christopher Townsend. 'It is a privilege for us to be able to honour Trish with the Community Award – another 'Tring Hero.'

We are indeed fortunate to have someone so capable and committed living in our community and joining in with so many community initiatives with seemingly boundless energy.

'I felt very proud to have been nominated,' Trish said, 'and accept the award on behalf of all the people who I volunteer with. For all the groups I volunteer for, it means recognition that we all DO make a difference.'

'I feel tired just watching her,' is a phrase I have heard more than once from those who observe the 'get up and go' she brings to every task. But it's not just energy and attack but also rigorous commitment to doing things in the right way that typifies her approach.

Multi-tasking as an artform

I have been privileged to work with Trish on quite a range of projects and initiatives, whether in my role as a member of the Tring Ministry Team or with FOTCH where she functions as secretary and she even finds time

to assist me in some of my business activities.

She organises the rota and team of helpers for the Foodbank; she co-ordinates the cooks, servers and bottle-washers for the First Saturday Lunches; she operates as a vital member of the Tring Together Team; she helps on the big events, both organising and serving; she's a master-mind at running quizzes; she liaises with the town council on behalf of the church and other community operations; she sorts out the arrangements and invoicing for funerals; she's our GDPR dragon and keeps us all firmly in check when we stray from the narrow path; wherever you go, you'll find Trish is involved somewhere. And every time, in every activity, she gets on with it all uncomplainingly and efficiently. She does all this to put something back into the town where she lives and she is passionate about her community.

Of course, she comes from that modern-day 'land of milk and honey', New Zealand where they are clearly 'brought up proper', encouraged to stand on their own two feet and get on with life – so Trish has had a good start. She has certainly built on that firm foundation.

However, we are very privileged to know that she has made Tring her home and is just as passionate about our town as the rest of us who have discovered 'there's only one Tring!'. I am sure that it is people like Trish who have contributed to the fact that Tring has just been voted the best place to live in Hertfordshire!

On behalf of everyone in our community who has benefited from Trish's energy and efficiency, I would like



to say, 'Thank You' and 'Well done – it's great to have you with us'.

I would also add a PS and thank her for introducing us to her husband Phil who has also got involved and is doing a great job as Editor of the FOTCH magazine which is going from strength to strength under his direction. Clearly that NZ zest for community contributions is infectious!

I think we all know that there is something about living in Tring that stimulates people from all backgrounds and experiences to get involved and get stuck-in. We have a great bunch of enthusiasts hereabouts and they have a justly-celebrated cheerleader in Trish Dowden.

**Grahame Senior
Tring Team/FOTCH/Tring Together**

They did it anyway!

In the past there have been hoards of people travelling from Tring and the villages on foot to celebrate Easter in St Albans Cathedral. There were many reasons why this year the group was only seven-strong and it must have

been one of the wettest on record – but not as bad as the year roads were flooded and someone had to be carried through the water! Janet Goodyer added to her total which we think is now over thirty years of walking some

seventeen miles or more – a huge achievement. They sent a few photos of the bedraggled walkers for Comment.
The Editor



The deathbed faith of Henry VIII



Those who were paying attention during their school history lessons ('Sit up and listen at the back there') will remember the outline of Henry VIII's reign.

His six wives are famous ('Divorced, beheaded, died. Divorced, beheaded, survived.') and he is infamous. Also, and more significantly for the history of the British Isles, he was born a Catholic, but decided (to put it simplistically) to change England to a country with a national church, rather than one with the Bishop of Rome as its head. This was in order to appoint himself head of the Church in England and allow himself (or his Archbishop) to annul his marriage to Katharine of Aragon. Much ink has been spilt on the question over whether or not this was a genuine conversion or one motivated solely by a desire to marry Anne Boleyn, who was twenty-four years the junior of Katharine. Who knows? But if we fast forward to the end of Henry's life, what was his faith on his deathbed?

The glamorous Prof Suzannah Lipscombe, who has a Channel 5 Series 'Royal Scandals' and gave the post-episode talks after the BBC2 series 'Versailles' a few years back, came to St Albans Abbey in February to talk on the topic: The Deathbed Faith of Henry VIII. In March, your editor and I had a tour of the Tower of London, the place of execution of both Anne Boleyn and later Catherine Howard, which renewed my interest in this key time in British history.

After the break with Rome, the church underwent many reforms: the closure of the monasteries, the closure of chantries (where intercessions were made for the souls of rich people, supposedly to shorten their time in purgatory) and the Bible was made available for rich men, but not yet 'women, artificers, journeymen, serving men under the influence of yeomen, husbandmen and labourers'. But two things remained constant from the time before the split with Rome: the mass in Latin and the doctrine of transubstantiation, the belief that after consecration, the bread and wine at the mass turned into the actual body and blood of Christ.

In 1546, two significant episodes occurred. Henry accepted an envoy from the Pope into his court, but a few months later, sent him packing. Not long after, Henry entertained the Chief Admiral of France at a meal, shortly after France and England had signed a treaty. France, at that time, had its own issues with the Papacy. With his hands on the shoulders of both Cranmer and the Admiral, he suggested that England and France should unite in banishing the Pope and turn the Latin mass into a communion service. Cranmer later claimed that this showed Henry was heading in a Protestant direction. Prof Lipscomb wonders if this was just Henry throwing a verbal hand grenade into the meeting to see what reaction it would bring. Henry also barred two known traditionalists from the Regency Council that would advise the young Edward, and appointed two men who later came out as staunchly Protestant.

Thirteen years before he died, Henry had made even talking of the possibility of his own death an act of high treason, with the distinct possibility of the death penalty for all those who erred and strayed on the issue. In January 1547, the brave Sir Anthony Denny told Henry that he was dying and asked if he wanted any 'learned man' with whom to converse. Henry asked for 'Dr Cranmer', his very Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury. But he instructed Denny not to send for him yet, as he would have a little sleep first. By the time Cranmer arrived in Westminster from his palace in Addington near Croydon, Henry had lost all power of speech. When Cranmer arrived, he did not bother with the traditional deathbed accessories of candle, crucifix and communion, but told Henry to put his faith in Christ and give a sign that this was the case. Henry squeezed the Archbishop's hand.

So, does this indicate that Henry was indeed heading in a Protestant or an evangelical direction? Even a thoroughgoing Protestant such as myself knows that

Catholics trust in Christ; so that proves very little.

Prof Lipscomb showed us a copy of Henry's Last Will and Testament which begins

'In the name of god (sic) and of the glorious and blessed Virgin our Lady Sainct (sic) Mary and of all the holy company of heaven...'

Henry's will goes on in a very traditional Catholic manner which suggests that, for all his radical changes made in the church, possibly motivated more by the desire to capture the wealth of the monasteries and destroy alternative powerbases from his own, rather than evangelical zeal, he remained a convinced Catholic. He also, significantly, paid for two priests at St George's Windsor (the place of Prince Philip's funeral) to say mass for him for 'as long as this world endures'. During his reign, the chantries ('the powerhouse of prayer for the dead') were all closed, but Henry seemed to be paying for prayers for himself, just in case purgatory did exist. Dr Lipscomb argued that Henry appeared to die as a traditional 16th century Catholic, albeit one whose faith magnified his own importance as second only to God in his realm.

A final point: this article has mainly been about Henry and England but he also changed the religious status of Wales where his Reformation received the same mixed reception as it did in England. Henry's dad, of course, was born in Pembroke, a noble town, which means that Queen Elizabeth I could have played for the Welsh Women's Rugby team by 'the grandparents' rule'. Now there's a thought...

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team

Jane Ducklin
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Mottoes



If nowadays you struggle to distinguish Archimedes from Pythagoras, or to remember what Macbeth said to Banquo, I'll bet you have not forgotten your school motto! At my primary school it was 'Think of Others', which is really just another way of saying 'Love your Neighbour'.* We also had a jaunty and rather poignant school song, which had been composed by a parent: 'Life is like a forest-land, through which we all must pass; / Here and there a place to dream, upon the sunny grass. / But not for long we linger - we have our way to make / And so we journey onward, sweet music in our wake: Per-se-ver-ance helps a man along, / Cheer-ful-ness inspires a merry song, while / Loy-al-ty

assures us of a friend / and Courage is our staff, until the end.' (These were the mottoes of the individual houses.)

At secondary school (famous alumna Diane Abbott, MP), it was quite a different style. Our motto was 'Nisi Dominus Frustra', which we were told meant 'Without God in Vain'. This comes from the opening words of Psalm 127: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it' (in Latin, because the Prayer Book always had the first few words of every psalm in Latin as a sort of title).

At the other end of town, our brother school (famous alumnus Michael Portillo) had the motto 'Virtus non Stemma', 'Worth not Birth', which was always taken to be a dig at the famous public school up on the hill.

Many organisations and institutions have a motto; military regiments have mottoes, the Scouting movement famously has (had?) the motto 'Be

Prepared' (which conveniently echoed the initials of its founder, Baden-Powell). But do these slogans actually have any impact or usefulness? Perhaps the very fact that you still remember them decades later is proof that indeed they do.

Churches worldwide have adopted mottoes to be eye-catching messages, which with repetition become memorable and encourage engagement. The motto adopted by the Diocese of St Albans 'Living God's Love' has the benefit of brevity and directness of meaning: the three words are each central to the Christian faith and are comforting and welcoming to all.

*In those days I should have felt more inclined to love our next-door neighbours if they hadn't had a frighteningly yappy, jump-up-at-you dog, called Podgie.

Carole Wells
St Peter & St Paul

Introducing the Sew & Natter Craft Group



The first meeting of this new group was held on Saturday 25 March 2023 at 2.00pm in Corpus Christi Church Hall. The aim of the group is to bring together, in welcoming space, those interested in sewing, although other crafters are also welcome to come along.

The group is for everyone, whether you are a complete beginner wanting to learn to sew or you are someone who wants to improve, or you have a high level of skill.

There is no need to bring anything along as all materials and equipment is provided. In the group we share knowledge with each other as we work on projects.

The sewing project we worked on in our first session was a canvas shopping bag. This gave us the opportunity to learn to measure and cut out

fabric pieces, pin and construct the bag and basic sewing machine skills.

We also had attendees embroidering and crocheting and they enjoyed meeting fellow craft enthusiasts.

To keep our crafting strength up, we stopped for a cuppa with a homemade scone. We finished at 4.30pm and we all agreed that we learnt new things and had a very enjoyable afternoon.

Sew & Natter Craft Group will be held 2.00pm to 4.30pm on the fourth Saturday of each month in Corpus Christi Church Hall. It is completely free to come along and all are welcome. Learn and enjoy.

Margaret Donnelly
Corpus Christi Church



Transitions for positive change – responding to the climate crisis



Change is inevitable, they say. And it's true – things change all the time, and our time is finite. Shakespeare set

out seven ages that we live through, and I've often heard that, on average, people change their job seven times in their working life (or is it every seven years?). Maybe it works out about the same, either way.

During childhood – a period of rapid growth and change – the lucky ones feel life to be stable, even against the background of all that's going on. What we mark in our family lives are the big events and the decisions made that have an element of risk attached. Changing schools, choosing subjects to study; coming to terms with our own sexuality; settling with a life partner; moving home; becoming parents; changing jobs... the list goes on.

As a horse-rider and a dancer, I learnt that transitions are smoother and more comfortable if you prepare well for them, and continue working afterwards with the result of the change you have made. And I've come to realise that we do this in the church, too. As the large narrative unfolds, through each year, we have periods of reflection and study before a 'big event' and continue to reflect and hone any newfound insights long after Christmas, Easter and Pentecost celebrations are over. It's easy to see this as a circular movement through seasons: round and round, up and down (as Joni Mitchell sang) on the carousel of life. But in reality we are probably spiralling, because of the changes we make to the way we live and make decisions. We hope that we are moving forward and closer to a true relationship with our God and with others. Sometimes, sadly, we can feel that the spiral is in the other direction, whether in our personal life, as a society, or as humankind.

I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling eco-anxiety in this time of rapid climate change and such damaging inequality. I know that Chris Packham, David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg, among notable others have expressed their own. As a church, the Tring Team wanted to address this, and a number of us studied 'Tenants of the King'

(produced by Operation Noah – a Christian environmental organisation) before Christmas. We were challenged to reassess ways that we can make changes in our own lives and influence others, for the benefit of the one world we have and all the life within it.

Not that this is a new idea for many of us. In my own life, I became aware of some of the issues as a teenager, more than half a century ago. Gradually, and particularly from the time we were newly-weds, Malc and I became involved in campaigning and acting on behalf of the environment and justice for marginalised people. Aerosols and the ozone layer; rainforest destruction; food miles; clean water; endangered wildlife; organic growing; Fairtrade; high-welfare meat production; transport choices and air quality; renewable energy; biodiversity; recycling (do you remember when we used our home as a collection point for newspapers and aluminium cans for Friends of the Earth – before household recycling was a thing?). Certainly, our

daughter still remembers the shame she felt when we all spent a Saturday in Hemel High Street talking to people about the need to use recycled toilet rolls! The children even came with us on protest marches in buggies! (It seemed safe, then...)

Anyway, we've campaigned a lot, donated a lot and done a lot, and got pretty worn down in the process. A group called Tring in Transition started up, maybe fifteen or twenty years ago with a view to making Tring a more sustainable town. The two of us had talked to powers-that-be about sustainability before, and they managed to turn it into 'economic sustainability' in the same way that they called money for public transport a 'subsidy', but money for roads 'investment'. We decided, at that time, that we would not join the new Tring group, even though we supported their aims – maybe it was time for a new generation to take the lead on 'activity', and we would continue to try to influence policy by campaigning in writing – by

letter, then email, then also in online petitions.

Fast-forward to 'Tenants of the King', so many years later, and my response to its message was 'I am sick of campaigning' – it has, over fifty years, often made me feel out of step with other people and a bit stupid as I get stonewalled by politicians and tongued by arguments against the sort of changes we have personally made in our life. But I still felt it was important for us personally and as 'tenants of the King' to continue to be involved, in some way, with these vital issues.

During the pre-Christmas time of study and reflection, I had also been to a large meeting of residents keen to explore the idea of 'Sustainable Tring', where I met some current Tring in Transition members who were looking for new volunteers to help with thermal imaging of houses. They wanted to reach as many people as possible before the end of the winter, but could not keep up with the waiting list, in the aftermath of the energy price hikes last year. (As I understand it, thermal imaging is best done when the temperature outside is at least 10 degrees Centigrade below the temperature inside. The special cameras use infrared technology to detect where heat is being lost through gaps, or where

insulation is breaking down, patchy or inadequate.) I would not have to research, campaign, or give advice – I could just DO something practical in a time of year when I am not so busy with my garden maintenance work. I received training in using the cameras, and in what to look out for – but I was nonetheless glad to be with another more experienced volunteer, on the visits I made. The work was done free of charge, but with a request for a donation for Tring in Transition, if people wanted to. (The cameras cost several thousand pounds.) Later, Malcolm also trained and helped with imaging some of the almshouses in Tring, owned by the church.

I suppose my point is that God knows and loves us. If we stay open to prompting and are willing to be led in a new direction, new paths may open up for us to explore that will feel like a continuation of the dreams we once had, but which had begun to feel stale. The Bible study itself was not a turning point for me, but prepared the ground for my realisation that the work being done by Tring in Transition, and so many others in the town as part of the 'Sustainable Tring Thing', was an invigorating new way for me to respond to the climate crisis.

In preparation for Easter, I joined a group studying The Beatitudes. I always

learn something new in discussion with others. Sometimes, it feels that we're disappearing down a rabbit hole – and then out pops an insight from someone that proves to be drawn from the depths, but which is enlightening. It was clear to me, reflecting on one of the questions for discussion, that I often lacked courage and felt responsibilities too keenly for my own good. I have a tendency to think that others are wiser, cleverer and understand the situation more than I do, so I close in and fret. I was kindly encouraged by someone else in the group, and it was only while writing this piece, that I realised the significance of the two Beatitudes we were studying that week: 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.' 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.'

If you, too, are feeling anxious about the state of the world and the part humanity has to play, my prayer for you is that you can rest in God and listen for your own particular prompting. Then, when you are ready, and feeling prepared, be bold and make that change. To steal this year's Fairtrade slogan – 'Choose the world you want!' And my favourite, from Riding for the Disabled: 'It's what you CAN do that counts.'

Anne Nobbs, St Peter & St Paul

Item	Venue	Where does it go to?	Notes
Batteries	M&S, HP23 5BN		
Batteries	Metcalfe's, HP23 5AG		
Batteries	Tesco, HP23 5NB		
Batteries	Victoria Hall, HP23 6AA		
Blister packs (all medication removed)	High Street Baptist Church, HP23 4AB	Superdrug, Hemel	
Bras	High Street Baptist Church, HP23 4AB	www.againstbreastcancer.org.uk	
Coat hangers	Save the Children, HP23 4AB	will be re-used	
Preloved clothes Tring and surrounding area - Facebook group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/900378077011277/?ref=share		Local group for buying and selling preloved clothes.
Electrical	Curry's, Aylesbury HP20 1DG		All electrical equipment, whether bought from them or someone else.
Energy saving lightbulbs	Tesco, HP23 5NB		
Hearing aids	Specksavers, HP23 5BN		
Inkjet cartridges	Tesco, HP23 5NB		
Paint tins	B&Q, Aylesbury HP20 1EA (or Hemel)		
Pens and writing equipment	High Street Baptist Church, HP23 4AB	Terracycle	www.bouchonsdamour.com/les-bons-bouchons
Plastic bottle tops and corks	High Street Baptist Church, HP23 4AB		
Shopping bags	Save the Children, HP23 4AB		
Soft plastic packaging inc crisp bags and pet food pouches	Co-op, HP23 5EP		
Soft plastic packaging inc crisp bags and pet food pouches	Tesco, HP23 5NB		
Spectacles	Brian Clarke Opticians, HP23 4AF		
Spectacles	Specksavers, HP23 5BN		
Stamps	High Street Baptist Church, HP23 4AB	RNIB	
Tools, household and garden	Workaid in Chesham, HP5 2AA	Mainly Africa	Long list of items they will take on https://workaid.org
Towels and curtains	Co-op, HP23 5EP		
Water Brita cartridges	Metcalfe's, HP23 5AG		
Water filters	Tesco, HP23 5NB		
Also:			
Tring Market Auctions	HP23 5ED		Furniture, household, etc
Tring Book Swap Group	Facebook group		
Tring Free Items	Facebook group		
Tring Jigsaw Swap	Facebook group		
Tring Elves	Facebook group		Items suitable for gifts
Tring & surrounding area Plant Swap	Facebook group		
South Bucks Hospice Reuse Centre & Furniture Store, College Road North, Aylesbury, HP22 5EZ	HP22 5EZ		
Wedding dresses	https://www.prettyinprelovedbridal.com/		Shop in Wendover buys/sells wedding dresses

TRingers are 10!



Few people seem to be indifferent to the sound of bells; some find the music captivating, while others find the clanging quite irritating. A group of us – we call ourselves the TRingers – have just celebrated ten years of playing hand-bells together (I suppose we must quite like the noise we make). We meet on a Monday morning for

an hour of playing plus an (optional) half hour of chatting together. We now have a repertoire of 100 tunes, ranging from Alouette to Waltzing Matilda (and including three versions of Psalm 23!). We occasionally go out to entertain and engage church and social groups (the photo shows us in our finery performing for a FOTCH event). We are a friendly group and have space for one or two new players; you don't need to be able to read a music score, but do need a sense of rhythm.

We meet in St Peter & St Paul's Church, and our bells belong to the parish, but we welcome players regardless of their faith (a sense of humour is helpful).

To find out more, visit the Tring parish website and look for groups, talk to Margaret Gittins or me, or just turn up from 09.30 on a Monday morning to see what goes on.

**John Whiteman
St Peter & St Paul**



Stay curious – welcome to Alpha

We all know that being curious leads to discovery. Without people wondering 'what if...' and 'what about...' great discoveries would not have been made. The same can be true in our own lives. We need space to think, explore and ask questions. Sometimes these questions are about the big things in life – 'How can I make the most of my life?' 'Is there a God?' 'How can we have faith?' 'Why and how do I pray?' 'Who is Jesus?'

Alpha is a place to ask, and explore, these big questions.

'Alpha was the best thing I ever did. It helped answer some huge questions and to find a simple empowering faith in my life.' Bear Grylls, TV Adventurer

Society today seems to be dominated by the way to look, what to achieve, what we own. Sometimes a major event can make us stop in our tracks and think bigger. Sometimes we have the ongoing niggling thought that there must be more to life than the treadmill which seems to be perpetual. Offering a space to have conversations about faith, life and God is

essential.

We will be running the Alpha Course in Tring in order to create this space. We will provide a delicious homemade meal to start the evening with space to relax and get to know each other. After eating, we will watch a short video to introduce new questions to explore each week, with plenty of time to chat and be curious. If you, or someone you know, would be interested in this, we would love to hear from you.

High Street Baptist Church will be running a 6-week Alpha course starting Monday 5 June at 7.00pm. If you are



interested in knowing more or to sign up, please email Polly at admin@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk.
High Street Baptist Church

What exactly is 'church'?



Regular readers of *Comment* may have spotted that there have been a few articles over recent months mentioning 'what church is' to people in Tring and of

how hard it is to be a Christian 'on your own'. It was interesting in my Lent reading to find a reference to the same subject using Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

The writer, Bishop Emma Ineson, commented that St Paul's vision of church isn't an optional extra we can add on to a personal faith in Jesus. 'Membership of the Body of Christ,' she says, 'with our siblings, this radical new inclusive community of belonging and reconciliation, is absolutely central to the gospel.'

Bishop Emma defines the church in Paul's letter to mean 'the gathering of all God's people, called out and saved throughout all time and history to gather around the throne of Jesus, the heavenly assembly, the universal, cosmic, multi-national, multi-racial, boundary-less community of saved and

reconciled people.'

I liked that description of a boundary-less community. It also made me think of all the surprises we will get if everyone gathering around the throne of Jesus is not the same as 'us', whatever that means. What if they don't worship the same way? What if they have incense and candles when that is not our tradition? Or dance and sing for joy with tambourines – when that usually makes us feel uncomfortable? What if they are dressed in shorts and a Hawaiian shirt (I am thinking of John Lippitt's article about the church in Sydney) – when we feel it's important to 'dress smartly' for church? What if they all want to hold hands – my husband might feel very uncomfortable!

The fact that we have so many churches in Tring alone tells us that we do all feel more comfortable in one church than another. Some people have drifted from one Baptist church to another (which means moving outside of Tring). Some people live in Tring and worship in Wilstone while others (like our family and that of John Heasman!) live in Cheddington but worship in Tring! But – I think – what is central to

our Christian faith IS the same. And – I hope – when we are gathered around the throne of Jesus, we will be focused on Jesus, and not on all the extraneous things that have divided us in the past.

Why do you worship where you do? I asked people to write on this subject some years ago and every single one of those articles explained how they were Baptist, Methodist, Anglican – because they had been brought up that way!! There is nothing wrong with this, but I imagined I would get replies that explained what drew people to this specific church, its belief and practice.

If there is anyone reading this who would like to write about why they chose their particular church, now or in the past, I would be delighted to hear from you; or if you want to say what 'church' means to you.

And while we are here, having read about the faith of Henry VIII, it leaves me wondering just this: does it matter whether he died a Catholic or a Protestant? Or whether the important thing is simply that he trusted in the saving power of Christ?

The Editor

Celebrating 250 years since 'Amazing grace'!



Over the last year, High Street Baptist Church have chosen various songs to structure our Tring seasonal celebrations: 'He's Got the Whole World in His Hands' for the Summer Carnival, 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' for the Apple Fayre, and 'Joy to the World' for the Christmas Festival. During the forthcoming Spring Fayre we are connecting with 'Amazing Grace'. This coincides with the 250th anniversary of this well-known and much-loved hymn.

The lyrics to 'Amazing Grace' were penned by John Newton (1725-1807). Once the captain of a slave ship, Newton converted to Christianity after an encounter with God in a violent storm at sea. The change in Newton's life

was radical: not only did he become an evangelical minister for the Church of England, but he also fought slavery as a social justice activist. Newton inspired and encouraged William Wilberforce (1759-1833), a British member of Parliament who fought to abolish slave trading in England.

Newton's ministry was inspired and influenced by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. Until he died at the age of 82, Newton never stopped wondering at the grace of God. Not long before his death, Newton preached in a loud voice, 'My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Saviour!'

In 2006, Chris Tomlin released a contemporary version of 'Amazing Grace', the theme song for the 2007 film 'Amazing Grace'. The historical drama celebrates the life of William Wilberforce, a zealous believer in God and human rights activist who battled through discouragement and illness for two decades to end the slave trade in England.

Following this brief skip through the history, it would be remiss of me not also to highlight the local-ish Cowper and Newton Museum in Olney. Orchard Side House in Olney was home to William Cowper (pronounced 'Cooper') from 1768 to 1786. Born in Berkhamsted in 1731, Cowper moved around the area and struggled with his mental health. He would visit his friend John Newton in Olney and then moved there himself in 1768. Revd

John Newton lived in Olney for sixteen years (1764 to 1779) as curate-in-charge of the parish church. The two families socialised regularly. It is in Olney that the two men collaborated on various hymns, publishing 'Olney Hymns' in 1779, with 'Amazing Grace' part of



the collection.

As well as being a wonderful museum to visit, there are talks and events in the coming weeks and months to mark the 250th anniversary of 'Amazing Grace'. Please do browse around their excellent website for more information and maybe plan a visit, <https://cowperandnewtonmuseum.org.uk>.

Inspired by this wonderful hymn, High Street Baptist Church has planned some activities in Tring for the Tring Together Spring Fayre. One of these events is the 'Lost and Found' treasure hunt on Saturday 13 May, followed by a BBQ in the garden at High Street Baptist Church. All are welcome!

Polly Eaton, High Street Baptist Church



*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord hath promised good to me
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.*

*Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.*

John Newton, 1725-1807

GDP – God’s Divine Purpose?



Our leaders seem to be obsessed with improving this country’s economic growth; it was the pre-occupation of Liz Truss’s brief taste of power, and the watchword of Jeremy Hunt’s recent budget. Keir Starmer, too, promises to make us the fastest growing developed country. It sounds good, but maybe as Christians we should worry about the quality as well as the quantity of growth.

So, what do we mean by growth? Is it ‘a good thing’? The usual measure is change in GDP, which stands for Gross Domestic Product, everything made in the UK economy (services as well as physical outputs). Of course, it’s a fairly heroic estimate: it’s not at all like accounting, and the tiny changes we hear about from one quarter to the next can be swamped by later revisions. And

the ‘gross’ bit matters: the word has various negative connotations in popular usage but in this context it means before making allowance for assets which were depleted to generate the output being measured (e.g. wear and tear of equipment).



While the statisticians are conscientious and imaginative in trying to estimate GDP reliably, it’s not in their brief to allow for the damage to the earth’s climate which growth in measured GDP might entail.

GDP is also not a measure of happiness or welfare; hence, for example, the publicised effort to get people back to work. If a person chooses freely not to take paid employment, but rather to carry out a voluntary activity (whether caring for youngsters, or for the elderly, or picking up litter, or even being a church warden!) their unpaid contribution is not counted as part of GDP, even though it enriches us. (The picture is of junior street champions, and is taken from the Dacorun website.)

Finally, remember that what the public sector does can be just as much a contribution to GDP and wealth as what the private sector does. An NHS nurse’s contribution is as valid as that of somebody working for EON on a wind turbine.

In conclusion, don’t be anti-growth, as poverty per se is not a blessing. However, do be sceptical of growth at all costs; it’s not necessarily part of God’s divine purpose for us.

John Whiteman, Tring Team

Supporting those facing the cost-of-living crisis in the community

DENS, Liberty Tea Rooms and Christians Against Poverty have announced an exciting partnership to support local people facing financial difficulties.

Funded by The Trussell Trust, the Financial Empowerment Programme aims to help those who access the Dacorun Foodbank, or may be at risk of needing the service, to manage their financial situation and provide practical support so they are less likely to need the Foodbank in the future.

The programme will provide free, on-the-ground support throughout Dacorun to people accessing the Foodbank and other services like community fridges.

Individuals will be offered a range of services including; tailored budgeting advice and support; ensuring they are receiving the correct benefits; and life skills and money management workshops, focusing on how to maintain a tenancy, manage bills, eat healthily for less and improve wellbeing.

More in-depth debt counselling will be available on a one-to-one basis for

those with significant issues, to support them to manage their debt and, long term, become debt free.

Wendy Lewington, Chief Executive at DENS, said: ‘We are delighted to be working in partnership with our friends at Liberty Tea Rooms and Christians Against Poverty to provide this much-needed service. We are all very aware of the impact the cost of living has had on our community.

‘Our aim with this programme is to provide both immediate support for those in crisis, as well as working with individuals before they get to crisis point. We are very grateful to the Trussell Trust, whose funding means we can make this happen.’

Despite still being in its early stages, the Financial Empowerment Programme has already helped a number of local people to significantly improve their financial situation and wellbeing.

Owen Cooper, CEO at Liberty Tea



Rooms and Community Hub, said: ‘The Financial Empowerment Programme has helped us to focus on those people living in our community who really need help and professional support. This partnership has ensured that we continue to have the resources to give people hope. Just recently, we have seen two families become totally debt free.’

If you, or someone you know, needs financial support, call 07415 628701 or contact karen.kelly@dens.org.uk

**Alex Copley
DENS**

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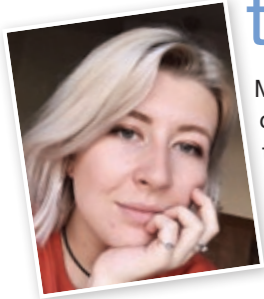
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‘Good morning and welcome to St Peter & St Paul...’



Maria Lashley is a church welcomer at the parish church in Tring. Her daughter, Lottie, interviewed her on her role there for

Comment.

How did you become a welcomer?

After Lockdown, we slowly had people feeling they could return to church. The clergy team wanted a friendly face to welcome people so that they felt things were just as they were before the church had to close during the pandemic. We used to have ‘sides people’, but the clergy wanted a more modern approach to welcoming people back to church after Covid-19. I was already on the coffee rota and was asked to head up the new role of church welcomers.

How do you make churchgoers feel special?

I always try to remember everyone’s name – but sometimes have a problem with this, so I try to remember their dogs’ names or if they have children! I can then ask about their dog or children so they know we care about them and are interested in who they are.

Why are welcomers important to the church?

When my daughter went to university in a new town where she didn’t know anyone, I suggested she go to the local Anglican church. She did, and was very upset because no one spoke to her. She sat on her own and felt very disheartened. After coming from St Peter & St Paul’s, we assumed all churches were like ours and she would be happy there. How wrong we were!

What are the positives of the role?

It makes me feel happy to play my part in the church family. I get to meet new people and I feel as if it’s a really important role for the church.

What do you struggle with within the role?

Listening! I am naturally a ‘talker’, so I have to try to listen to what the person is saying and not be over-enthusiastic to jump in!

Are there any transferable skills you’ve learnt you can use in welcoming?

Communication: I can talk to anyone. I have a positive attitude.

Do you ‘welcome’ on your own or have help?

We have a lovely team. We now have twelve members of the congregation who are welcomers. We have teams of two or three for each Sunday.

Do you have to come to church early?

Yes, around 20 minutes early to find out from the clergy team what is needed for the service. This may mean giving out items for the sermon and saying hello to those already there, such as the coffee helpers, clergy and wardens.

How many times a month are you on the rota?

I am on the church welcoming rota one Sunday a month but also stand in when someone else can’t make it for whatever reason or if there is a particularly busy service and full church when more welcomers are needed.

What do you do in the service?

We welcome people through the door, give information about the service, using the screens and where the toilets are, etc.

if they are new. We take a headcount and we ask anyone who may have difficulty going up to the communion rail (there are a few steps) if they would like to have communion brought to them in their pew. This information is taken down to the clergy team. We also take the collection plate to be blessed at the right place in the church service. We invite people to come up to the communion rail in turn so that not too many people are standing in the



aisle at one time (this doesn’t always work!). At the end of the service, we also invite people to stay for tea or coffee. If they are new, I steer them towards a seat next to somebody I know will talk to them and make them feel at home. We say goodbye and check to see if anyone’s forgotten anything in their pew.

How can you develop the role in the future?

I want to ask congregation members to take up the collection plate, especially if they are newer people. I remember when John Hawkes (the sides person from a few years ago) asked me to do it, and I took the offertory up with my mum. Being made to feel welcome and included encourages people to stay with our church and get the full benefit of worshipping at our services and that sense of feeling that they belong.

Lottie Lashley
St Peter & St Paul

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The parable of the twins



This ‘parable’ has apparently been around for some time and I heard it recently at a friend’s funeral and thought *Comment* readers might find it interesting.

In a mother’s womb were two babies. The first baby asked the other: ‘Do you believe in life after delivery?’

The second baby replied, ‘Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later.’

‘Nonsense,’ said the first. ‘There is no life after delivery. What would that life be?’

‘I don’t know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths.’

The doubting baby laughed. ‘This is absurd! Walking is impossible. And eat with our mouths? Ridiculous. The umbilical cord supplies nutrition. Life after delivery is to be excluded. The umbilical cord is too short.’

The second baby held his ground. ‘I think there is something and maybe it’s different from what it is here.’

The first baby replied, ‘No one has ever come back from there. Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery it is nothing but darkness and anxiety and it takes us nowhere.’

‘Well, I don’t know,’ said the twin, ‘but certainly we will see mother and she will take care of us.’

‘Mother?’ The first baby guffawed. ‘You believe in mother? Where is she now?’

The second baby calmly and patiently tried to explain. ‘She is all around us. It is in her that we live. Without her there would not be this world.’

‘Ha. I don’t see her, so it’s only logical that she doesn’t exist.’

To which the other replied, ‘Sometimes when you’re in silence you can hear her, you can perceive her. I believe there is a reality after delivery and we are here to prepare ourselves for that reality when it comes...’

Barbara Anscombe,
St Peter & St Paul

Original Story told by Henri J Nouwen, from the writings of Pablo Molinero

Tring’s Great Big Green Week



The Great Big Green Week is the UK’s biggest ever celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature.

The first ever Great Big Green Week took place in September 2021 and saw over 5,000 events and actions across the UK. Since then, the movement has grown and every year, people come together to unleash a wave of support for action to protect the planet. The Great Big Green Week is a Climate Coalition initiative. The Climate Coalition is, as the name suggests, a coalition of influential charities including Friends of the Earth, The National Trust, Christian Aid, WWF-UK, RSPB and Oxfam.

The Great Big Green Week encourages whole communities to come together to be ready and willing to take action to tackle climate change. The Great Big Green Week includes everything from cookery to craft, festivals to football matches, shop window displays to school assemblies. Events are hosted by teachers, shop owners, sports clubs, artists, community groups, places of worship, libraries, builders – anyone who cares about climate change. You!

As well as one-off events and activities, there is a strong emphasis

on making our voice heard. Writing letters is one of the ways we can do this: these are called Letters to Tomorrow. Letters to Tomorrow explain your hopes for future generations if our leaders step up to protect the environment – and your fears about what life could be like if we don’t slow down climate change. Your letter could be to your friend, child, an MP or person of influence.

In 2023, Great Big Green Week will take place from 10-18 June. Tring wants to be part of this by creating its own week of events and action. The drive to promote The Great Big Green Week locally has been brought about by The Sustainable Tring Thing working in partnership with Tring Town Council.



The Sustainable Tring Thing is a local grassroots movement supporting the development of projects, campaigns and initiatives to further the sustainable development and enhancement of the community of Tring and the surrounding area. It would be fantastic to see everyone in our community engage in Tring’s first ever Great Big Green Week. There will be an array of events and activities for you to get involved in, or even organise.

Let us know!

We’re inviting anyone organising an event to let us know what you are planning so we can upload it to the Great Big Green Week events page. We’d need to know

the following details: name of event; date and time; location; brief description; and contact person. The events page is then where you can head if you’re looking for something to get involved in. Of course, we’ll be advertising what’s going on locally via social media, Tring Radio and posters around the town.

If you’re organising a local event or just want to know more, please feel free to get in touch via sustainabletringthing@gmail.com. For more information and to find out about local events head to: <https://greatbiggreenweek.com>.

Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church

Protect the high seas, protect the planet



The United Nations High Seas Treaty was announced as agreed on 4 March 2023 after about fifteen years of negotiation between the United Nations member states.

Basically, this treaty covers the world's oceans that lie outside of national boundaries, so-called international waters.

National territorial waters for islands and coastal countries typically extend 200 nautical miles from the coastline or halfway between the coastline and that of the nearest coastline of a different country – think English Channel for instance. A nautical mile is equivalent to approximately 1.15 miles (2,025 yards) or 1.852 kilometres (1,852 metres). So, a national boundary could be up to 230 miles from that country's coast. If you want to see the area this treaty covers then I suggest looking at <https://www.marineregions.org/eezmapper.php> to get some idea of the area we are talking about. Also, if you zoom in on Britain on this map you can see how our national boundaries are affected by the close proximity of other countries such as Ireland, France, Belgium etc. The bulge in our national boundary to the north-west of Scotland is in part extended by St Kilda. There are currently no permanent residents on St Kilda. A military base on the main island, Hirta, is occupied all year round and National Trust for Scotland staff are resident on the island from April to September every year – during the breeding season of the large seabird colonies found there. Zooming back out you can see that, because of Island groups, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, large chunks of ocean are categorised as national waters and so aren't covered by this treaty.

The last international treaty prior to this treaty was the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which was signed in 1982. This agreement defined an area referred to as the 'High Seas' – international waters where all countries have a right to fish, ship and do research. However, only 1.2% of these waters are protected. So, any marine life living outside these small protected areas has been at risk from overfishing and shipping traffic.

This treaty took fifteen years to be agreed because of funding issues and fishing rights. You might wonder why this treaty costs money to implement. Part of the treaty is to ensure that money goes into marine conservation and this money has to come from somewhere. The fishing issue is because countries may not be able to fish in international waters as they have done in the past and they would see this as a loss of their 'rights'.

This treaty covers about two-thirds of the world's oceans and the intention is that this will place 30% of the world's oceans into protected areas (roughly 50% of international waters as opposed to the current 1.2% – a massive increase), ensuring that by 2030 more money is put into marine conservation and that there are new rules for mining at sea. The International Seabed Authority that oversees licensing has said that future activity on the deep seabed will be subject to strict environmental regulations to ensure that it is carried out sensibly and sustainably.

Environmental groups say it will help reverse biodiversity losses and ensure that any development is carried out sustainably. Just by being there, the protected areas will allow marine life to recover and this should mean an increase in marine life in areas immediately adjacent to these protected areas and in some mobile species (like birds), even further afield.

It is interesting to note that DEFRA has announced plans to consult on proposed measures to ban industrial sand eel fishing within UK waters. Of course, DEFRA's track record when it comes to conservation is not good and

the cynic in me wonders if 'Wild Isles', which started on 12 March and is fronted by Sir David Attenborough, might have something to do with the announcement. It is no secret that sand eels are an important part of our marine ecosystem and are either direct food for many of our globally important breeding seabirds, or are certainly part of their food chain. The first part of what will, no doubt, be a wonderful series is looking at Puffins, a bird for which the phrase 'cute and endearing', was invented. Puffins are a direct consumer and I would be surprised if Sir David doesn't mention that numbers of seabirds have declined for a number of reasons – all related to our activities.

For centuries the human race has thought that the vast oceans were limitless and inexhaustible resources that we could use as we saw fit. However, history has taught us this isn't the case. Look at the Dodo, first discovered by sailors early in the 16th century on Mauritius. They were unused to humans and tame, so as a consequence sailors destroyed them as a source of fresh



New Zealand Fur Seal



Northern Royal Albatross

meat. Also people settled on the island causing habitat loss and introducing animals that ate Dodo eggs or competed with them for food and so the last Dodo died in 1681. Although not a seabird, sailors caused this bird's extinction without a doubt. The near extinction of some species of Whale did teach us something – although some countries still hunt them for 'research purposes' and others do it blatantly for food.

Today though there are other impacts we are having on the oceans that, if anything, are potentially catastrophic. About 50% of the world's oxygen is produced in the sea. Currently about a quarter of the world's carbon dioxide is absorbed by the oceans, which you might think is a good thing given that an excess of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is contributing significantly to global warming. However, when carbon dioxide is absorbed by water then it combines with the water to form carbonic acid (you get the same acid formed in fizzy drinks, one reason why sparkling mineral water tastes different from still mineral water). Although carbonic acid is a weak acid it still can impact marine life. For instance, coral can dissolve in carbonic acid, causing dramatic and devastating effects. Coral reefs in shallow water can also suffer from bleaching due to hotter temperatures which is already happening



Sooty Shearwater



Cape Petrel



White-chinned Petrel

in the Great Barrier Reef and other parts of the world. Other species are also susceptible to a slight change in seawater's acidity. Climate change seems to have increased marine heat waves twenty-fold. If 50% of the world's oxygen is produced in the ocean – do we really want to jeopardise that!?

So even though

we live in land-locked counties, Britain is an island, surrounded by small islands and we cannot ignore the importance of the sea in our lives and the international waters. Certainly, some species that breed here wander far afield into international waters. Manx Shearwaters winter on the seas near South America either in or crossing international waters. Sooty Shearwaters visit here, mostly in late summer and autumn, but breed in the southern oceans on islands large and small so spend a lot of time in international waters. A number of the albatross species spend their time flying over international waters when growing up or not breeding and tighter legislation in these waters could certainly improve their prospects by reducing their chances of being caught on fishing lines and having more food available when traversing the oceans. This includes Black-browed Albatross, a rare bird in this country, which has taken to sitting

on Bempton Cliffs in Yorkshire in the summer, amidst the Gannets breeding there.

So is this treaty important? If adhered to and acted upon then yes, it is very important. We only have one planet and God expects us to take responsibility for it and look after it.

Roy Hargreaves, St Peter & St Paul



Salvin's Albatross



Shy Albatross



Australasian Gannet

The Beatitudes



Several small groups met across the Tring Team Parish during Lent to study the Beatitudes: these are the sayings that start in most Bible translations as 'Blessed are the...'. (They are in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5, verses 2-12). It could have been a bit of a dry semantic exercise, comparing multiple translations of the original Greek. However, the real joy of small groups is not our study of erudite research, but our sharing of what being meek, or a peacemaker, or even just blessed mean to individual Christians in Tring in 2023. Often we struggle with the verbiage but we recognise the concept when we see it or experience it.

We were blessed, to coin a phrase, by the study material written by Huw Bellis. While he characteristically credits others with much of the material, the resulting leaflets are engaging and thought-provoking. In the final one, Huw

has a go at his own version of the Beatitudes, which I am pleased to include here:

'What is true happiness? By that I mean the deep and lasting happiness, not the superficial and transient joys of a hedonistic life, but the happiness which comes from fulfilling your true purpose as a human. That means recognising your need for God. You may think God doesn't matter, but you are most likely to recognise your need for God when you are at the end of your tether. That is OK. But when you DO recognise that God loves you, you must also recognise that God wants you to love too. Love always comes with grief. The cost of loving is the pain of grief. And it is more than just loving another person, it is loving this whole world and all of its people. Loving means you must work for the good of all, you need to do something, it should be a physical desire – you must thirst for this! There will be much which winds you up in this world, but be like God, be slow to anger. Do not be arrogant and think of your own importance, set aside all self-



interest and see the needs of others. You have your own worth and dignity in the eyes of God, but so does everyone else, so fight for them and for what is right. Resolve your differences properly. A temporary cessation of conflict in your relationships is not peace. Peace only comes when you work to genuinely overcome differences and you can say you are at one with each other. Then you will find wholeness. And that is true happiness. Others might mock you for it, but you are doing the right thing.'

Prompted by Huw, I also had a go at my own version of the same passage; I won't inflict that on long-suffering *Comment* readers, but ask me if you'd like me to share it with you.

John Whiteman (and Huw Bellis)
Tring Team

Why was *Comment* late?



I suppose it could be construed as positive that when the monthly magazine of the churches in Tring (and the villages) does not appear by the 1st of the month, people come up to me or to Barbara Ancombe and ask 'Where is my *Comment*?!'

Sadly, the Easter or April edition WAS late. It may even be that the May edition will be late (you will know the answer to that by the time you read this article).

If you have already read the article on page 24 of the March edition of *Comment* about deadlines, you might have some idea of why we were late last month.

First, it was a month in which very few articles arrived on or before the 1 March; and although your editor tried very hard to elicit more articles, that meant that when they did come, they were well after the deadline and the designer had more work to do to fill the 32 pages. It's always an option simply to go to press with what DOES arrive but it feels as though

we have let the side down and failed in producing the magazine you expected.

Then we had a problem with printers as we approached the Easter break and a couple of Bank Holidays. The usual printer could not fit us in – and although Ian Matthews tried to find someone else to print it in time, the prices were considerably higher than usual and there is a budget... Ian did well to find a substitute printer to get it printed without breaking the bank and now has a back-up should the same thing happen again. But delivery was late – and it's all credit to Barbara and Barry and the team of people who deliver the magazine that it was only a few days later than people expected. Nonetheless, we apologise for that delay.

The more worrying fact is that there was a repeat of the low number of articles on 1 April – it seems many possible contributors were away or too busy to write because of Easter. THANK YOU to all who stepped up to help fill the pages. Add another few Bank Holidays into the mix in early May and I can guess it will be hard to get you this edition on time too. And while I am typing this article,



knowing that the designer wants to go to press today, I am already preparing the June edition and I can tell you already that, with a week to go till the end of the month, we will be struggling again...

If you want to say something or write about something you can share with others in Tring and round about, please do send it in soon – and maybe there will be a month overflowing with interesting contributions and I will not be tearing out my hair next month!

The Editor

On changing the words in hymns



In St Peter & St Paul's Church on Easter Day we sang the great hymn 'To God be the Glory'. The author of this hymn was Mrs Frances Jane van Alstyne, better known by her maiden name of Fanny Crosby. Born in New York, and totally blind from birth, she went at the age of 14 to the first special school for the blind in the USA. In later life she returned to teach in the school and married another blind teacher.

Fanny wrote verse from an early age and was encouraged by William Cullen Bryant, the distinguished American poet and hymn writer. She wrote over 8,000 hymns and sacred songs. Many of the hymns are no longer sung much, but were once very popular. One of my English great-grandfathers, who was a conductor (on the Woolwich tram, not of an orchestra), is reported to have sung her 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus' on his deathbed. My mother thought there was at least a possibility he was going to the other place. One hymn which is still regularly sung by American and British Methodists is:

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine:
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

The song became the theme song of the Billy Graham evangelistic movement, being used in his 'Hour of Decision' broadcasts. Sceptics of the Billy Graham approach parodied the opening lines thus:

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine:
I had an experience at a quarter
to nine.*

Fanny's hymns were possibly not the greatest of poetry but, as the Rector said in announcing the hymn, the chorus for 'To God be the Glory' is 'cracking'.

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
Oh, come to the Father through
Jesus the Son;
And give Him the Glory! Great
things He hath done!*

This song was popular with the Moody and Sankey evangelistic tour in America and Britain. Fanny was a Baptist lay preacher but was greatly influenced by American Methodism. Her original words, as far as I can make out, for the first verse were:

*To God be the glory, great things
He hath done;
So loved He the world that He
gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement
for sin,
And opened the life gate that all
may go in.*

Once in a church a long time ago, my wife my wife and I were handed a hymn book in which the words had been changed to: 'And opened the life gate that we may go in' implying that the grace of God was only for a select few. We looked at each other and sang the original words loudly, for the grace of God, we believe, is for all. For as Paul says, in his first letter to Timothy, God 'desires everyone to be saved and to

come to the knowledge of the truth'.

This year is the 250th anniversary of the writing of 'Amazing Grace' by the Revd John Newton when he was Vicar of Olney, not too far away from Tring. Newton wrote a number of great hymns, including one of my favourites, 'Glorious things of thee are spoken'. Newton's final verse originally started:

*Saviour, if of Zion's city
I, through grace, a member am...*

Many modern hymn books have changed this to:

*Saviour, since of Zion's city
I, through grace, a member am...*

My wife tells me that the vicar of the first church she attended, Desmond Guinness of the famous Guinness family, once preached on this saying that there was no presumption in the word 'since' because grace relies not on our goodness but on God's infinite mercy. John Newton was a Calvinist and believed that not everyone was going to be saved by God, unlike Fanny Crosby, who thought the grace of God was open to all. I am all for this change.

If I had the chance to change the words of hymns for ever, I think I would start with the communion hymn 'Let us break bread together on our knees', especially the line 'As I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun'. I presume this refers to communion in a traditional eastward-facing church; but I don't fall on my knees, I have to gently lower myself, or I would never get up again. On reflection, perhaps it would be best to ban the whole hymn.

Jon Reynolds
Tring Team

Parish registers

Baptisms

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

Arabella Dibble
Oscar Lear

Weddings

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

Oliver Ferrari & Emily Alliott

Funerals

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

Edward Parker

The Rule of St Benedict



There are many abbeys in our country but I wonder how many readers of *Comment* have ever met an Abbot! I have, as will be explained at the end. There are still some abbeys but not as many as in the Middle Ages.

Recently I started to re-read the Rule of St Benedict, the basis of life in those abbeys which nowadays are abbeys in name only. Some, of course, are still places of worship such as Westminster Abbey and our own Abbey and Cathedral Church of St Alban; some are stately homes and tourist attractions, such as Woburn Abbey; others are ruins, such as Tintern Abbey – reminders of past days or inspiration for poetry and art.

The call of God, which inspired some to get away from it all, in deserts or rocky islands or other remote spots, also inspired many to gather in communities, that is, to become monks. Some found it necessary to provide rules for these communities, among them St Benedict, who wrote his rule in seventy-three chapters. He was, by no means, the first to do so; there were a number of others, including one called the writer of the Rule of the Master, a work which preceded Benedict's Rule and the contents of which formed the basis of Benedict's Rule. But Benedict's Rule is the best known and very influential and still much used, though with changes and adaptations over the centuries.

Benedict lived about AD480-550. He withdrew from 'the licentiousness of contemporary society' by retiring to live as a hermit in a cave, near Rome. However, a community grew up around him and he established twelve monasteries of twelve monks each. He ended up at Monte Cassino where a monastery was several times destroyed in earlier centuries and then, again, in World War II. He saw his rule as a modest addition to monastic literature, but, in fact, it became the best known.

Nowadays, when monks are few and far between, it can be hard to appreciate just how influential the monastic life has been, not just in church life but in life in general. We live in a vastly changed

society in church and state and in a very secular age. Many around us do not understand religion or know what worship and prayer are about, let alone the vocation to serve God in a life of total commitment. This is what Benedict asks of his monks, and this commitment includes celibacy, sharing of goods, the need for self-discipline, the pursuit of humility, obedience and the centrality of prayer. All these are to be seen as part of a constant process of renewal. In other words, the monastic movement stands as an alternative to what is normal to most people today. It has also developed greatly from the first small groups of men committed to a life of prayer in a small community; for it was through the monasteries that much learning was preserved through the centuries, including the so-called 'Dark Ages'. They were also places that looked after the poor and needy, the sick and aged, and gave hospitality; even paying guests were to be welcomed, as Christ would be. They served as places of education and learning in the days before schools and universities existed.

Over time, different forms of monasticism developed and other orders sprang up to reflect changing times and needs. However, as well as doing much good for society and offering much worship to God, there were downsides. Some monks became slack in their observances and many monasteries became rich through pious donations. Of course, some wealth was used to build great churches such as St Albans Abbey.

For us, in this century, there are two main reasons why, from having 800 monasteries, we ended up with none in the 16th century. One was the Reformation, with its many different ideas about the Christian life and the church and its worship and sacraments and understanding of the Scriptures. The other was the greed of Henry VIII and his cronies, who gained so much land and wealth at the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Back to the

actual Rule of St Benedict – although many of its rules do not apply to us, its emphasis of prayer, worship and the centrality of God in our lives are still worthy of consideration. So, he addresses the reader in the Prologue: 'First of all, every time you begin a good work you must pray to the Lord most earnestly to bring it to perfection'. This leads on to seventy-three chapters covering everything from daily worship, household management, discipline and other matters, including the welcome of guests.

So, when did I meet an abbot? When I was a teenager, I stayed several times at Nashdom Abbey in Bucks, an Anglican monastery ruled by an abbot. It followed the ways of the Benedictine communities on the continent and all worship was in Latin and according to the Roman rite. That monastery is no more. The building had originally been built by a Russian princess ('Nashdom' means 'Our Home'). The Benedictines took it over and I believe it has been converted to luxury flats. But though I have no vocation to be a monk, I still worship at St Albans Abbey most mornings in a fashion monks of earlier centuries would recognise, with psalms, readings and prayer, but not the length, frequency or in Latin as when St Albans Abbey was a monastery! Our cathedral was once an actual abbey but it is still a place of prayer and worship (as well as a tourist attraction).

In his chapter 'The Tools for Good Works' Benedict states: 'First of all, love the Lord God' and ends 'And, finally, never lose hope in God's mercy'.

Martin Banister
St Albans Cathedral (Abbey!)

COMMENT

The magazine of the Churches in Tring

Please submit your article to the Editor by the 1st of the month.

Aim for 400 or 800 words and please send a head and shoulders colour photo or jpg and any other photos in high resolution.

Contact comment.magazine@gmail.com



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Tring Repair Café: the first year



Just over a year ago, you may remember, Tring in Transition started up Tring's very own Repair Café.

One year on we have a well-established place in Tring's calendar on the third Saturday of every month in the hall of High Street Baptist Church, 10.30-13.00. If you haven't dropped in to see us yet, please do. Even if you don't have any repairs, some people just drop in for a coffee and watch the repairers at work.

We have repaired anything from toys, hoovers, laptops, clocks and clothes to lamps, toasters, food processors, furniture and ornaments. We have restringed ukuleles and made train sets travel again. We have sharpened knives and given 'how to' advice on operation of

phones and laptops. You name it, we've had a go!

In our first year we have had over 300 customers, 202 items have been repaired and advice has been given to enable customers to make their own repairs to 64 items (48 items were not repairable).

The Farnham Quick Repair Café Calculator gives a very approximate idea of the consequences of our repairs. It calculates that our emission-saving after the first year was 6,599 kg CO₂e and that we have saved 702kg of materials from landfill. We have also given £700 of donated money for the repairs to mostly local charities, such as DENS.

In addition to these obvious benefits, there are over twenty repairers who help us at the Café and who benefit from the camaraderie of a team of people who enjoy fixing things. When doing their repairs, volunteers share their expertise with customers in the hope that they will

try to make their own repairs in the future and also think twice before taking broken items to the tip for landfill. If you would like to volunteer, get in touch via the Tint website transition@tringintransition.org.uk.

We are part of a growing movement. There are now also repair cafés in Aston Clinton, Ivinghoe, Berkhamsted and Chesham and we are often contacted by other groups in Herts that want to start up in their area.

We have had great fun along the way and look forward to our Repair Cafés in 2023. The Repair Café concept is becoming increasingly popular as a way of reducing emissions, changing people's mindset about the possible longevity of products and, in a small way, helping to mitigate climate change.

Janet Rook
High Street Baptist Church

It's what you CAN do that counts



While I was spending my Saturday afternoon editing the May contributions to *Comment*, my third son came in to ask me to check an email

he was sending to the leadership team at the school where he works. The gist of the email was that he wants them to stop throwing away the plastic that tells you that it can't be recycled at home. It is a huge concern for him, just as at 14 he wrote to the Local Council because it caused him great distress that yogurt pots could not then be recycled – he ate a lot of yogurt and hated the fact that they would go into landfill. Should he stop eating yogurt? He went on to say that if the school agreed to make a space where the 'can't be recycled at home' plastic could be collected, he would be willing to transport it as he left work each day to Tring Tesco, where it can be moved on to the right place for recycling.

I had only shortly before read Anne Nobbs' article about Tring in Transition and her lifelong concern about climate change and recycling (among other things); and also Jan Rook's article on the Repair Café and the 6,599 kg of

CO₂ emission saving and the 702kg of materials saved from landfill in the first year. I had also been moved by Anne saying that it was hard not to lose heart when it seems no one is listening to your eco-anxiety and the need to DO something. I had been losing heart myself in several other areas of my life, one being the difficulty of getting articles in to *Comment* because people are too busy to write!

Anne, Jan and Polly were all concerned about all the same issues that I was as a teenager and beyond – in my case being heavily involved in Tearcraft and Traidcraft and fairtrade and also stopping the use of aerosols and saving the ozone layer and going on protest marches, speaking to my MP in Parliament... (you get the picture). I had also, in my first place of work (young, passionate about stuff, enthusiastic, probably scary) tried to persuade the management to change to the use of toilet paper made from recycled paper. I partly succeeded – the then MD wouldn't have it in his toilet as the recycled paper version was not soft enough for his delicate bottom. In those days some brands of toilet paper were also colour co-ordinated to the bathroom colour fashions of the time – does anyone else remember that? The dyes used were also harmful when



added to the water waste.

This particular son already takes away the 'can't be recycled at home' plastic that still remains in our shopping and we have almost as many places for recycling in our home as for kitchen appliances! (We may soon have to move to a tent in the garden to make room...)

I suppose the message here is that we are not alone in our eco-anxiety. Maybe many of the younger generation are better at this than we more senior citizens – though this son almost succumbed to road rage while driving to Parkrun this morning and watching the driver in front of him throw his disposable coffee container OUT OF THE WINDOW of his car. It made me mad too...

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul

The Holy Land and us – our untold story



On the 14 and 21 March this year, the BBC broadcast two programmes about the foundation of the State of Israel and the way these events shaped the narratives of two British families,

one Israeli, the other Palestinian, co-presented by Rob Rinder and Sarah Agha.

Using the approach seen in 'Who do you think you are?' these two grandchildren trace their families' history back to 1948 and before, to reveal personal stories hitherto unknown to them. As the experiences of another four families are explored, characteristic Palestinian and Jewish narratives emerge. In the final scene the participants wistfully express hope for the future,

but they show no awareness of approaches such as Musalaha's.

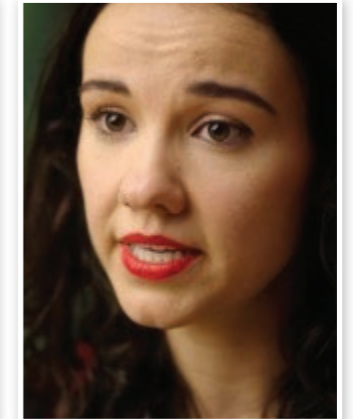
The series is even-handed and sensitive as the two competing narratives emerge. At the very start it outlines the role the British played, raising difficult questions for us today.

It seemed to me that these two programmes are a very good way to help us understand the current background Musalaha is working in.

The first five minutes of Episode 1 form an overall introduction, well worth



'I think the key to understanding where we are today is to hear the stories of that time from both sides.' Rob Rinder



'These are stories that need to be told. You need to look at the human impact on families whose lives were changed for ever.' Sarah Agha

looking at in itself. It contains hints of the pain and the hope the two main participants will share with viewers. These two BBC episodes are available on iPlayer for the next twelve months.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001k3w3/the-holy-land-and-us-our-untold-stories-series-1-episode-1>
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Colin Briant
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'...the promise of a homeland of safety a quarter of a century before my family are murdered in the holocaust...'

'Israel offered sanctuary for Jews from across the world, but it undoubtedly came at a price.'

'For the Palestinians there was nothing to celebrate. What Palestinian families like mine lost in 1948 were their homes, along with a sense of place and belonging. More than 700,000 Palestinian refugees were created by the events between 1947 and 1949... Palestinians call this period The Nakba – Arabic for the catastrophe.'

From Pennant Melangell to Pistyll Rhaeadr

Pennant Melangell is a tiny hamlet just over the Welsh border, a short drive from our new home and one of my favourite places to take our visitors. It is an exceptionally tranquil place comprising the church with shrine, a large circular graveyard, a scattering of houses and the healing centre. The shrine dominates the chancel in the church. A recent reconstruction, it houses bones discovered under the original apse in 1989. The bones have been identified as from a female of short stature and these are believed to be the holy relics of St Melangell. It is hard to believe that the patron saint of hares is to be found contained in these cold stones. Surely she is running barefoot beside the infant River Tanat, dancing around the ancient yew trees, kneeling before the majestic foothills of the Berwyns, praying and praising her Lord and Saviour?

A short distance away, a second holy place can be found. It is a little different. Always a popular visitor attraction, during lockdown, Pistyll Rhaeadr (translates as 'water, waterfall': in case there's any doubt, it's a very wet place) became a place of accepted pilgrimage for many Muslims. Car loads of visitors were replaced with bus loads and the narrow lanes were apparently gridlocked. Their destination? A mighty, impressive waterfall, with camping and picnic site, a great little cafe and excellent access for walking to the twin summit of the Berwyn Hills. We've taken friends here too!

If you find yourself nearby why not visit these amazing places and let us know if you want to drop in on us too. We have our own hill, orchids, streams and sheep of course.

Jenny Hoare, former Tring resident and current Comment reader




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Crossword

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
8								9				
10					11					12		
18												
24												
26												

ACROSS

1. Vegetable (5)
4. Letter of the N.T. (7)
8. Not this one or that (7)
9. Funny (5)
10. Cattle (4)
11. Attempt (3)
12. 'The venerable ...' (4)
15. 'So be it' (4)
16. Politeness (4)
18. Index (4)
19. Question (3)
20. Burden (4)
24. Tooth (5)
25. O.T. Hebrew prophet (7)
26. Book of the O.T. (7)
27. Lawful documents (5)

DOWN

1. Book of the O.T. (4) (2) (7)
2. Upper class (5)
3. Resound (4)
4. Mistakes (6)
5. Small measure (4)
6. Storm (7)
7. Priests (13)
13. Affirmative (3)
14. Keep cool in summer (3)
15. Son of King David (7)
17. Tunes (6)
21. Little corner (5)
22. Real (4)
23. Happy (4)

Postcard from Orkney



Hello all you sun-tanned Tringsters, here is a letter from the northern hemisphere for your delectation.

To start with, I have been shipped down to the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, courtesy of the Scottish NHS to have a neurostimulator implant refitted into my head to control migraines. On the flight back, both Carrie and I caught a nasty bug. Carrie's cleared up in a week; mine turned into pneumonia and I was blue-lighted to hospital for yet another 'near death' experience, Yippee!

This was followed by a severe dose of 'thrush' to the point of being unable to eat. So now I / we are recovering (they expect this to take over a month) and our black labrador was diagnosed with cancer and died, so I would be very grateful if you have any spare prayers, to send a small one up for us, although with all that is going on in the world, we are pretty small cheese.

On the bright side, our family visitors

are arriving and the weather has improved. Looking out over the 'flo it is such a beautiful backdrop, one cannot help smiling and thanking God. Our good friend, the farming priest, donated a complete butchered lamb as payment for our grazing land used over the summer last year. I must say it is very welcome. We have joined the Orkney Club which is a lovely 'knock three times and ask for Fred' type-place where one has to be approved. But it is full of codgers like us, cheap beer and trlps out and fills a space where older, quieter folk can hide from our welcome hoards of tourists and cruise ship passengers looking for a bit of local colour.

We have at last invested in an auction house electric Car. This is primarily for running about the island. As Orkney is carbon neutral with all power from renewables, it seemed like a good idea. I am just beginning to understand how to drive it, it being a Nissan Leaf



my feelings precisely. I only wish I had written it rather than J.Earnhart.

Mac Dodge
Milestone Community Kirk, Dounby

If you've ever lived on an island

By J. Earnhart, 1992

*If you've ever lived on an island
If you've ever lived by the sea
You'll never return to the mainland
Once your spirit has been set free*

*If you've ever smelt it in the ocean
Or tasted the salt in the air;
You'll know you've discovered a haven
That is uncommon, precious and rare.*

*If ever you've seen the whales play
or watched the eagles in flight
You remember, again, why you live here.
And why it feels so right.*

*If ever you've seen the sunset
As the ferry passes the shore:
You've seen the beauty of the island
That will be with you forever more.*

*If ever you've heard the seagulls
the waves, a foghorn, the winds:
Then you've heard the song of the island
And the peaceful message it sends.*

*Indeed, if you live on the island
If you're lucky to live by the sea
You'll never return to the mainland
As your spirit has been set free.*

BUCKS

OPEN




Brenda Hurley Amanda Curbishley

STUDIOS

JUNE 10TH - JUNE 25TH

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**OPEN: WEEKDAYS 11:00 AM- 5:00 PM
SAT.- SUN. : 11:00 AM - 5:30 PM**

Church windows



Churches have not always had windows! In Rome when the early Christians were persecuted, they worshipped underground in catacombs without windows.

The Jewish Christians, especially in Jerusalem, started by worshipping in the synagogues, which had windows. The rest of the early church started worshipping in members' houses which would have had large windows to let in maximum light, as was the fashion in Eastern Europe at the time. The windows would have been open, without glass, as window glass was not invented until around AD100. Before this time, many windows were covered in flattened animal horn or thin slices of marble, set in wooden frames to let some light through whilst protecting from the elements. Windows in poorer houses would simply have had hide, wood or cloth covers to keep out the weather.

The earliest purpose-built churches, up to about AD200, would have had small open windows, often high up towards the ceiling. The oldest remaining one is in Aqaba, in Jordan. This dates from AD300 and was small – 26m x 16m – mainly underground, although it appears there may have been a second storey above ground. The worship area on the ground floor does not seem to have had windows. The remains of many glass lamps to light this area have been found.

Around the 4th century, as churches evolved and early cathedrals were developed, windows started to be filled in with glass, sometimes coloured. The early window glass was a blown glass jar, flattened to form a window filling, not very transparent. Eventually, around the 10th century, a technique was developed where a cylinder of glass was blown, curved sheets cut from it and then flattened under heat.

The shape of windows also developed. Early house churches

had square or rectangular windows, although arched windows were found in some of the grander houses – having been invented by the Romans around 700BC. Some Roman house churches after AD100 had circular windows, as blown glass could easily be spun into a disc. By the time early cathedrals were being constructed, the windows followed the columns supporting the roof in the walls. The windows were tall and narrow with a pointed top.



During the late medieval period churches and cathedrals had windows decorated with intricate coloured glass figures and shapes which were first introduced in Germany in the 10th century. The glass was produced in specialist factories often specialising in only one or two colours of glass, the most famous being in Chartres in France.

The main specialist types of church window that evolved are: clerestory windows, high up in the church to let in light without any distracting views; lancet windows, tall and thin between supporting columns; rose windows, circular sectioned windows; cinquefoil windows, five arches in a circular

pattern to resemble a flower.

In England from AD700-1100, church windows were small and had rounded or triangular tops set in solid walls, Saxon-style, but from around 1090 to 1200, windows started to have a round top in a bigger window in the Norman style, which was possible from the use of columns and arches in the main church construction. These evolved into lancet windows around 1200. From 1200-1300, windows

evolved from lancet windows, often in groups. The stone between the windows became thinner so that groups of lancet windows formed one large window. From 1300-1400, these started to be decorated with circular, trefoil or quatrefoil mini windows above the lancet windows. From 1400-1600 the windows evolved into large perpendicular-style windows which were only possible by church construction without pillars in the walls, strength being provided by external buttresses.

From 1600, the Renaissance period saw intricate stained-glass windows flourish up to 1700 and the Age of Enlightenment when non-conformist influences produced more austere church architecture which called for a high pulpit set against a blank wall with plain glass windows on either side. From this point, windows depended on the denomination of the church with Catholic and

high Anglican churches with lavish stained-glass windows, and churches of other Protestant denominations having plain windows with a minimum of colour. You can see this distinction in Tring with St Peter & St Paul having stained-glass windows, Corpus Christi representing a modern Catholic simplicity and minimal colour in windows, whilst the other churches have very plain windows.

Please note this is an extreme simplification of a very complex subject!

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

Do send in to the Editor your favourite stained-glass windows – though they are often very hard to photograph!

The Red Cross Hall



The Good Companions Club started in 1950 for people over 70. At first it seems to have been for women only! It was held twice monthly in the YMCA Hall off Akeman Street. It quickly became very popular with about seventy members. They had to have a waiting list to join!

At that time some foods were still rationed so a friend of Nora Grace's offered to supply butter. Howletts, the baker, supplied brown loaves of bread. This continued until very recently. Each meeting they had a speaker or some sort of entertainment. They went on outings together and even holidays... A 'Thrifty Club' was organised to save up for the holidays and Christmas. At every meeting a register was taken and members sat at long tables. It was a very different time from today and the waiting list got longer and longer.

Meanwhile the Red Cross Cadets were meeting in the Temperance Hall. Herts 96 met every week and was growing as more houses were being built and more people were joining. It was becoming more obvious that we needed a much bigger premises with parking space built in the town with room to store equipment.

So, in 1970, Mrs P Fells gave a piece of land in Pond Close and an appeal went out to raise £20,000 – a huge amount at the time. Mr P Fells was the Chairman of the appeal. The architect was Mr E T Dowling, whose wife was the Red Cross Divisional Director. A great effort was made by the town to raise the money, with barbecues at Miswell Farm, bring & buy and jumble sales, a mammoth 15-mile sponsored walk, which included children as young as 6, local councillors and Nora Grace herself.

There were gifts and donations from clubs, businesses, memorial gifts, grants from British and Herts Red Cross, County Council and Tring Council. Within a year, we had raised the money to build the Red Cross Hall.

Well done, Tring!

On 27 October 1971, the centre was opened by Sir George Burns, Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, accompanied by the architect, Mr P Fells, the chairman of the appeal, The Rev Donald Howells, the chairmen of Tring and Berkhamsted UDCs, president of the Red Cross,

Mrs Boyle – and many other Red Cross members, including some from the detachment in uniform.

Mrs Boyle thanked Mrs Fells for the kind donation of the land and Sir George said he 'hoped happiness will be found in this building for years to come'. Indeed, it has been so for fifty years.

The building has a hall with seating for 200, a smaller hall, kitchen, office and toilets, and at that time, a bath with a lift for assisted bathing – although that has since been removed. Outside there is a sunny terrace, gardens and parking.

The Good Companions now had room to accommodate more members and the Detachment had storage space for First Aid and Nursing equipment. A caretaker was appointed. I think the first one was Gerald Boniface, husband of one of our members who lived nearby.

The hall was rented out for all sorts of occasions: Blood Donor Clinic (another one of our duties), wedding receptions, golden and diamond wedding anniversaries, funeral gatherings, birthday parties, good-as-new and bring-and-buy sales (but not jumble sales, which had to be in the Temperance Hall). Every year in May, a party of pensioners would come from Ware to see the bluebells at Ashridge and we served them a hot lunch, which they enjoyed. Some sat on the terrace and others wandered off into the town to browse the shops. They loved our charity shops and would come back with bulging bags.

Sometimes, Bob and Tom Grace would give one of their slide shows of Old Tring, always very popular and not to be missed, and full of interesting anecdotes.

All of these things helped to raise the money to



keep things going and the hall was very well used and appreciated by the town.

The Eight of Herts was a local group who raised funds for all sorts of local organisations and one year, it was The Red Cross. It was an 'Old Tyme Music Hall' to be held in the Victoria Hall. Nora recruited about ten of us to be waitresses, known as 'Nora's girls'. This was great fun but very hard work. Nora was dressed as Britannia, wearing a fireman's helmet – and sold an amazing number of raffle tickets all for The Red Cross. That was an unusual duty.

Erica Guy
St Peter & St Paul

Piano & more series

An hour of music on Sunday afternoons

Robert Salter *Violin*
Penny Bradshaw *Cello*
Kathron Sturrock *Piano*

Haydn
Piano trio in Eb major

Bach
Sonata in C minor for violin and keyboard

Mozart
Piano trio in G major, K564

Sunday 21st May
at 3pm

Tring Parish Church HP23 5AE
Free admission, with retiring collection

For further details, see:
piano-and-more.org.uk
or Google "Piano and more, Tring"



Still walking...



I know I will win no prizes for remembering the first Walk of Witness I attended in Tring, because compared with many others, it's not that long (especially if you take

out the Covid-19 years when no one walked). My youngest son, Ben, now 26, was toddling and didn't want to stay still for the ACTS drama performed on the grass at St Peter & St Paul's. I was acutely embarrassed when he toddled into the drama at a pivotal point in the action.

I have walked in rain and sunshine –

Michelle Grace commented that in the time she has been in the Tring Parish, Good Friday seems to mark the first sunny day of Spring, and so it was this year – a wonderfully sunny morning, even if it clouded over later. I have walked with our own children and two of our foster children – although our latest baby wanted to be carried for part of the walk and she felt very heavy by the end!

I don't know if anyone counts how many people walk, but it's hugely encouraging that the long line of people who march or who gather to sing and remember and pray, seems to be just as long as it ever was year on year, even though many from years ago have died or moved away or become too frail to walk. This must mean newcomers join us

each year... This year we welcomed new clergy to take part in the readings and prayers: Father Sean from Corpus Christi, Jackie Buie from New Mill Baptist Church and Ruth Egan from High Street Baptist Church.

I have no idea what the people of Tring think as they watch from windows or coffee shops or the butchers or M&S (I have some idea that not all the motorists are ecstatic when they have to stop to let us cross at the junctions) but I hope that they have some idea of the significance of Good Friday and what it is we are remembering by the end.

Annette Reynolds

St Peter & St Paul

Many thanks to Janet Goodyer for the photographs!



In memory of Spencer Harris

Spencer was born in Bromsgrove and lived in the beautiful area around the River Severn near the Malvern Hills. He had elder siblings Jacquie and Milton and went to school and Sunday School run by very strict nuns. His mother left the family home when Spencer was 4, later returning to take Spencer away to live in Spain. Spencer did not see the rest of his family again for many years. It was not a happy time: his stepfather beat him regularly with a belt; but a few years later, they all returned to the UK and settled in Stewkley and then Aylesbury in some sort of normality.

He attended Aylesbury Grammar school where, despite his dyslexia, he did well and his love of music was nurtured. He played in various bands and was a very talented bass player. He made his own first bass guitar when he was 14, and played the double bass for a while. After a fight with his stepfather one night, Spencer's mother and stepfather left the house, never to be seen again. Nonetheless, he did his A Levels, finished school and managed to find himself his first full time/apprentice job at Carpenters the Hardware store in Thame, and later on was given accommodation above the shop, paid enough to live on and put through a Business qualification at Brookes College, Oxford. He was in the hardware business most of his life and made an impression on those he met through work as a very genuine and personable man who was genuinely liked and appreciated, and considered a friend, not just a business acquaintance.

He and a couple of friends in a band entered a competition to write a jingle for a local radio station, won the 1st prize and his share of the prize was something like £10,000 which he used as a deposit to buy his first house in Rippon Street, Aylesbury, at the age of around 21. From buying that first house, he became a very hands-on person who taught himself from scratch how to fix things, learning some essential plumbing, carpentry and even roofing skills, after taking out a few books from the library on how to repair a roof.

Spencer married Melanie around 1984 and their first son, Joshua, was born in 1986. After their separation, Spencer married Jayne, and his second son, Barnaby, was born in 1995. I was his third wife and we were together

for nearly twenty years. I first met Spence when his band 'The Orange Tones' was playing at a gig in Windsor. We embarked on our long-distance relationship that lasted over three years before we bought our lovely house together here in Tring. Spence continued to play with the band for about forty years (later called the The Blood Oranges, which underwent a few name changes over the years).

Spencer has always been a loyal friend and dedicated musician. Music was his life, and it was always such a pleasure watching him at his happiest, playing the bass with friends he had known for almost his entire adult life. In the first years of the band, they played original music that they wrote, but then they decided to move on to playing covers from bands whose music they enjoyed most in various pubs and for private events like birthday parties, New Year's Eve and weddings. Around the time I met Spence, they started to play some of their favourite high energy New Wave and Punk music.

When Spence was about 19 or 20, he was rediscovered by his father and brother – a great joy for them all to be reunited. He took me to meet his father for the first time at Easter about five months into our relationship. Spence had told me a lot about his background, but had not really mentioned his brother at all. After the introductions were made, the first thing Alan said to Spence was 'Spence, you've just missed your brother Milton on the TV just now – his horse won at Cheltenham!'

Spencer was a very principled man who believed in doing the right thing. In general, he was always happy to help people, and was always concerned about others less fortunate than himself. Last year Spencer and a couple of friends planned a charity gig at our local pub, the Kings Arms, to raise money for the Ukraine DEC appeal. They got a number of local bands to play for free, raffle tickets were sold for prizes generously donated by local businesses and individuals. Spencer was proud to be part of something that brought the community together for a worthwhile cause. Over the years he also loved to host Christmas Day dinner, mostly for friends locally who were otherwise going to be on their own.

Spence was also known for looking



well turned out when going out, wearing some striking and flamboyant shirts. He loved to go on holiday, our favourite holiday destinations being the Croatian island off Split – Brač (Bratch) and Venice, but also new European historic cities we had not seen yet. He had hoped to return to Rome which he had arranged as a surprise 50th birthday present for me. Spence really was the life and soul of the party, able to lift the atmosphere and put a smile on everyone's face with his amusing antics, but he was also an affectionate, caring and loving husband. He would often try to persuade me it was time to switch off my laptop and stop working and relax.

During Lockdown, Spence was determined to improve the circulation issues in his right leg which made it painful to walk after about 400 yards. He religiously took our lovely dog Copper every morning for some really long walks and, after she died, he would still do that same walk imagining her by his side. Later he returned to painting and decorating jobs and found his really 'happy self' in work.

Spence was a very sociable man, who loved to share a joke, to find reasons to laugh or make people laugh, and to cheer people up; he had a very generous heart and wanted to make people feel comfortable and welcome; he was an affectionate, loving, caring and protective husband, a true friend and companion.

Yolanda Harris

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August

Crossword puzzle answers

From page 24

- | ACROSS | DOWN |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 1. SWEDE | 1. SONG OF SOLOMON |
| 4. EPISTLE | 2. ELITE |
| 8. NEITHER | 3. ECHO |
| 9. COMIC | 4. ERRORS |
| 10. OXEN | 5. INCH |
| 11. TRY | 6. TEMPEST |
| 12. BEDE | 7. ECCLESIASTICS |
| 15. AMEN | 13. YES |
| 16. EAST | 14. FAN |
| 18. LIST | 15. ABSALOM |
| 19. WHY | 17. THEMES |
| 20. ONUS | 21. NICHE |
| 24. MOLAR | 22. TRUE |
| 25. MALACHI | 23. INCH |
| 26. NUMBERS | |
| 27. DEEDS | |

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.



Church office

Revd Joe Egan

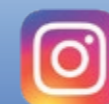
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tringbaptistchurch



High Street Baptist Church



Everyone is warmly invited to

Tring's Coronation Party



Monday 8th May from 2pm to 6pm
at St Peter & St Paul Church, Tring



At 2pm

Celebration Service for the Coronation

in St Peter & St Paul Church, Tring.

From 3pm

Coronation Party in the churchyard

with music, a tea tent, hot food, Tring Brewery bar, children's craft, fancy-dress competitions, and Royal themed quizzes.

All are welcome - free entry

Please RSVP info@tringtogether.org.uk to make sure we have enough seats and cake!
Free local transport can also be organised via the same email or call 01442 828920.