

# COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



## Services in October in Tring Church

### Sunday 2nd October

**8am** Holy Communion traditional language

**10am** Holy Communion with Sunday Club

### Sunday 9th October

**8am** Holy Communion traditional language

**10am** Harvest Worship for all

**11.30am** Baptism preparation session

**3pm** Piano and More Concert

### Sunday 16th October

**8am** Holy Communion traditional language

**10am** Holy Communion and Sunday Club

### Sunday 23rd October

**8am** Holy Communion traditional language

**10am** Communion Together

### Sunday 30th October

**8am** Holy Communion traditional language

**10am** Communion Together

### Worship for All and Communion Together

At these services we all worship together but there is more provision for children, quite often a craft activity, however they are for everyone.

Worship for All doesn't have Holy Communion, Communion Together does.

They are a more relaxed style of worship and are a bit shorter.

### Holy Communion with Sunday Club in Tring

There are also times when it is important to have age related worship. We all worship in different ways so we have a Sunday Club in Tring. The children (0 - 11 years old) go upstairs during the first hymn to have activities then re-join the wider congregation to take communion.

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

### Lots more going on

**Mondays 3.30pm - 5pm**

Youth Café in term time

**Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm**

Craft and a Cuppa

**Wednesdays 10am - 12noon**

Baby/toddler/carer drop-in

**Social Coffee** Fridays, Saturdays

10am - 12 noon, after Sunday,  
Tuesday & Thursday services

### Mid-week Services in Tring

**9.15am Tuesdays**

Holy Communion

**10am Thursdays**

Holy Communion in traditional  
language

## A sign of the times



Over the summer we went away for a short break. Because all three grown-up children and two rather large Labradors came with us, packing had to be kept to a minimum.

However, unbelievably, we were able to leave coats at home. Who can ever remember going away in England without needing a raincoat, or a warm coat? It has been exceptional this summer, rather devoid of 'soft refreshing rain'.

The other notable thing on our trip was that early in August the harvest had been brought in pretty much everywhere. It has been the earliest harvest that anyone can remember, so the churches are a little late with their harvest festivals this year.

I was surprised how well our sheep have coped in the extreme heat. Apparently, their wool insulates them both from the cold and extreme heat and enables them to maintain a constant temperature. However, we, like farmers up and down and across the country are feeding them with winter hay because there is no grass to eat. When we give

thanks for the harvest, we will need to remember how challenging it is going to be for farms, with the vagaries of the climate combined with astronomical fertiliser and fuel costs.

However, all things are relative. Our situation is nothing like the unbelievable scenes in Pakistan where an area the size of the whole of the UK is underwater. It would be rather difficult for them to sing that all is 'watered by God's almighty hand'.

As we celebrate harvest and the abundance of God's goodness, we are all too aware that the climate isn't entirely controlled by God – human interference is, without doubt, having a growing impact. As well as giving thanks, we need to approach harvest with a degree of penitence and a desire to change.

**Huw Bellis,  
Tring Team**

## A prayer after the death of Queen Elizabeth II

*Father in heaven,  
we give your thanks for your servant Elizabeth,  
our Queen.*

*We praise you as we remember her life  
and cherish her memory.*

*We bless you that in bearing your image  
she has brought light to our lives;*

*for we have seen in her life*

*reflections on your compassion,*

*in her integrity demonstrations of your goodness,*

*in her faithfulness glimpses of your eternal love.*

*Grant to each of us, beloved and bereft,*

*the grace to follow her good example*

*so that we with her may come*

*to your everlasting kingdom;*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord,*

*who died and rose again*

*and opened the gate of glory,*

*to whom be praise for all eternity.*

*Amen*

## Editorial



My dad was the eldest of twelve children so I am blessed with a good number of (now) elderly relatives and more cousins than I can name.

One of my aunts died in July after a long illness and was buried in August. As she was the only one of the family to profess a Christian faith, I was looking forward to the service in church rather than the rather sanitised goodbyes in crematoria that I had previously experienced of some of her siblings.

You are guessing already that I was disappointed – and you would be right. My aunt was a loyal, faithful and active Christian and the large congregation of her friends filled more than half the church. The priest knew her and was able to add a few personal touches to his sermon and spoke of her

opportunity to prepare for death over her long period of suffering.

But welcoming this church was not.

There were hymnbooks in the pews, but not enough to go around – no one ensured we all had sight of the words.

The regular members of the church knew the liturgy but it was not familiar to us (communicant members since our teens) and so we felt excluded – and who knows what the rest of the forty plus non-church-attending members of the family felt? There was communion at this funeral and we were not allowed to take part except to go for a blessing. The priest could have made the liturgy accessible but instead he seemed to think the important thing was to get through the words at breakneck speed so we could barely understand them, let alone pray the words with him. I knelt to pray until I realised everyone else was standing up to pray (my helpful husband poked me so I was not alone on my knees!).

What a wonderful opportunity there was to show my extended family what Christian love is like; to demonstrate Christ's welcome to all! And how this church (priest) failed to use the opportunity well.

If this is how a Christian feels in an unfamiliar Christian church, what must visitors to our churches feel like? I fear this is not the first time I have written about this in *Comment!* Whether it is that first welcome as we enter the church, to making sure we can all join in, to being given helpful words to direct our sitting or standing or kneeling – it can all make a difference to whether we feel we want to return or whether our prejudices about 'the church' are founded or not.

Lord, help us to put ourselves in the shoes of others.

**The (grumpy old) Editor**

## The Bright Field



Here is a simple, gentle and, surprisingly for Thomas, cheerful poem about the sacred at the heart of the ordinary.

The momentary brightness of the sun on the countryside had a fleeting intensity which urged the author to step out of time and experience the gift of God's grace. The structure of the sonnet, its language and images, all work together to encourage the reader to surrender to the revelation of the divine in such rare moments. The second stanza signals a shift from memory of the sunlight to a reflection on

the meaning of the experience, and the references to the 'pearl of great price' and Moses' meeting with the 'burning bush' anchor the poem in a biblical context.

Ronald Stuart Thomas (generally known as R.S.Thomas) was a Welsh poet and Anglican priest. He was born in Cardiff in 1913, but the family moved to Anglesey in 1918 when his father started work with the Merchant Navy. He was awarded a bursary to study Latin at the University of North Wales, and, after training for the priesthood in Llandaff, he was ordained in 1936. He served all his ministry in Wales and is known for his love of the Welsh countryside and a dislike of modern technology. He was a prolific poet for over sixty years, and

*I have seen the sun break through to illuminate a small field for a while, and gone my way and forgotten it. But that was the pearl of great price, the one field that had the treasure in it. I realise now that I must give all that I have to possess it. Life is not hurrying on to a receding future, nor hankering after an imagined past. It is the turning aside like Moses to the miracle of the lit bush, to a brightness that seemed as transitory as your youth once, but is the eternity that awaits you.*

**R.S.Thomas, 1975**

*Collected Poems 1945-1990; Phoenix Giant – Orion Publishers 1993*

his work is often considered bleak and austere. He died in 2000.

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

## Repair Cafe



If you have something that really needs a fix, don't bin it, come and see us instead.

Word is now spreading about Tring's very own and very successful repair café.

If you haven't been to see what we get up to, pop in to the High Street Baptist Church Hall, from 10.30-13.00 on the third Saturday of every month.

If you don't need any repairs just now, you can call in for a coffee and chat and watch the repairers at work. Repair skills are being lost, so come and learn from our volunteers who really enjoy the challenge and satisfaction of bringing things back to life.



to sing and dance had been lost) to the many toasters, hoovers and lamps that have been the most common items, together with various sewing repairs.

We now also have an IT support volunteer who will give help with using mobiles or tablets. Just the job to solve all those 'how do I?' questions. It will open your eyes to what can be achieved on your mobile devices.

We've also had offers of help from ceramics and art restorers. Whatever needs a fix, come in and ask us about it. We'll look forward to seeing you.

**Jan Rook**  
**High Street Baptist Church**  
*This is a Tring in Transition initiative sponsored by Dacorum Borough Council*



## Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)



October this year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the great British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams – generally known as 'RVW'. His actual birth date was 12 October so we will be having a celebration of his music on the closest Sunday to that – 16 October – in St Peter & St Paul's Church. More about that later, but first, some information about the great man himself.

RVW was born in the lovely village of Down Ampney in Gloucestershire and was the third child of the vicar of that village, Rev'd Arthur Vaughan Williams, and his wife Margaret, nee Wedgwood. Arthur Vaughan Williams died suddenly and unexpectedly when RVW was just 2 years old. His widow relocated the family to her family home, Leith Hill Place in Surrey, where the children were placed into the care of a nurse, Sara Wager.

At the age of 5, RVW started receiving piano lessons from his Aunt Sophie and displayed signs of musical talent early on. He then moved to Field House prep school in Rottingdean and on to Charterhouse in 1887. From there he was enrolled into the Royal College of Music where he studied organ with Walter Parratt and composition with Hubert Parry whom he idolised. From here he went to Cambridge University where he met Adeline Fisher, who would become his wife, and then returned to the RCM where he met Gustav Holst, who would become a lifelong friend.



With his education complete, he married Adeline in 1897 and they honeymooned for several months in Berlin where he met Max Bruch. In 1899 he passed his doctorate of music at Cambridge, the title of which was formally conferred in 1901. At this time he composed what would be the first of his works to appear in print – the song 'Linden Lea'.

Although not himself a professing Christian, in 1904 RVW was appointed by Percy Dearmer as musical editor for a new, at the time, hymn-book 'The English Hymnal'. He was not completely ignorant

of church music, having been organist of St Barnabas in South Lambeth from 1895 to 1899. RVW avowed that the new hymn book would contain 'tunes of worth' both old and new and it included several items of music that he wrote or arranged himself.

Around 1904 he started collecting folk songs, travelling around the English countryside noting down and transcribing songs traditionally sung in various locations. He created many works of all kinds based on these melodies, including many that would be used as the base for hymn tunes.



Despite being 42 at the outbreak of The First World War, RVW volunteered for military service and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, driving ambulance wagons in France and in Greece. In 1917 he was commissioned as an officer in the Royal Artillery and saw live action in France from early 1918. The war had a lasting emotional effect on RVW who lost many of his friends, and the continual noise of guns damaged his hearing which led to deafness in later years.

In 1938 RVW met Ursula Wood, the wife of an army officer. She was a poet and had approached RVW with a proposed scenario for a ballet. Despite both being married, and a forty-year age difference, they fell in love and maintained a love affair for many years. Ursula's husband died in 1942 after which she became RVW's literary advisor and personal assistant and also carer for his wife, Adeline, who had become crippled by arthritis.

Adeline died in 1951 and in February 1953 RVW married Ursula Wood. The year 1953 was also, of course, the year of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II to which he contributed an arrangement of the 'Old Hundredth' hymn tune and a new

setting for Psalm 34.

RVW passed away suddenly in the early hours of 26 August 1958. After a private funeral at Golders Green, he was cremated and his ashes were subsequently interred in the north choir aisle of Westminster Abbey, near the burial plots of Purcell and Stanford.

There is so much more that could be said about RVW's life and works but, as a tribute to the great man, we will be using his music throughout the service in St Peter & St Paul's on Sunday 16 October as follows.

The organ music before the service will include 'A Wedding Tune for Ann' (1943). The hymns will be:

1. All who would valiant be (traditional melody arranged by RVW)
2. Father, hear the prayer we offer (traditional melody arranged by RVW)
3. Come down, O Love Divine (RVW tune: 'Down Ampney')
4. I heard the voice of Jesus say (traditional melody arranged by RVW)
5. For all the Saints (RVW tune: 'Sine Nomine')

And the concluding Organ Voluntary will be 'The New Commonwealth' which is an adaptation for organ of a song that RVW wrote for the 1940 film '49th Parallel'.

**Cliff Brown, St Peter & St Paul**

## Piano & more series

*An hour of music on Sunday afternoons*

**A celebration of Ralph Vaughan Williams**

to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October**  
at 3pm

*followed by tea and refreshments*

**Tring Parish Church HP23 5AE**

*Free admission, with retiring collection*

*For further details see:*

[piano-and-more.org.uk](http://piano-and-more.org.uk)  
or Google "Piano and more, Tring"



## Wet season – dry season?



I have a bee in my gardening bonnet!

I suspect that this summer's drought will eventually become a regular part of our annual weather pattern and that winters will

compensate with high rainfall. Hopefully the two will balance out for our overall water supply!

My Jenny is a regular watcher of BBC's Gardeners World programme (I watch occasionally). In the course of a recent interview with an experienced British professional gardener, a comment was made about the UK gardening year becoming a two-season event rather than a four-season one. It triggered memories of our time in Nigeria in the 1960s, when this two-season pattern controlled Jenny's gardening.

We lived at an altitude of about 4000 feet in the city of Jos which, in Nigerian climate terms, was then considered 'temperate'. It is about 400 miles south of the Sahara desert. Wet season was from April to September, dry season was from October to March; wet season was rainy and hot, dry season was rain-free and relatively cool.

Our gardener spent most of his time watering in the dry season and cutting

grass in the wet season. We were lucky to live close to the city's main water supply system so watering bans did not hit us. For what it is worth, Jenny's dahlias were highly successful in the wet season and she won a Banksian medal one year in the local horticultural show!

I suspect that climate change will slowly move this pattern north. Does this mean that we can expect to see wet seasons and dry seasons, Nigeria style? If so, it will take some decades to develop, and in the meantime we may get interesting variations.

It may be coincidence but one of the reasons we gave up our very productive allotment here in Tring was the increasing demand for watering, caused by extended very low rainfall spells in the early stages of the growing season when regular watering is essential for good crop yields. I was moving up to a quarter ton of water each time I visited the allotment. It became the dominating chore, not a pleasure. I accept that this may have been a short-term problem, but cultivation and development became secondary jobs.

Whether this is a symptom of climate change in action, I am not sure, but it killed much of our enjoyment. Could it have been an early warning of things to come? Sadly, it was a significant factor that led us to pass on our much-loved allotment to another gardener.

For me, there are hints that it could all be driven from the Sahara Desert and the low-rainfall countries immediately north of it, which will probably also become deserts. Fortunately for us the Gulf Stream is a major climate smoother and stabiliser for us – long may it continue. Global warming will have some surprising effects and if we are facing a two-season climate change, then an obvious pattern could well be the opposite of our Nigerian experience! Our new cycle might well be May to September predominantly warm and dry with a peak in June/July/August and October to April correspondingly wet and cool. A possible plus here is that snow and ice will become exceptional and that we will have two very different growing seasons. It won't happen overnight and there would inevitably be fluctuations, but the implications for our farmers and potential wine producers are interesting, to say the least!

There could be hiccups along the way, but the smart thing is to take advantage of it.

Running an allotment will be a challenging exercise. We may well need to change our personal choice of things to grow, when and where, for a start. Summer holidays could also be very different, with British seaside resorts really booming!

Thoughts on the topic, please!  
**Bill Bradford, St Peter & St Paul**

## The French connection



Those who like to go to France for sunshine in the summer had more hot weather than they needed just staying at home in August 2022.

France also came to England in musical form on one of the hottest days, when the Piano and More audience were treated to a sparkling cocktail of piano compositions with a French connection. Few of us had heard music by Charles Trenet before, and the pieces by Poulenc and Debussy were unfamiliar. They were all brought to life by the apparently effortless playing of Alan Dorn, complemented by his crafting of engaging programme notes which enabled even music novices like

me to relate to what the pieces were depicting. I can still picture the cathedral (complete with organ), rising from the sea mists in Debussy's prelude no 10.

The Piano & More concerts are held in St Peter & St Paul each month at 3.00pm on the second Sunday; the next one, on 9 October, is a celebration of Vaughan-Williams to mark the 150th anniversary of his birth. There is no admission charge, the concerts are just an hour, and refreshments are served afterwards. They are friendly and engaging. We are indebted to local musicians like Alan Dorn who give generously of their time and skill, and to



Anna Le Hair, who created and sustains this programme of concerts.  
**John Whiteman  
Tring Team**

## The Autumn Lunch – back with a bang!



After the frustrating years of interruption following Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions, we are happy to confirm

that the traditional FOTCH half-yearly lunch is back in the calendar for 2022.

The date is Sunday 16 October 12.30pm in the Church Hall. During lockdown we have twice had to postpone the proposed entertainment feature of this particular lunch and we feel very privileged that Stephen Hearn has again agreed to be the host and convenor of 'Antiques Call My Bluff with Stephen Hearn': third time lucky! ALL ARE WELCOME!

As usual there is no charge for the lunch itself but donations to FOTCH (The Friends of Tring Church Heritage) are always welcome. What is essential is that you do book your places as these are

limited and we need to make sure that all the catering arrangements are of the usual high standard.

I am also happy to say that we shall be holding (for the first time LIVE in several years) the half-yearly Hundred Club draw and hopefully the winners can be in the audience to collect their prizes!

We very much hope that this half-yearly lunch will again become a feature of our calendar in spring and autumn – it's a small way in which we can say thank you to all our loyal supporters as well as getting together and catching up on all the news. Many of our members

have remarked how much they have missed the 'mingling' during the lockdown years and it will be great to get the gang back together! Please do make a date and join us.

If you need any information at all please contact Richard Abel, Trish Dowden or me on 01442 822770 or gsenior@seniorpartners.co.uk.

**Grahame Senior  
St Peter & St Paul**



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**Apple Day**  
Sun 2nd Oct, 10am-4pm, Jeacock's Orchard, Cow Lane  
**Tring Farmer's Market & Apple Parade**  
Sat 8th Oct, 9am-2pm (10.30am-11am Apple Parade)  
**Tring Farmers' Market & Apple Bake Off**  
Sat 22nd Oct, 9am -1pm (10am Apple Bake Off)

**Collect your programme with all events in town or download a copy via the details below.**

TringsOwnAppleFayre TringFarmersMarket www.tringtogether.org.uk/apple-fayre

The Trustees of the Friends Of Tring Church Heritage invite you to the Autumn 2022 half-yearly Lunch

**12.30PM 16TH OCTOBER 2022  
ST PETER AND ST PAUL CHURCH HALL**

All members and friends are invited to join us for a social lunch where the aim is enjoyment and good company.

**FOTCH INVITES YOU TO PLAY**  
**CALL MY BLUFF** **ANTIQUE CALL MY BLUFF!**

**OVER LUNCH WITH STEPHEN HEARN**

Join us for a jolly lunch for all with the usual excellent spread from Barry and some refreshing and revivifying wines

Bring your best poker face and join our Quiz Master Stephen Hearn, FOTCH Trustee and renowned Auctioneer.

Please do come along and enjoy the occasion. There is no formal charge for lunch but donations to FOTCH are appreciated. You will need to book a place so we can make the catering arrangements work.

Please confirm your attendance by contacting Trish at info@fotch.co.uk, or ringing on 0772 083 6930, or by responding to the notice in the Newsletter.


Stephen Hearn  
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## Postcard from Orkney



Hello lovely Tring folk, this month will be our fifth anniversary for moving from Tring to Orkney. Time is slipping by so fast. They say here that if you survive two winters, you have a good chance of staying. It is not cold here but the winter is very black and wild, with very short days. A lot of incoming folk cannot handle this so move out, maybe forgetting the flip side, that summer days are very long. It is not unheard of for some fanatics to play golf at midnight. We have barmy residents, just like anywhere else. I don't mind the winter: it is sometimes exciting with 200ft waves coming over the cliffs and big plops of rain hammering on the glass with the wind howling and yowling. Then's the time to light the fire and snuggle down to write the next *Comment* article.



August and September was the peak growing season and we are up to our ears in tomatoes. I've so far made nine packets of Passata at 1 kilo of tomatoes for every three packets; and we still can't eat our way through the rest. Our lemon trees are growing well and our vine had its first tiny crop of grapes. It is amazing what some people get excited about.

We had a grand total of nine bishops descend on us from America prior to the Lambeth Conference. I suspect a bit of a Bishopry-jolly was afoot. They were all very nice: one even bought a house and is staying – how about that? We now have a '+' as a near neighbour.

Both Carrie and I headed south on Saturday 3 September via Norfolk, Tring, then Kendal, before heading home. It was my first major excursion and drive since I had a stroke and felt like a big step.

As with St Peter & St Paul's rector,

Huw Bellis, our vicar keeps and breeds sheep and has been using our front paddock for extra grazing. This has meant Carrie has become involved in feeding lambs with special nuts on a daily basis to fatten them up. Unfortunately, she has made friends with them, especially No 1 lamb who follows her around and has the dubious pleasure of being hand fed from a bucket. So you can imagine the problem when our vicar kindly offered one of his lambs to the freezer. I think this is going to be a case of lamb-smuggling and as you all will read this after the event, it will remain a secret until too late.

How are you all managing with these dreadful fuel costs? Diesel has always been more expensive here, but now it is ridiculous, at a fraction under £2.00 a litre (£9.00/gal). I can understand the problem as we are the furthest delivery from the refineries. However, what I can't understand is why we pay more for electricity, when the Islands are self sufficient, generating more than our needs and exporting to the grid. Not only that, but we are also carbon neutral, using wind and sea power, even down to testing a hydrogen airplane. To rub salt into the wound, most of the island is solely electric. Fortunately, thank God, we are OK at present, even with the price forecasts. But a large number of folk are not OK, and even now are really struggling. Apart from keeping



the foodbank fully stocked, what can we do? Our Islands are relatively crime free at the moment, but one wonders how long that will last as the pressure mounts.

On a lighter note, we are 'performing' a Foy (a stage performance of song music and poetry, usually fairly informal) soon in aid of our Ukrainian refugees. We shall be doing an adaptation of the 'Green Fields of France' AKA Willy MacBride, with Carrie and me on stage together. What could go wrong? We are already having discussions, with Carrie doing the discussing and me the listening. I can tell you 'it's a hard life' for us shy individuals.

All good blessings to you,  
**Mac Dodge, St Mary's, Kirkwall**



# Towers and spires



Many churches have a tower often with a spire. The first known church ruin is the Dura-Europos built around AD240 – all churches at this time were

house churches and it was not until thirty to forty years later that purpose-built churches were constructed. These were simple halls with no tower.

The first cathedrals, such as the Cathedral of Echmiatsin, which was built in 301-303 by King Trdat III (Tiridates) and St Gregory the Illuminator, did not have a tower, but had a large dome. Hagia Sophia Cathedral, built from 532-537 by Roman emperor Justinian I, had a large pendentive dome which was a round dome constructed over a square room. Tall thin towers were added in 1435 when it became a mosque, before reverting to a cathedral. Around 780 the Princely Abbey of Corvey in Westphalia was expanded to include small towers and spires.

The earliest towers were mostly not decorative, but practical. They either gave a view over a wide area to enable distant enemies to be identified or were to carry a bell. Around 400 of the first churches were permitted to have bells by Paulinus, Bishop of Nola in Campania, and monasteries followed around 600. By 750, they were sufficiently common for the Archbishop of York to order all priests to toll their bell at certain times. Bells were usually

housed in a bell tower. Defensive and observational towers were often round such as those found in Ireland and Scotland. Round towers were easier to build than square towers. An example is Thorington Church in the illustration.

Bell towers started to proliferate in Britain around 937 when King Athelstan decreed that to achieve thegnly status, landowners had to have a bell tower. Thegnly status meant title of Thegn or Thane which predated noble titles. Shakespeare called Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor. Thanes after a few generations were the first Earls. So, many landowners built a bell tower on to their family church simply to achieve the title of Thane. Some churches were built as a tower only with the church at the bottom level of the tower. An example is St Peter's Church, Barton-upon-Humber, which is thought to date from 970 when it was just a tower church. It has been expanded to a full church.

Often churches were built on a slight hill as landmarks for the traveller and as an indication of a wealthy town. A spire added height to a square or round tower and could be seen from a greater distance. Cathedral towers and spires could be very tall which led to problems. Lincoln Cathedral tower collapsed in 1237 due to poor construction. The tower collapsed during a sermon, burying a large part of the congregation. It is not known what the subject of the sermon was. The tower was rebuilt with a spire on top, and this collapsed in 1548.

Spires were introduced in the



12<sup>th</sup> century as small pyramidal roofs capping a tower. They were not tall. Spires grew taller as a symbol of elegance and of aspiring to reach heaven. In 1280 the spire of Fribourg Cathedral in Switzerland reached 385ft in length on top of the tower. Salisbury Cathedral has the highest UK spire at 404ft which was built in 1330. The tallest in Europe is Ulm Minster in Germany at 530ft. The minster was constructed in 1390 but the steeple was not completed until 1890.

In Tring, St Peter & St Paul's has a tower, but no spire. St John the Baptist at Aldbury has a tower only, as does All Saints, Long Marston, St Mary's Puttenham has a tower and what could be a tiny spire, Akeman Street Baptist Church has what might be described as a small spire on top of the roof, St Bartholomew's, Wigginton has a small spire, St Cross in Wilstone and the other Tring churches have no towers or spires. Modern churches can have no tower or spire, a tower and spire or a spire only. The choice seems to be entirely an architectural one.

**John Allan**  
**High Street Baptist Church**

# A weekend in Wales



At the end of the summer we booked a cottage near Hay-on-Wye, an area I wanted to return to in order to explore 'Kilvert Country'. Francis Kilvert was a curate in Clyro and kept diaries

between the years 1870-1879. Some of them have survived and they give an interesting perspective on the social history of the time. He clearly enjoyed writing and some of his accounts are amusing. The cottage we rented was not far from the village of Clyro, at the end of Maesyronnen chapel which dated from 1697.

Now follows a very brief history of what was happening to the church in Wales.

During the time of Queen Elizabeth I, groups grew up, such as Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and later the Baptists who did not like the government of the church by bishops. Many believed in the absolute authority of the Bible. They were Puritans and known as Dissenters. After the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the coming of Cromwell's Commonwealth, Puritans were tolerated and in 1650 the Act for Better Propagation of the Gospel in Wales decreed that all clergy who were not of approved Puritan tendencies were removed from their livings. Around 300 clergy were evicted. Ten years later, with the restoration of Charles II, Anglican clergy were reinstated, and in 1662 the Act of Uniformity required all clergy to conform to the code of the Established Anglican Church. All meetings by Dissenters were forbidden. Freedom of worship didn't really arrive until the time of William of Orange and the Act of Toleration in 1689.

The Maesyronnen chapel was registered in 1697, although it was built on the site of a previous building which it is believed was a cow byre where dissenters met. The cottage we were staying in was for a caretaker. The last caretaker left in the 1950s. She had been caretaker for fifty-two years and had raised fifteen children in the cottage!

Back to Kilvert. I have a book 'Exploring Kilvert Country' which suggested a car drive north of Clyro, and incorporated some walks. Our first visit was to the church of LLandewi Fach. I

want you to imagine driving down a single-track road for over a mile to come by a farm. The church is across a field. There is no path, no car park. The church is open: you enter it by a door shaded by a 600-year old yew tree. Inside the place looks a bit derelict with bird droppings. It must be used at times, maybe Christmas and St David's Day. There is a domestic-style fireplace in the north wall. (We saw a similar feature in a small Baptist chapel in the Black Mountains). The churchyard is overgrown, with no graves on the North side of the church (that is the devil's side!). There is no evidence that Kilvert visited this church, but he did visit the second one we called at and wrote about the priest, the Revd John Price, who must have been quite a character. The church was Llanbedr-Paincastle. In the time of Revd John Price, it must have been quite run down. Price was a scholar of Queen's College, Cambridge and was vicar here from 1859-1895. When Kilvert met him, he must have been in his 60s. There was no vicarage when Price arrived and the stipend was meagre. He stayed in a small croft for a while and when he had to leave, he bought three bathing huts from Aberystwyth and lived in them. A tramp got in one day and stole a box from inside, but when he got it open, he found it contained not money, but letters from a young lady to Price dating from many years ago. In disgust, the tramp tore the letters up and threw them away. Price was seen out in the countryside retrieving the pieces. Later the huts were destroyed by fire and when Kilvert visited him, he lived as a hermit in a small, secluded hut out in the hills. A walk we did took us past the site of this hut. Nothing remains except for a few stones and a nearby spring. Kilvert describes it 'In a green cwm stood a little grey hut. It was built of rough dry stone without mortar and the thatch was thin



LLandewi Fach church

and broken.' He goes on to describe the dilapidated and forlorn clothes which Price wore and the 'wild confusion of litter and rubbish almost choking and filling up all available space' inside the hut. There were heaps and piles of old religious books on the floor. Yet this was a scholar who invented his own shorthand in which he wrote his sermons. There was an excellent history in the church which also mentions that, when Price arrived, he found that most of his parish did not go to church, so he offered them sixpence to come and this later was reduced to tuppence when the funds diminished. He also paid couples money to get married rather than simply live together. What a character! There was something sad about finding the site of the hermit's hut amid the bracken in an area where game birds now are raised for the benefit of shooting parties.

Needless to say, we never finished the car tour as the earlier part had been so interesting. It is always good to have something to go back to!

It is 150 years since Kilvert visited Rev John Price. I am always amazed at how people managed to survive by their own ingenuity and help from others. In the diaries we read about the hovels of the poor and the estates of the rich, about getting around on foot or by horse and carriage and sometimes by train. Things come and go. The train line Kilvert used no longer exists, the mansions are hotels, churches and chapels have been restored or have crumbled. Travelling tinkers are replaced by Big Issue sellers.

Over all this hangs God's love and in all this has been humanity to bring that love into the every day. Let us hope that, in the challenging times we are warned about, we can enrich our daily lives by shining God's love through all we do and say and pray. Holidays are times of refreshment; we come back renewed to work for our Lord.

**Jill Smith, St Peter & St Paul**



Grave of Rev John Price

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# Beginnings



In my (much) younger days I used to think that one of the joys of heaven would be finding out the answers to lots of difficult questions. Now I suspect that the vision of God in all his glory will mean we are not bothered by finding answers to our questions! All this arises because I have been thinking about beginnings, not least about the beginning of the Gospels. Why are they all different and why do all four gospel writers begin at different places? One might also ask why does the New Testament begin in such an off-putting way?

Matthew, we know, comes first in our printed Bible and he starts with a genealogy – a lot of strange and largely unfamiliar names and a lot of ‘begats’ (although modern versions tend to say ‘was the father of’). Matthew’s Gospel was not the first in time; that honour belongs to Mark. Matthew is writing, we believe, for Jewish Christians, Jews familiar with the Old Testament and so many of the names in Matthews’s family tree of Jesus would be not be unknown. Family trees are important to many of us: ‘Who do you think you are?’ along with Ancestry is a great hobby for many.

So, while Mark starts by describing Jesus Christ as the Son of God, both Matthew and Luke think we need a family tree. We need to know the background to Mark’s stark beginning – stark because after his opening verse he tells us of Jesus as a man, an adult starting his ministry by being baptised by John the Baptist. Matthew therefore starts with a family tree leading on to an account of the birth of Jesus. Luke, on the other hand, gives us an account of the births of John and Jesus and then goes on to the baptism of Jesus, as an adult, by John and only gives us a family tree after his baptism. The voice from heaven says ‘You are my Son’ and then Luke traces the family of Jesus back to ‘Adam, Son of God’.

So there are two genealogical tables but with great differences which, among other things, remind us that even the Gospels are not the literal words of God, dictated to individuals, but are accounts of the Word of God recorded by different

humans who have their limitations, particularly with names! Otherwise, there are insuperable problems in reconciling the two family trees, even though many scholars have tried. These family trees are theological statements about who Jesus was rather than accurate or literal statements of every ancestor. Family trees in the Bible in general are about belonging to a particular tribe or people (and, often as a consequence about land distribution). Much more could be said (and indeed many books have been written about these genealogies) but if we concentrate on Matthew, there are two particular subjects worthy of note: one is to do with women and the other to do with numbers. Luke mentions no women, but Mathew mentions four – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and the wife of Uriah, who is not named here but is known to be Bathsheba. This naming of women is unusual and so clearly significant. Why?

St Jerome, the great biblical scholar and translator, regarded all these four women as sinners; and so their inclusion foreshadows the forgiveness Christ brings. In fact, not all were ‘sinners’ but Jerome was no feminist! The Reformer, Martin Luther, more acceptably thought that these women showed Jesus was related through them to Gentiles. Rachel and, probably, Tamar were Canaanite, Ruth a Moabitess, and, though Bathsheba was not identified as a foreigner, she was married to one, Uriah the Hittite. But of course, Mary was not a foreigner. Today it is thought that their significance is that, though perhaps their unions were irregular from a strictly Jewish point of view, they helped continue the Messianic lineage and so were important in God’s plan as instruments of his providence. God uses the unexpected or unlikely to triumph over human obstacles and intervenes on behalf of his planned Messiah. Moral or biological irregularity are overcome and this is supremely seen in the absence of any father’s part when Jesus was born of Mary.

Now to numbers as expressed at

the end of this family tree – there are, we are told, ‘fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and another fourteen from David to the Exile and third fourteen from there to the Messiah’. It is all rather artificial and clearly some generations are omitted. Apart from anything else, the three periods of fourteen generations cover 750 years, plus 400 years plus 600 years. Clearly there are omissions and perhaps some confusion of names. We may note also that Luke has many more names, and not just because he goes back beyond Abraham.

One commentary on Matthew’s Gospel lists eight explanations for this fondness for fourteen and for his final one favoured what is known technically as gematria. As Hebrew uses letters for numbers every name is also a number. Only consonants are used, so D=4, W=6, David is spelt DWD, that is 4+6+4+14. David is the key to this pattern. We note in the very first verse of Matthew that Jesus is named the son of David, before being called the son of Abraham.

Clearly much more could be said about the opening of Matthew’s Gospel and its genealogy. It stresses Jesus as a son of Abraham and of David. It is not a biological record but a demonstration of God’s plan. This happens all through the Old Testament and often not in the way we would expect. The divine plan does not stick to the first-born son as heir, for example.

We may not find the first few verses of Matthew’s Gospel easy reading but they make a point which his first readers would have appreciated and they remind us of how God works in different ways and through different individuals.

**Martin Banister**  
*St Albans Cathedral*

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Please note that the closing date is 15 November 2022 to lodge a completed application for grants payable from Autumn 2023.

# Our trip to the Holy Land



In October 1984, my daughter Ruth and I went on a very memorable trip to the Holy Land, led by Revd Harold Roche. These are some highlights.

We travelled from Gatwick to Tel Aviv and then by coach to Jerusalem where the restaurant had a room overlooking the Kidron Valley to the walls of Jerusalem. We could see very plainly the golden dome of the Dome of the Rock and the silver dome of the El Aqsa Mosque.

Our first visit was by coach to the Dung Gate leading into the old city. We were soon at the temple area, coming first to the Wailing Wall. On Mondays and Thursdays 'Bar Mitzvahs' are held and we were fortunate enough to see part of one. The Wailing Wall is the remaining part of the western wall of Herod's temple where little scraps of paper (written prayers) had been poked into crevices. The people really do wail when praying there.

We then passed through the Mograbi Gate into the Temple Mount, site of King Solomon's temple, where our Arab Muslim guide, Ishmael, was very keen for us to go into the el Aqsa Mosque. The name means 'the farthest', a reference to the 'farthest mosque' from Mecca, mentioned in the Koran. Then we climbed up the steps to the Dome of the Rock which covers the traditional place where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac and the site of David's altar (the threshing floor). Under the rock we saw the duct where blood from sacrifices ran outside. We could see Gethsemane on the other side of the Kidron Valley and the remains of the Golden Gate just below us.

In the new city of Jerusalem we saw the museum, the Israeli houses of parliament – the Knesset – and then visited the Shrine of the Book, devoted to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Another coach took us to the Yad Vasham on the Mount of Remembrance. There was a single flame burning in memory of all the lives of the Jews slaughtered in WWII. The photographs of emaciated prisoners in the concentration camps were very disturbing and outside was a very moving statue of Rachel weeping for her children.

The following day we set off to Bethlehem (which means Bread of Life),

stopping at Rachael's tomb on the way. We had to bend down low to get into the Church of the Nativity, first entering the Basilica of the Nativity built by Emperor Constantine and rebuilt by Emperor Justinian 200 years later. We went down steps into the grotto, which was very dimly lit. First we were shown the spot where Jesus is supposed to have been born, marked by a silver star set in the ground, and then there was the manger where he was laid. We had a short service and sang 'Away in a manger' and 'Hark, the Herald Angels' and then knelt at the manger for our own devotions. This was very special. We went on to view the shepherds' fields from the rooftop of a Franciscan Convent before moving on there. Here we heard the BBC Welsh Choir making a recording of 'While Shepherds watched their flocks by night' for Christmas 1984 on location!

Next was the Palm Sunday Walk from the present Church of Bethphage built by the Franciscans as a shrine, commemorating the meeting between Jesus and Lazarus' sister, Martha, after Lazarus had died. Behind the altar is a fresco depicting Jesus mounted on a donkey with his disciples round him. We walked into the garden and saw a typical tomb with a stone rolled to cover the entrance before walking uphill and on to the Church of the Pater Noster where there are numerous plaques with the Lord's Prayer printed in various languages. Next was the Church of the Ascension where there was a rock with Christ's footprint supposedly marked in it. It was getting dark as we moved off to the Garden of Gethsemane with its ancient olive trees.

The next day we passed through Bethany and saw the traditional tomb of Lazarus before descending along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho in desert country. We stopped at the Good Samaritan Inn where we heard the parable read to us. We arrived at Masada, where the Judean revolutionaries had killed themselves rather than be taken captive by the Romans, and made the ascent to the ruined hilltop fortress by cable car. We went on to float in the very salty Dead Sea before going on to Qumran, the site of an Essene monastery where the Dead Sea scrolls were found in caves nearby. All this area was very barren and we were told that it was John the Baptist country and where the cave was where David lay hidden from King Saul.

In Jericho we looked at some excavations carried out in 1952 by Kathleen Kenyon who unearthed part of the walls of Jericho and looked out over the Jordan valley to the hills of Moab. Jericho lay below us all lush and beautifully green.

On the way back to Jerusalem we stopped at Bethany and visited the House of Martha and Mary, not much more than an extended cave.

The following day was the trip to Mount Zion in Jerusalem, where first of all we visited David's tomb, then the original Holocaust Museum, the Cenacle or Hall of the Last Supper and then onto the Dormition Church sanctified as the place of Mary's death. We looked over the valley of Gehenna (where the rubbish was tipped and there was a continual fire burning).

St Peter in Gallicantu or the Church of the Cock Crow was very impressive, standing on the House of Caiaphas, High Priest at the time of Jesus' execution, where Peter denied knowing Jesus.

Next the plan was to walk the way of the cross, entering by St Stephen's Gate. We started at the Lithostrotos, where Jesus is said to have been condemned, crowned with thorns and given the cross to carry. We saw the Ecco Homo Arch from the Convent of the Sisters of Zion, where Jesus faltered for the first time, then the place where Jesus and his mother Mary met, moving on to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

We visited the Garden Tomb before travelling north to Tiberias. It is thought to be the real place where Jesus was buried because it is near the place of public executions, outside the city walls, near a rich man's garden and was not completed, only having one finished burial place and a large stone at the entrance too big for a woman to move alone. We sang 'There is a green hill far away'.

We stopped to look at Jacob's Well on the way to Tiberius, then Samaria for lunch. We drove past Mount Gilboa where Jonathan and Saul were both killed in battle and stopped at a Kibbutz – Beit Alpha – and saw a large mosaic floor. We stopped again where the River Jordan leaves the Sea of Galilee and witnessed some baptisms done by total immersion in the Jordan.

We visited the Church of the Multiplication sited by the side of Lake Galilee. It was here that we recalled the

miracle of the feeding of the 5000 with five barley loaves and two fishes. Nearby was the Chapel of the Primacy, where Peter was commissioned by Jesus 'Feed my lambs, feed my sheep'. We had our service by the lakeside, standing by the statue of Jesus with Peter (which I found possibly more moving than had we been inside).

Capernaum was next, where we were all entranced by the lovely trees and shrubs in full bloom. Capernaum had been a wealthy Jewish town and there were many ruins. We saw the ancient synagogue and St Peter's house before travelling on to the Church of the Beatitudes, a lovely octagonal church set amongst the trees near the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It commemorates the spot where Jesus is said to have preached the Sermon on the Mount.

Cana was our next stop, a small church with a lovely stained glass

window in the side. We saw earthenware pitchers typical of the ones which would have been used at the wedding to contain the water/wine. We arrived in Nazareth in good time for lunch, visiting the Church of the Virgin's Spring first, then the Church of the Annunciation, a modern, beautiful building. All around the walls on the boundary were lovely mosaics from different countries. Not far away is the Church of St Joseph built on foundations of a church that was built by the Crusaders allegedly over the place where Joseph worked as a carpenter. We were told that there were only about 400 inhabitants of Nazareth at the time when Jesus was alive. We reached Mount Tabor before the church closed.

The next day included the port of Haifa, with magnificent views as we climbed Mount Carmel. The Carmelite monastery had a beautifully painted ceiling depicting various episodes in

Elijah's (their patron saint's) life. We saw the ruins of Megiddo, the hill of battles, fortified by Solomon and where King Josiah was killed.

Our visit to the northern part of the River Jordan was next, with the Syrian border near us on the left, arriving at Dan and then onto Caesarea Philippi at the base of Mount Hermon, scene of Peter's confession of Jesus as Christ. We journeyed on along the Golan Heights, passing army camps and tanks. Eventually we dropped down beside the Sea of Galilee again, and on to Ein Gav Kibbutz where we could have St Peter's fish to eat. Then we sailed across the lake to Tiberius, six miles away, stopping to have the reading about the stilling of the storm.

A lovely holiday and certainly one to remember.

**Sheila Davis**  
**St Martha's Methodist Church**

## Meeting the 'other'



Musalaha is a Jerusalem-based charity founded thirty years ago to promote reconciliation between two divided communities.

Musalaha means reconciliation in Arabic. It works by building relationships at grassroots level. Janet and I were very impressed in 2005 when we first met Musalaha on a study tour of Israel and Palestine. (Most of us find Musalaha tricky to pronounce. Try Moo-sa-la-ha or perhaps Moosarlaha).

### Desert Encounters

Israel and Palestine are two communities that normally do not meet at all. In a Desert Encounter thirty young adults spend a week together in the Jordanian desert. With a partner from the 'other' community they tackle a new experience - riding and leading a camel.

Communication and trust are essential to manage the camel which means participants usually develop a respect for their 'enemy'. Some have formed close friendships as a result of their experience.

Training is given in biblical reconciliation. They explore the stories their communities tell about the 'other'. These can be painfully contradictory.



Comments have included:

'The first Israeli I met who wasn't a soldier was at Musalaha.'

'I saw things from the other side which I cannot see on the news.'

One Israeli said that one of her friends was killed in the conflict, and as a result she used to hate Palestinians. One Palestinian shared humiliations at the hands of Israeli soldiers on the way to the desert event. This brought tears to many eyes. One Israeli realised the suffering the Palestinians endure. A Palestinian said that she had never before heard an Israeli listen and feel sympathy for the pain of her people.

'We sat side by side and shared each other's pain and ended the trip feeling the suffering, not of a Palestinian or an Israeli, but of friends. We knew this trip was only the beginning.'

Daniel Munayer, the newly appointed Executive Director of Musalaha, is of the new generation of leaders. He is coming to the UK in October and we hope to welcome him to Tring to tell us first-hand about himself and Musalaha on Tuesday evening, 11 October.

**Colin Briant**  
**High Street Baptist Church**





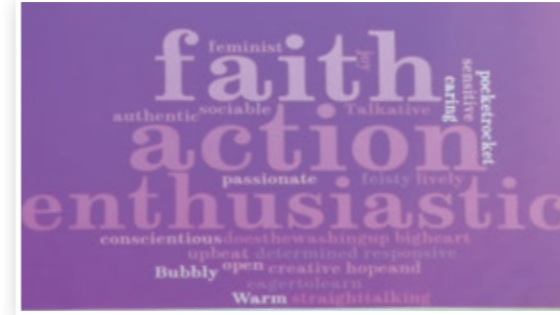
# Celebrating friendship

Revd Sarah Marshall, formerly curate in the Tring Team, was licensed and installed as Team Vicar at Shenley on a very hot Tuesday evening in August. She was joined by eighteen members of Tring Team Parish, with Michelle Grace commending her to the post on behalf of the parish. She was given a very warm welcome by the congregation of the Aldenham, Radlett and Shenley team.

Sarah had her formal goodbye at the patronal festival of St Peter & St Paul's at the end of June, celebrated with an

outdoor paella and many hugs. We will all miss her – while praying for her as she continues to serve God in her new parish.

**The Editor**



# We made it!

We are so pleased to report that Eleanor, along with her parents, brother, aunt, uncle and two cousins, made it to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro on 2 August at 8.20am.

It was 'awful and amazing all at the same time!' she said.

We started the trek on 26 July. The seven days of trekking before summit night were just inspiring. Summit night, basically midnight till the sun rose when we reached Gilman's Peak (18,885ft) was probably the hardest thing we will have ever done! From there, it was another hour until we reached Uhuru Peak (19,340ft) a very arduous and emotional journey for us all.

Eleanor has been a student at Tring Park School for the Performing Arts for four years, now in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form on the Dance Course. Her sheer determination and positivity got her to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro!

We climbed to raise funds for the Kenya Kesho School for Girls that we have been affiliated with for a few years and have so far doubled our target at over £4000.00. The amount has apparently sponsored a whole class!



Kesho is the Swahili word for tomorrow or future. The school provides quality primary education for young girls to enable them to escape the relentless cycle of poverty. Building a decent school in a village and providing exciting, trained teachers and good teaching materials gives children hope for the future and encourages parents to be involved in their children's education. The charity's mission is to give every young girl from

Mshiu Village the opportunity to reach their potential and be the 'best she can be', giving her the education, vision and confidence to build a new destiny for herself.

So very proud of Eleanor, her brother and their cousins: not an easy task for a bunch of teenagers! And thank you to EVERYONE who has donated so far!

**Kirsty Knoblauch**  
mother of Tring Park School student



## Parish registers

### Baptisms

We welcome into our church family all those below and pray for their parents, godparents and families.

**Abe Christian David van der Merwe**  
**Joshua Hunter**  
**Zachary Hunter**  
**Evie Wilkins**

### Funerals

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

**Susan Lale 77**  
**Lilly Robinson 56**  
**Annabel Mackenzie 96**  
**Caroline Farthouat 54**  
**Susan Hobson 50**  
**Hugh Neill**  
**Christine Lockhart 72**

## Tweet of the month



A number of people who know me in St Peter & St Paul asked if I had been to see 'that rare gull' that turned up recently – and I was able to reply 'yes, I have', as I knew exactly which bird they meant.

Sometimes when I am asked questions like this, it is not easy to tell which bird they mean. However, this time I knew they meant the 'Cape' Gull. This is the African subspecies of a Kelp Gull, a large black-backed gull similar to our Great Black-backed Gull. News of this British 'first' came out at 10.30am on 7 August so, after the church service, I had lunch, found a few photos of the bird on the internet to make sure I was happy it was a Cape Gull and set off to Grafham Water. The 52-mile journey didn't take long and I saw it fairly easily. It was last seen on 10 August at Grafham Water and hasn't been seen since. After I saw

it, news emerged that someone had photographed it on 2 August and not realised what it was. This reminded me of my first experience of Kelp Gull on 21 December 1991, which was very similar to the unfortunate photographer, so I sympathized. For those of you not old enough to remember, 1991 was before the internet; bird books were really variable in quality and information interchange was really slow.

On 21 December 1991, we were in The Gambia, our first holiday in Africa. There was only one book that covered the area and it wasn't good. Our Gambian guide was very good with most local birds but not gulls – to the extent that I showed him four new species of bird while we were on holiday there, all of them gulls. So when we saw a bird that looked like a Great Black-backed Gull on a beach, the guide knew less than I did and the book was no help as Great Black-backed Gull or similar gulls weren't in the book! What I did notice was that it had green legs and Great Black-backed Gull should have pink legs.



A few years later I found out that Cape Gull, which was previously only found in southern Africa, had expanded its range north, and since the late 1980s has been found in Senegal. It turned out that I had found the first Cape Gull for The Gambia, but not realised it: not exactly a satisfactory experience. These days I would check the internet and not make assumptions and am better at bird identification as I learnt from that experience.

As Christians, if we make mistakes in life God wants us to learn from them and to try not to make them again. This can be much harder than bird identification, but fortunately God loved us enough to send his son to save us – much better than any bird book or the internet.

**Roy Hargreaves**  
St Peter & St Paul

## New Parish Priest at Corpus Christi Tring

I have been asked to write a short article to introduce myself to the other churches in Tring. My name is Father Sean Thornton and I arrived as the Parish Priest in Tring and Berkhamsted in September 2021.

I originally come from the County of Kent. At the age of 18 I left school and entered Allen Hall which is the Seminary for the Diocese of Westminster. Moving from Kent to Chelsea was quite an eyeopener for a country boy.

After studying for five years, I was ordained to the Diaconate in February 1989 and served for a short period at St Scholastica in Clapton. On 17 June 1989, his Eminence George Basil Cardinal Hume ordained me to the Priesthood at Our Lady Victories, Kensington. I served three curacies, the first at All Saints in Kenton for three years, St Albans in North Finchley for three years and Harrow on the Hill for one year. During that time, I also had various chaplaincies including Chaplain to the London Oratory School, Harrow Boys School and a North London Hospice.

After this period, I became Parish Priest at St Joseph's Grove Park,

Chiswick. After a few years there, I became Parish Priest of the Holy Family, Welwyn Garden City. During my period there I was approached about becoming Parish Priest of all three Welwyn parishes and, after some consideration, I concluded that this amalgamation was better suited to a new man. From Hertfordshire I was moved to the Church of The Transfiguration, Kensal Rise NW London. I spent eighteen very happy years serving a large diverse multi-cultural community.

In my last two years there, Covid-19 struck and, with a large crematorium and two cemeteries, much of my time was given over to ministering to the sick and the dying and their relatives. At some point I realised I was going to catch the virus and did so in January 2021. I was quite unwell and within a few months had a bad case of shingles followed by hospitalisation with septicaemia. I knew that my time at Kensal Rise was coming to an end, but my illness brought forward my move.

I was offered the opportunity to run three parishes, but subtly pointed out that this might be a bit much for someone

with long Covid. It was at this point I mentioned the vacancy at Tring. Cardinal Vincent agreed to the appointment. On the 1 September I moved to the Sacred Heart, Berkhamsted, while I waited for the tenant at Tring to vacate the Presbytery. However, I was still plagued with long Covid and found the journeying up and down between the parishes rather difficult. The Cardinal agreed that I could look after Tring and a new priest be appointed to Berkhamsted.

I have moved to one of the most beautiful parts of the country and am happily ensconced in the Presbytery with my two dogs, Daisy and Lottie.

I am looking forward to meeting everyone in the Tring churches community and have already received a wonderful welcome, not only from the parishioners at Corpus Christi, but from members of the other churches who have approached me while in the town.

I am really looking forward to ministering in Tring and I hope I will be left here till I retire. Please keep me in your prayers and be assured of mine.

God bless.  
**Sean Thornton, Corpus Christi**

## 'The Plague' – Albert Camus



In July the Parish Church Book Group looked at the novel 'The Plague' by Albert Camus which he set in the French Algerian town of Oran.

The book, which was published in French in 1947 and in English the following year, is set in the 1940s. The narrator (whose identity is only revealed at the end of the book) tells the story of how the plague swept through the port city of Oran, how the people responded and how the disease left. Camus used as source material the cholera that killed a large proportion of Oran's population in 1849, but Oran has had many other attacks of the plague over the centuries. Since the arrival of Covid-19, sales of the book have soared – I started to read the book the day I tested positive.

Reading 'The Plague' after the events of the last few years has been an interesting experience. Its fictional chronicle of the measures taken in the city of Oran against a death-dealing disease were reminiscent of the government announcements which reshaped our lives during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Oran is a city like anywhere else, Camus' narrator tells us: 'Our citizens work hard, but solely with the object of getting rich. Their chief interest is in commerce, and their chief aim in life is, as they call it, "doing business".'

Like people anywhere else, the Oranians are completely unprepared when rats begin emerging from the sewers to die in droves in streets and laneways. Then, men, women and children start to fall ill with high fever, breathing difficulties and fatal buboes.

The people of Oran initially 'disbelieved in pestilences', outside of the pages of history books. So, like many nations in 2020, they were slow to accept the enormity of what was occurring. The numbers of afflicted rose. First slowly, then exponentially. By the time the plague-bearing spring gave way to a sweltering summer, over 100 deaths daily was the new normal. Emergency measures were rushed in. The city gates shut and martial law was declared. Oran's commercial harbour was closed to sea traffic. Sporting competitions

ceased. Beach bathing was prohibited. Soon, food shortages emerged (toilet paper, thankfully, is not mentioned). Some Oranians turned plague-profiteers, preying on the desperation of their fellows. Rationing was brought in for basic necessities, including petrol.

Meanwhile, anyone showing symptoms of the disease was isolated. Houses, then entire suburbs, were locked down. The hospitals were overwhelmed. Schools and public buildings were converted into makeshift plague hospitals. Dr Rieux and his friends Tarrou, Grand and Rambert, set up teams of voluntary workers to administer serums and ensure the sick were quickly diagnosed and hospitalised, often amongst harrowing scenes. In these circumstances, fear and suspicion descended 'dewlike, from the greyly shining sky' on the population. Everyone realised that anyone – even those they love – could be a carrier.

The failure of the governors to consistently impose 'social distancing' is shown up spectacularly in the novel's most picturesque scene. The lead actor in a rendition of Gluck's Orpheus and Eurydice collapses onstage, 'his arms and legs splayed out under his antique robe'. Terrified patrons fled the darkened underworld of the opera house, 'wedged together in the bottlenecks, and pouring out into the street in a confused mass, with shrill cries of dismay'.

Arguably the most telling passages in 'The Plague' today are Camus' beautifully crafted meditative observations of the social and psychological effects of the epidemic on the townspeople. Epidemics make exiles of people in their own countries, our narrator stresses. Separation, isolation, loneliness, boredom and repetition become the shared fate of all.

In Oran places of worship emptied. Funerals were banned for fear of contagion. The living could no longer even say farewell to the many dead. Camus' narrator pays especial attention to the damages visited by the plague upon separated lovers.

Camus' prescient account of life under the conditions of an epidemic works on different levels. 'The Plague' is an allegory of the Nazi occupation of France beginning in spring 1940. The sanitary teams reflect Camus' experiences in, and admiration for, the



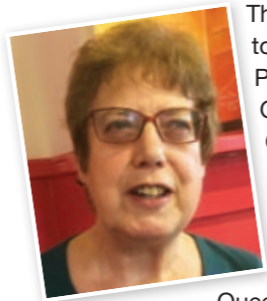
resistance against the 'brown plague' of fascism. Camus' title also evokes the ways the Nazis characterised those they targeted for extermination as a pestilence. The shadow of the then-still-recent Holocaust darkens 'The Plague's' pages.

Camus' plague is also a metaphor for the force of what Dr Rieux calls 'abstraction' in our lives: all those impersonal rules and processes which can make human beings statistics to be treated by governments with all the inhumanity characterising epidemics. For this reason, the enigmatic character Tarrou identifies the plague with people's propensity to rationalise killing others for philosophical, religious or ideological causes. It is with this sense of plague in mind that the final words of the novel warn: 'that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years in furniture and linen-chests; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city.'

Different people in our bookgroup had different experiences of the pandemic but the novel spoke to them all. Some had read it before, others had welcomed the opportunity to read this classic. All agreed it was worth discussing after our experience of Covid-19 as it shed light on what we had experienced.

**Jon Reynolds**  
**Tring Team**

## Oberammergau, the Passion Play



This year I decided to go to see the Passion Play in Oberammergau in Germany. I booked a single room for six days in June and then realised that it was the

Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. (I recorded the main Royal events to see later.)

There were thirty-one of us on the holiday and I had read that the paths in Oberammergau were sometimes rough and uneven and as I had been (and was still) feeling unwell, I decided to take a walking pole with me. Having the pole with me meant that at check-in I was advised that I could have assistance to go to the plane. This was a mixed blessing as although I did not need to negotiate escalators and corridors, it did mean that we boarded the plane after everyone else, leaving our belongings to be scattered around the plane where there was room. However, when we arrived at Munich Airport, a lady who was travelling with her husband gave her suitcase to him and took mine and insisted on wheeling it around for the whole holiday.

The Passion Play is only on every ten years so the holiday had been built around this event. We had the opportunity to walk into Innsbruck escorted by a lady in traditional Austrian costume and did a tour of Salzburg before reaching Oberammergau.

On the day of the Passion Play we explored the village (some of the houses were beautifully decorated with wall paintings) and went to the theatre where the play would take place. In the foyer there were Information boards about the history of the plays over the



centuries. Apparently, there were lots of performances all around Bavaria and the surrounding areas for many years but it was then decided that it would be better to have one play every ten years and in the same place. Oberammergau was chosen.

Rehearsals for the play start early in the year and the men begin to grow their hair ready for their parts. Around 200 people are sometimes on stage and, when you add in understudies, many people are involved in the production. The play runs from mid-May until early October and is on around five times a week – a big commitment for the people involved.

Before we went into the theatre we mingled with people who were there from many places including the USA and some were local people in German traditional dress.

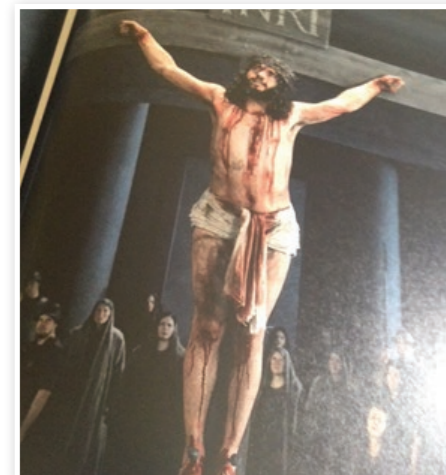
The first part of the play began at 1.30pm and we were all handed texts in our own languages beforehand. It began with Jesus' early ministry and concluded with the washing of the disciples' feet on Maundy or Holy Thursday. This was beautifully done and the actor playing Jesus took their feet in his hands and washed them tenderly.

After a traditional 3-course meal, we returned for the second part of the play, the trial of Jesus and up to the crucifixion. At the trial scene the stage was full of actors and singers and there were sheep, goats and a few horses. This confused the lady behind me: 'Were there horses mentioned in the Bible?' The horses were a bit skittish and it wasn't easy for the riders to control them. The play was very moving and the actor playing Jesus was very good indeed. The scenes with Jesus and the thieves on the cross were excellently performed. When Jesus was taken down from the cross he seemed to dissolve into weightlessness. It was very thought-provoking.

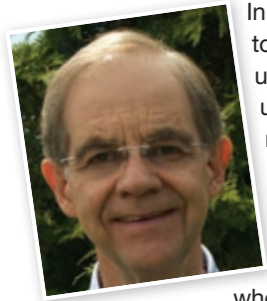
The rest of our trip included a three-hour boat trip across Lake Constance, with some beautiful gardens.

It was an excellent trip and the play is well worth going to if only to say, as everyone on our tour said at some time, 'I felt I had to come this year as in ten years' time – well, who knows!'

**Thelma Fisher**  
**High Street Baptist Church**



# An organ for Tring Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century



In this article I hope to present some unbiased and useful information regarding an organ for the future in St Peter & St Paul's Church, in particular

whether we continue with a Pipe Organ or move to a Digital Electronic Organ.

There are many things wrong with the current organ. Here are a few of the most significant: the Tracker Action is worn out, uneven and unreliable making playing on the Keyboards difficult; the mechanical Coupling of Keyboards makes the keys very hard to press which, in turn makes playing even more difficult (and actually makes some pieces of music physically impossible to play); several ranks of pipes in the Swell Box cannot be reached for tuning and are therefore very out of tune; a few pipes here and there do not speak properly and cannot be fixed other than in a full rebuild of the organ; there are a few keys which sometimes stick down after being played and have to be pulled up to stop them sounding – not easy in the middle of playing!; one of the main Pedal Ranks takes several seconds to start working after its Drawstop has been pulled out; several of the Couplers do not work consistently or reliably making the playing action uneven and resulting in some pipes speaking feebly and/or out-of-tune when the key is pressed; many of the Rank slides are very noisy in operation when the relevant Drawstop is pulled out or pushed in – this is annoying when Drawstops need operating during quiet times of services; over thirty-five years' worth of dust and dirt have accumulated inside the organ which interferes with some pipes speaking properly and the Tracker Action working evenly and smoothly.

Addressing all these issues requires a full rebuild of the current Pipe Organ or replacing it with a Digital Organ.

## What drives the decision between Pipe Organ and Digital Organ?

There are two significant factors to consider here. First, and foremost, there is the cost (including VAT where applicable): rebuilding the current Pipe Organ will cost at least £360,000 (based on the cheapest of three quotes received) – that will last for roughly thirty years

which is equivalent to £12,000 per year. Installing a Digital Organ will cost no more than £80,000 – this includes the price of the organ itself plus the associated works to install it. The instrument has a lifetime of at least thirty years so that is equivalent to no more than £2,650 per year.

Secondly there is the desire for more floor space in church: rebuilding the Pipe Organ could free a small amount of ground-floor space adjacent to the vestry by virtue of moving to a Detached Console. Installing a Digital Organ will completely free the ground-floor space adjacent to the vestry and also allow the construction of a mezzanine floor which would be half free (the other half would be used for the Digital Organ speaker systems – see below).

Rebuilding the Pipe Organ would be a project lasting ten-to-twelve months, during which we would need to rent a Digital Organ, the costs for this are included in the above. The companies approached for the rebuild quotes were from a list provided by the Diocese.

## Do I prefer a Pipe Organ or Digital Organ?

I am often asked this! In an ideal world, if money and space were not a problem, I would stick with a Pipe Organ, provided it had a Detached Console with Electric Action. But we do not live in such a world so pragmatism becomes paramount. The answer is that it really makes no difference to me. What really matters to me are the feel and playability of the Organ Console; and the quality and quantity of the sound – and these two points really have nothing to do with whether the instrument uses wind and pipes or electronics and loudspeakers to produce the sound...

## The Organ Console

We will have a 'detached and moveable' Organ Console for the Pipe Organ if it is rebuilt. We will have a 'detached and moveable' Organ Console for a Digital Organ if this option is chosen. So, as you can see, the feel and playability of the Organ Console will be exactly the same either way.

## The Sound

The main factors that influence the types of sound produced and the loudness of that sound do not depend on how the sound is produced. If the current

Pipe Organ is rebuilt we would take that opportunity to make some improvements to the variety and quality of the sounds it can produce. Digital Organ manufacturers take 'sound samples' from Pipe Organs around the world and have a huge library of these from which the sounds available for any given Digital Organ can be selected. If we install a Digital Organ we could, in principle, make it sound absolutely identical to how the Pipe Organ would sound if rebuilt. In reality, though, we would take advantage of the greater flexibility offered to make improvements to the types of sound produced and the loudness of that sound to a greater extent than if we retained and rebuilt the Pipe Organ. Every organ installed in a church goes through a process, known as 'voicing', in which the sounds the organ produces are adjusted to match the size and acoustics of the building and the needs of the music most commonly performed. This, again, applies to both methods of sound production (although it is much simpler, quicker and more flexible with a Digital Organ than a Pipe Organ).

## Why do we need a Detached Console?

The present location of the Organ Console is not at all convenient for the organist. There is very restricted visibility, albeit alleviated somewhat by the CCTV system. Perhaps more important is the issue that the organist cannot hear how the organ sounds in the main body of the church. Having the Organ Console in the Nave of the Church would address both these issues.

It is envisaged that a Detached Console would normally be located in the area of the dividing panel between the Nave and the Lady Chapel. This would give the organist good visibility and the ability to hear the instrument properly. However, it would be easily movable so that it could, for example, be put in the Nave centre for an organ recital; moved to a location within an orchestra for Choral Society or similar functions; or even moved right out of the way if front-of-nave space is required for some particular event. There is also the possibility that the choir stalls may be relocated at some point in the future in which case the Organ Console could be moved closer to the new choir location if required.

## If we get a Digital Organ, what happens to the current Pipe Organ?

The current Pipe Organ is a fine instrument and would be of good quality if rebuilt. But it is neither historic nor special in any respect. It has been extended and altered several times during its life so, as it stands now, it can't even be attributed to any particular organ builder.

The most likely future for the current Pipe Organ is that it would be 'sold for parts'. We would approach a number of Pipe Organ builders / renovators with a view to them purchasing some or most of the Pipe Organ so that they can reuse the pipes in other instruments when they carry out rebuilds or repairs.

## Where would the Loudspeakers for a Digital Organ be put?

The proposal for this is to retain the current 'decorative' Organ pipes that are visible from the North Aisle and those that face the choir stalls. All the space occupied behind these by the current Pipe Organ would be cleared and a mezzanine floor constructed across the whole area. The loudspeakers would sit on the mezzanine floor behind the retained organ pipes. As well as the obvious aesthetic appeal of this it would also make the sound emanating from the loudspeakers travel past the pipes which will diffuse the sound and improve

the realism, free up the entire space occupied by the Pipe Organ at ground level for other purposes, and provide considerable space for other purposes on the mezzanine floor as well.

During the works to remove the current organ and construct the mezzanine floor, the loudspeakers could temporarily be placed outside the organ space in the area where the grand piano is situated.

## Myths and legends of Digital Organs

*'I know of a church that changed to an Electronic Organ but it was so awful they had to change back to a Pipe Organ.'*

No one, I think, would dispute that early Electro-Mechanical or Electronic organs were not up to scratch. Indeed, some were pretty awful. But the digital technology in use today, coupled with huge advances in loudspeaker technology over the years, have really turned this around to the point where the sound of a Digital Organ is indistinguishable from a Pipe Organ.

*'Electronic Organs don't sound like Pipe Organs.'*

In the past, maybe, but today's Digital Organs actually have the sound of real organ pipes stored digitally and they reproduce this to match the Keys / Pedals pressed by the organist. This, together with modern amplification technology

and loudspeakers designed specifically for organs, means that the sound is indistinguishable between the two.

*'Digital Organs don't last as long as Pipe Organs.'*

People sometimes talk of Pipe Organs lasting hundreds of years', but this is not really true. Some of the pipes and other parts of a Pipe Organ may well be very old. But, in order to remain playable and sounding correct, Pipe Organs have to be regularly rebuilt. This is because they are mechanical with hundreds of moving parts which suffer wear and tear over time. They also accumulate dust and dirt which make them unreliable and affects the sound. So, in reality, a Pipe Organ only lasts around thirty years before it becomes in need of a rebuild.

A Digital Organ would be expected to have a lifetime of at least thirty years. The only mechanical part of a Digital Organ is the Console. But a Detached Console for a Pipe Organ is exactly the same thing as the Console of a Digital Organ. So there is no lifetime difference in this regard.

If you have any comments or questions about what you have read here, please feel free to email the-organist@tringchurchmusic.org.uk or speak to me in St Peter & St Paul's Church after a service.

**Cliff Brown, St Peter & St Paul**

**Terminology** – to make the sections following more understandable I have, here, explained some 'organ words'.

<b>The Console</b>	This is where I sit! The Console includes the Keyboards that I play with my fingers; the Pedalboard that I play with my feet; all the Drawstops and sundry playing aids such as Thumb Pistons and Toe Pistons.
<b>Detached Console</b>	A Console which is not an integral part of the organ it controls. The Console in Tring at the moment is not detached, but we would like to move to a detached one.
<b>Keyboard</b>	A set of keys, much like a piano, which are played with fingers:
<b>Pedalboard</b>	A set of keys, much larger than you'd find on a piano, which are played with feet:
<b>Drawstop</b>	Drawstops are what the organist uses to control the different sounds that the organ can make. They are pulled out to activate and pushed in to deactivate. Most of the Drawstops are used to control which type of sound each key will make. On a Pipe Organ they do this by allowing air into a particular Rank of pipes. On a Digital Organ they do this by controlling the waveforms produced by the digital sound generators. Drawstops are also used for Controlling 'Coupling' (see below).
<b>Thumb Pistons</b>	Little push-buttons under a Keyboard which provide a quick way to select a pre-set combination of Drawstops:
<b>Toe Pistons</b>	Buttons above the Pedalboard which provide a quick way to select a pre-set combination of Drawstops:
<b>Electro-mechanical Organ</b>	An early type of Electronic Organ which used rotating wheels to produce electronic signals which could be combined to make different types of sound.
<b>Electronic Organ</b>	Can be used as a generic term for an organ which uses any kind of electronic means for generating sound. More specifically it is generally used to refer to older instruments using Analogue Electronics to generate signals which would be combined to make different types of sound.
<b>Digital Organ</b>	An instrument which uses modern digital electronics to generate sound.
<b>Pipe Organ</b>	An instrument which uses wind, blown through pipes of various sizes and types, to generate sound.
<b>Tracker Action</b>	A system of rods and levers which are operated by Keyboards / Pedalboards to control the flow of air into pipes.
<b>Electric Action</b>	A system in which the Keyboards have electrical switches which operate electro-magnets to control the flow of air into pipes.
<b>Coupling / Couplers</b>	A system whereby playing a key on one Keyboard or the Pedalboard also plays the corresponding key on another Keyboard.
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Pipe Organ:</b> A set of pipes which make the same type of sound, generally one pipe per key / Pedal but some 'combination Ranks' contain a set of two, three or even four pipes per key / Pedal. <b>Digital Organ:</b> A set of digitally-stored waveform patterns corresponding to the sounds that a set of Pipe Organ pipes of the same name would make.
<b>Swell Box</b>	A large wooden box containing Ranks of pipes, padded on the inside, with one wall made of shutters that can be opened and closed to vary the volume of sound that comes out:
<b>Swell Pedal</b>	<b>Pipe Organ:</b> A foot Pedal which is used to open / close the shutters of a Swell Box. <b>Digital Organ:</b> A foot Pedal which controls the sound produced to mimic the effect of a pipe-organ Swell Box.

## Are you ready?



You might think that listening to Huw Bellis' sermons in St Peter & St Paul's would not be a source of inspiration for *Comment* articles – but they often are! The problem is whether I can remember what I was inspired to write by the time I have reached home...

The sermon was about being ready, being prepared for the second coming of Jesus. Now I was never a Brownie, Girl Guide or even a Boy Scout; but not leaving things to the last minute is written in my DNA. I certainly want to be ready – and work at doing things ahead of schedule rather than at the last minute.

The passage we were exploring was Luke 12:32-40, the servants being ready to greet their master at the wedding feast. I vividly remembered somewhere in my late teens being asked what I wanted to be doing when Jesus comes again. The 'right' answer was apparently being 'caught' reading my Bible or on my knees in prayer, what used to be called a 'quiet time', a time of study and reflection and meeting with God.

What would your answer be? No doubt we can all think of things we would definitely NOT want to be doing when Jesus returns. But I realise that with the passing of time, I would love to be able to go back to challenge the 'right' answer with that formidable youth leader teaching from the Gospel that day.

There is no doubt that reading your Bible or spending time in prayer is something we are called to do and most Christians would want to be doing. But I have come to believe that (despite my recent tendency to slump on a sofa watching catch-up dramas) there are many other things in our lives that God calls us to do too. It is surely also service to God to be visiting someone who is ill, doing their shopping, telephoning a lonely friend, taking food to the foodbank, baking or cooking for someone recently bereaved, listening to someone who needs to talk, treating kindly the delivery person or people who serve you in shops or restaurants or on buses like the tired, stressed, bored or anxious human beings they might be... but it might also be food shopping for your family, changing a baby's nappy, reading to or playing with your child or grandchild, writing to someone in prison, giving up your seat to someone

on the train, or doing your day job, whatever it is, really well – going the extra mile.

In that same service we sang a hymn I didn't know before but one of the lines spoke of 'the sacrament of care'. We can all care for those around us in some way. I am sure I need to become better attuned to the sometimes unspoken needs of others. If the summary of God's law is 'Love God with all your heart and soul and mind; and love your neighbour as you love yourself', and each day we aim to do that – maybe that's what we need to be doing when Jesus comes again?

A last thought: as I write this, the news of soaring energy bills and of forthcoming real hardship is on every news report we hear. Some of us will really need the extra £400 we will be given by the government (and much more besides). But others may be better able to cushion the blow. If you feel that you could sacrifice some or all of the amount to give to DENS or to the Rector's discretionary fund (which helps people who come in real need to Huw Bellis for assistance) that might also be a way of loving our neighbour as ourselves.

**Annette Reynolds**  
St Peter & St Paul

## Tring's Foodbank needs you



Tring's foodbank (part of Trussell Trust under the DENS initiative) is held every weekday from 10.00am-12.00 midday St Peter & St Paul's Church on Church Square. It is run by a fabulous band of volunteers who tirelessly give up their time and often 'go the extra mile'.

As you can well imagine, demand on foodbank boxes has risen quite sharply – even in Tring! With the cost of living rising and energy prices going mad, a lot of households are struggling – and the choice between heating and eating is a decision people will be making.

Foodbank is only a temporary measure and the goal is to get these people the help they need via Social Services, but in the meantime the boxes are a big help!

### You can help too!

DENS is receiving fewer donations recently so if you could spare some groceries – please check their high needs list on dens.org.uk – this list changes monthly. Or you could donate money to DENS so they can buy what they need for the foodbank. You can do this online via their website, online on the church SumUp machine (description Foodbank) or in an envelope marked Foodbank and placed in the church wall safe. Please note DENS are not accepting clothes, shoes, bedding, accessories or crockery at this stage.

If you could spare a couple of hours a month or even a fortnight, then please contact me on admin@tringteamparish.org.uk as I am always on the lookout for volunteers. Thank you!

**Trish Dowden**  
St Peter & St Paul

## 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

## The importance of ivy in Bee Friendly Tring



In a recent online talk about wildlife gardening, the presenter said that the best plant one can have when gardening for wildlife is the ivy plant. This would probably surprise

many as one so often sees ivy being killed as a result of its stems having been severed on trees. So, what are the pros and cons of having ivy in the garden; or elsewhere, for that matter?

Ivy has two distinct phases of growth – firstly as a juvenile and then, after several years, as an adult. At the juvenile stage the ivy sends out long stems that seek vertical surfaces. On finding these they grow upwards holding on with adventitious roots (roots that grow from the stem). The leaves, which in the juvenile phase are lobed, change shape becoming un-lobed or oval. It is only when ivy reaches this adult stage that it is able to flower and then bear fruit. It is now at its most useful for benefiting wildlife.

At the end of August, the ivy was just coming into flower in our garden and already a bumblebee and other insects had been in attendance. As we go into autumn many plants have finished flowering and the flowers of ivy give a late boost of nectar (some 49% of which is sugar) and pollen to their insect visitors. One study in Sussex showed that the main groups of insects visiting ivy flowers were honeybees (21%), bumble bees (3%), ivy bees (3%), common wasps (13%), hoverflies (27%), other flies (29%) and butterflies (4%). Pollen trapping at hives showed that on average 89% of pollen pellets collected by honeybees in the autumn were from ivy.

The results show that ivy is important

in the conservation of flower-visiting insects in the autumn and could indeed be considered a keystone species!

There is one insect that uses ivy as the main plant for collecting pollen – the Ivy Bee, a solitary bee which emerges in September and is on the wing until November, coinciding with the flowering period of ivy. It is a recent arrival in the UK having been first recorded here in 2001.

The Holly Blue butterfly is another insect whose lifecycle is dependent on ivy. It has two broods, the caterpillars of the first brood feeding on holly and those of the second brood feeding on ivy. At the end of the year the fully grown larva pupates on ivy and the adult butterfly emerges in the spring. The caterpillars of many moths, too, are known to feed on different parts of the ivy plant.

Ivy is important for birds as well. The blue-black fruits mature later than other fruits and, being rich in calories, are important as food resources for birds in the winter months after the berries of other plants, such as hawthorn, have been eaten. Some Blackcaps now overwinter in the UK and we have observed Blackcaps in our garden feeding on ivy berries. Being an evergreen, ivy thickets provide good nesting sites for birds such as Robin and Wren.

So what is the downside of having ivy around? Does it ever need to be controlled? Ivy roots in the ground and climbs up trees (as well as walls and fences) using them for support. It is not a parasite and does not kill a healthy tree and many trees can survive with large amounts of ivy on them. But where a tree is old or weak, ivy can add significant weight to the crown and the sail area created can make the tree more prone to be thrown by the wind. Ivy can also smother the few leaves left on an old tree.

In these cases, removing the ivy can be justified but otherwise it should be left. Its importance to wildlife is such that it has once been said that if ivy did not exist it would have to be invented!

Ivy does, of course, climb up walls. In the case of historic buildings there can be concern as to whether or not it may be causing damage. In a report commissioned by English Heritage (now Historic England), researchers at Oxford University found that, among other things, ivy reduces the severity of frost events that cause damage to some masonry, and that its foliage reduces the amount of pollution reaching the surface of walls. It cannot be assumed that ivy is always doing damage: in some cases it can aid conservation of a building. The report does conclude, though, with some practical tips on how best to manage ivy on buildings, if this is still considered necessary.

**Michael Demidecki**  
Justice & Peace Group





## Step back in time



I joked recently with Betty Aston in St Peter & St Paul's about how nice it would be if you could catch a bus back to the 1950s.

Well, it wasn't a bus but a ferry.

During our late summer holiday, Roy and I met up with old friends in Swanage, Dorset. They live at Portland now and we haven't seen them for three years, but I digress. We took the ferry over to the Purbecks, drove down and through Studland which is no more than a hamlet, with homes built in stone and tiny doorways that tell a tale of history and smaller people: I would fit right in.

Further on, we took the road to Swanage. It had been a long time since we had visited (they have a rather good wool shop there). I remember the town as being old fashioned in a good way: lots of family businesses, tea rooms and just two well-known branded stores

that trade at a national level, Boots and Budgens.

I was not disappointed; the buildings were, let's call them shabby chic. Well, they could do with a lick of paint. The high street was full of window-shoppers with children or dogs. The shop windows were full of clothes, shoes 'and hats for all tastes', toys, postcards and gift shops, sweetshops with double cream Dorset fudge and ice creams at every six paces you walked.

Families were enjoying the last of the summer sun; and in the small square by the museum and the two fish and chip shops, people gathered. The shops were doing a roaring trade. Families squatted in small groups on every available bench, sharing lunch with each other and a few seagulls. It's a town you feel safe in.

We were early and decided to have a coffee while we waited for our friends. I should at this stage tell you that a few years ago we came to Swanage and popped into a tearoom for coffee.

'Two lattes, please', I asked the

waitress. She looked at me rather blankly, as though she had never heard of them. 'No, we don't have that.' So I asked for two Americanos. You've guessed: she didn't have that either. Bear in mind that this was maybe ten years ago and just ten miles away in Poole everyone was enjoying them. 'We do Nescafé, milky if you like.' We liked.

Back to our recent holiday, it was a glorious sunny day so we walked down past the amusement arcade and went into a bustling café on the quay to sit outside in the sun. What could be better? Roy went off to order.

'I'll have a latte,' I said, as he went to the counter. He returned disappointed with two mugs of liquid of a brownish disposition. I looked up at him.

'No Lattes?'  
'Afraid not.'

We sat sipping the 'coffee'. Nescafé. Was it possible we had slipped through a time warp? And were back in the 1950s?

**Brenda Hurley**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

## All in it together...

I was delighted to have been again selected to be Mayor, back in May – and this year there is a real feeling that Covid-19 is well and truly in the past.

Let's start with the good news: the carnival parade was wonderful, with our new Town Crier ringing the bell.

It also has been an honour for Tring to have been given Bee Friendly status, one of very few towns in the country! Further, plans for a replacement Nora Grace Hall are progressing, with the expectation of a public consultation this autumn.

The Town Council has also appointed a new Deputy Clerk who is already making a number of processes more efficient. Finally, work has started on Wendover Arm improvements to the canal – not the most glamorous work, essentially removing old household waste in bulk – but really great news that this grand scheme is progressing.

I'd love to paint a picture that it is the Town Council that is magically doing all these things on behalf of the

town, but the truth is that we make only a modest contribution to governance, organisation and occasional funding. The real work is done by the great many local organisations and the key volunteers who make these things actually happen.



Whether it is Tring Together, the various churches, the Wendover Arms Trust, coffee mornings for Ukrainian refugees, the foodbank, Tring Charities, Tring Youth Project, the book fair etc. The real life-blood of our community are these organisations and it is a privilege to serve a town that has such vibrancy. If you

have any desire to contribute to your community, there are so many ways to do so – do get in touch.

Looking to the future, unfortunately there is still uncertainty about the Local Plan and the degree to which Tring might grow. Do look out for local consultations organised by Dacorum Borough Council and rest assured that Tring Town Council remains vigilant and will make sure that local concerns around large scale development are put to the planning authority. Also, looking forward, it is impossible not to be concerned about the impact of inflation and higher fuel costs – I know I am. Let's hope that these financial clouds don't last long or can somehow be dealt with by government. But remember, we are

all in this together and I hope that as a community we understand that in tough times we must all look out for each other. I hope that these unwelcome challenges call us to action as a community, supporting each other as best we can.

**Cllr Christopher Townsend**

## It's a blessing...

And in more ways than one! At last, family and friends were able to celebrate the wedding of our youngest daughter, Chloe, and her Romanian husband, Emi.

This special celebration had been a long time coming and in actual fact, Chloe and Emi had already been married – twice! – and both times to each other, I hasten to add.



Covid-19 disrupted many weddings. Chloe and Emi's, originally planned for 2020, eventually took place in May 2021 in Ramsgate Registry Office. At that time, the rule of six at a gathering applied so the only guests invited were both sets of parents. Rodica and Costel (Emi's mum and dad), flew over from Romania. What we hadn't realised was that the six people allowed inside at the ceremony included the Registrar and the Celebrant, which meant that only two of us could

be present in the room. The mums were nominated to be witnesses and the dads listened in just outside the door. After the vows, the witnesses were invited to sign the register and Emi translated this instruction to Rodica, who doesn't speak English. At this point, much to Chloe and Emi's alarm, the Registrar declared that the wedding was illegal as any witness needed to be able to understand spoken and written English! Without further ado (not to mention a bit of a 'musical chairs' moment), Colin and Rodica swapped places and the ceremony was conducted again, albeit at a slightly faster speed! All good this time and much relief all round. Phew!!

However, Chloe and Emi still very much wanted to share part of such a special moment in their lives with all their loved ones, so they decided to save their exchange of rings for when they could have a church blessing. St Peter & St Paul's Church in Tring was the obvious choice. After all, this was where Chloe had been christened and she had grown up in Tring; it's where Colin and I had been married and where Chloe's grandparents, Joan and Eric Hollingsworth, had been so involved in the church community.

As we currently see the restoration work on St Peter & St Paul's in full swing, we are reminded of our trip to Romania in 2019. When we visited Adjud, Emi's home city, we had a personal tour round the new church of St Nicolae by the priest who had been instrumental in building it. Final touches to the inside were taking place, ahead of the very first



service due the following weekend. What an incredible achievement and legacy!

And at last, on 3 September this year we were able to gather family and friends to witness Chloe and Emi's wedding blessing and exchange of rings. The ceremony was lovely, with vows and readings said in both English and Romanian. Then it was back to ours for a glass of champagne, before heading off to a Romanian restaurant in London for the main reception.

Chloe and Emi particularly wanted their day to reflect both cultures. 'Something old, something new' applied all round as both English and Romanian traditions were exchanged, experienced and enjoyed. One minute Chloe was being walked down the aisle by her dad and the next she was being whisked away and 'kidnapped' by the groomsmen during the reception. No need to panic, though, as a ransom (in this case, beer!) was soon quickly paid by the groom. And then we all joined in dancing the Hora. Strictly... Romanian style!!

Hopefully this is just the start of blending traditions as Chloe and Emi continue their lives as a married couple. I look forward to plenty more opportunities to mix and merge the two cultures in our family in the future.

**Mia Sturges, St Peter & St Paul**

## Rest in peace

Dorothy Howells, who died in the Princess Anne Hospital in Southampton on 6 September 2022 aged 95, was the wife of Donald Howells, Rector of Tring from 1966 to 1985. He was later also Rural Dean of Berkhamsted and an Honorary Canon of St Albans.

Donald and Dorothy, and their sons Robert and Jeremy, came to Tring from Knebworth. Donald had previously served in Watford, Stevenage, and Weston near Hitchin.

Tring was then much more of a self-contained market town than perhaps it is today. The vicarage was the neo-Tudor building, now offices, next to St Peter & St Paul's Church. The patron of the living, who then officially appointed

the rector, was Colonel Williams who lived in the family home at Pendley. The church wardens were Tom Grace, a farmer, and Chris Slembeck, a solicitor with offices in the High Street.

Times changed. The evolution to more of a commuter town gathered pace. The family moved to a new rectory next to the old building. A church hall, shared with the Methodists, was built. Services became livelier – particularly the 10.00am service. The youth club, the choir, bellringers and the Mothers Union grew in strength. The Parish Church was the focal point of the town, spiritually and socially, as well as geographically.

Donald retired in 1985 and died in



2005. They had a happy retirement, first in Dorothy's home town of Canterbury, then in Cheshire. Dorothy finally moved to Winchester to be close to Jeremy's home.

As well as Robert and Jeremy, she is survived by six grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

**Robert Howells, son**

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Articles, photos and publicity adverts for the next edition should arrive with the Editor no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 27

ACROSS	DOWN
1. ARCHBISHOP	1. AIMED
8. MIRACLE	2. CHRISTIANITY
9. ENOCH	3. BACH
10. DESK	4. SWEDEN
11. MESSAGES	5. OVERSEAS
13. REIGN	6. CONGREGATION
14. ARETE	7. CHASTE
16. SANITARY	12. ANATHEMA
17. SALT	13. RESUME
20. MITRE	15. DRAPER
21. PENSION	18. TENET
22. SACROSANCT	19. ONUS

# 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.



Keep updated by following

 Activities @High Street Baptist Church



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