

JULY/AUGUST 2021 £1

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



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#tringbaptistchurch High Street Baptist Church

Beyond the pandemic



So will 21 June see the easing of all restrictions? As I write I've been hearing mixed messages, maybe, maybe not, certainly the so-called Indian variant seems to be causing some concern although I think all of us are hoping that the restrictions will soon be at an end. Many of us, though, have been enjoying the reduced restrictions that have been in place since 17 May. It felt very strange to shop for clothes in an actual shop the other day and it's been good to be able to begin to get out and about once again.

As we gradually increase our activities, I suspect that many of us will be reassessing the activities that we did in the past and those that we want to take back up. This pause that we've had has given us an opportunity to reassess. What is important to us? How do we want to spend our time? What do we want to give our time to?

I've read a couple of articles recently about the Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918-20. The world had also just come out of the First World War, but I

found it interesting that the Spanish flu pandemic was followed by the 'roaring twenties', a time of 'hedonism' as one article put it. Is it likely that we will do the same? Will we want to grab hold of life and pursue the pleasure that we have missed out on over the last year; or will we want a different focus to our lives and activities?

For myself there are two things that stand out as I reflect on this past time. One is the value of community. An important part of community for me is the life of the church and I have missed being able to see people there regularly, to catch up on what they have been doing, to see their smiling faces. Alongside that is the community that has been built in our street. Like many streets across the country, we now have a 'WhatsApp' group for the street, we're planning a street party, there are regular requests for advice on handy electricians or gardening advice. The pandemic has certainly reminded me of the value of community.

Alongside this, I feel the pandemic has helped me to value the local much more. I'm still no good at gardening but I value our garden much more than I did before and am trying to take the time to care for it as it needs. I love seeing the strawberries and raspberries

gradually develop, seeing the garlic grow but having no idea what might be happening under the ground and how big the bulbs might be growing. We've also discovered so much more of our local countryside as we have gone on walks in the area. We live in a beautiful place and can access such variety just from our doorstep. The changing seasons of the last year and the wonder of the growing plants have helped me to reflect on God's care for us year after year, from one season to another, and I've been reminded not to take for granted the things that we have been given.

As we gradually return to our various activities, it could be tempting to just 'go back to normal', but for many of us things have changed and it's an opportunity to reassess, to think of those things that we have valued, what we want to keep and what hasn't been so important and could be laid to one side. As we take time to reflect, why not take a moment to stop and to ask God what his priorities are, both for us as individuals, for our churches and for our community, and what might be our role in enabling that to happen?

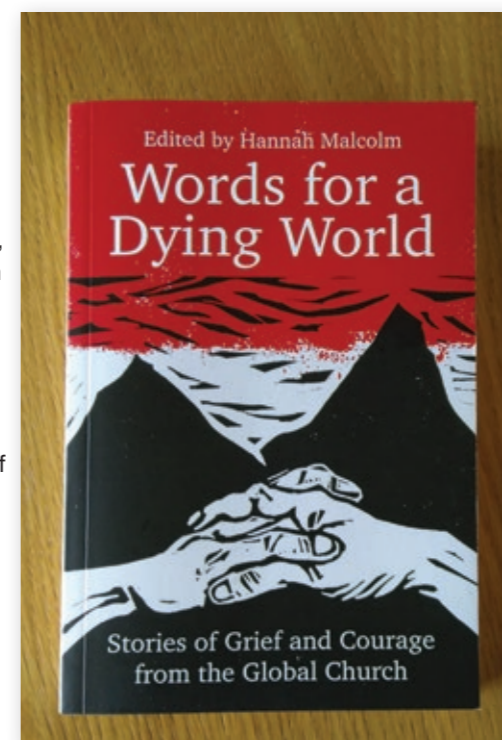
Rachael Hawkins, St Martha's Methodist Church

'Words for a Dying World'



The title of this book edited by Hannah Malcolm, published by SCM Press this year, is very sobering, possibly even a little off-putting for anyone who may have read the warnings of climate writer, Michael Mann in his most recent book: 'The New Climate War: the fight to take back our planet' about the dangers of climate doomism.

The subtitle of Hannah Malcolm's collection, however, 'Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church', gives a good idea of the scope of the text and I found this book really helpful. It gave me a much better understanding of the



variety of feelings encompassed by the terms 'climate grief' and 'eco-anxiety' and the responses to these feelings.

With a wide range of contributions from all parts of the world, many of them from people who have had first-hand experience of the effects of rising temperatures and extreme weather events, this book was an enlightening and informative insight into many aspects of the climate crisis and I really recommend it.

Nicky Bull High Street Baptist Church

Cover photo

The stunning photo of a bee, wings still moving as it lands on a flower, was sent in by Comment reader Su Nabaro-Crampton. Su takes photos on her daily walk around Tring and thought of Comment! Thank you, Su!

What is the meaning of life?



This May saw the introduction of the 'Philosophy Club' at Bishop Wood School. Very much in its early stages, the aim of the club is to further encourage children to think more deeply and consider alternative views on a wide range of philosophical and ethical questions about the world, the universe, and society.

To get the ball rolling we initially asked the children in Year 5 if this was something they'd be interested in and seventeen of them said 'Yes!' and volunteered to be in the group, which was incredible! At the moment the group is set to run weekly during lunchtime.

In week one, after setting out the principles of the club (respect, discuss, listen) we asked ourselves whether it is possible for us all to think the same thing at the same time. To demonstrate this, we each began by imagining an everyday thing like a tree. After taking time to

reflect, we each shared our images and, of course, a wide range of trees were described. We also considered if it was possible to not have any thoughts. At the end of each session, the children are set a question to consider for the following week (if you're a truly deep thinker then you need more than a few minutes to get your head around a subject!).

As an example, some of the questions we debate include:

- Are we living in a simulation? (How do we know what is real?)
- If you could live forever on earth, would you?
- What is a soul?
- What does it mean to live a good life?
- Is it possible to live a normal life and not ever tell a lie?



So far the viewpoints and follow up questions have proven incredibly interesting and enlightening!

As I say, 'Philosophy Club' is very much in its infancy and the children will no doubt let us know if it's a success or not (as they so honestly do!), but so far it's really got us thinking. Watch this space for future updates...

Sarah Marshall, Tring Team

Never let a good crisis go to waste



'A week in politics is a long time', so said Harold Wilson, purportedly. Goodness only knows what he would have said about a year-long pandemic!

Let's be honest: it has been a tough year for all of us – in our personal lives, family and church settings, not to speak of the impact on our mental health, our jobs and livelihoods.

Some of you will know that for my day job I run a network of Christian conference centres across the UK, including High Leigh and The Hayes which I imagine some of you may have been to over the years. I thought I'd share some of my experience of how we've been faring over the past year while we've been closed during the pandemic.

It's been tough. Very tough. We have had to close our operations for month after month, let hundreds of valued staff go and borrow millions. In that context we would have good cause to be downhearted. And yet I sense a growing confidence and optimism as we emerge into a post-pandemic environment and re-open our centres this summer, God willing.

One of my favourite passages in the Bible is in Lamentations 3. The prophet Jeremiah has been weeping over the destruction of Jerusalem in the preceding chapters. It is a properly depressing read. Then he gets to chapter 3 verse 21: 'Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness'. It is my prayer that this is the hope and testimony of all of us as we pick ourselves up and go again, with his strength.

Whilst I'm quoting Prime Ministers of yesteryear, I must let you have some Churchill, who once said; 'never let a good crisis go to waste'. Well, it has been a crisis and a half but that will have given many of us opportunity to review our church or business strategies, to upgrade systems, streamline our operating models, undertake building works or simply an opportunity to hit the 'reset' button. I think those of you reading this

who are involved in running organisations will identify with this; whether a school, business, charity, healthcare trust or church. Whether you've been able to make root-and-branch changes or simply redesign your website home-page, all of this will help as we look to go again. The prophet Zechariah said 'do not despise the day of small things'!

What has the pandemic taught us? Where do I start? I think one big area is that of change. We have all had to adapt to change and cope with great uncertainty over the past year. We will do well as we emerge from the pandemic to build in a mindset of 'expect change' into our thinking and planning in our personal, work and church lives. Change is to be embraced, not to be feared!

I recently visited a well-known national training and conference venue to see how they were responding to the 'new normal'. Their Managing Director made an interesting observation that twenty years ago, 70% of conference business was done in the conference room. Now, 70% is done outside of the conference room – over coffee, lunch, an evening glass of wine or a walk in the grounds. It was a reminder to me that whatever line of people-business we are in, whether workplace, charitable, community, education, healthcare or church – there is an increasing need for us to focus on the end-to-end experience, not just the transaction.

That put me in mind of the late, great David Bowie. What were the two secrets to his enduring success? He stuck to his

principles, and he constantly reinvented himself. Surely those are contradictions? No – he stuck to his principles to entertain. And he kept reinventing himself to stay relevant, whether through his alter egos of Ziggy Stardust or Aladdin Sane.

How does that apply to us all in our lines of work or church service? We must stick to our principles. For me in Christian conferencing that means sticking to what we do – conferencing, and not get caught in the bright headlights of weddings or birthday parties. Those may be great lines of business, but they are not ours. And then we must also constantly reinvent ourselves. For me that may be the introduction of a premium conferencing product, or continual investment in technology. For others it may be redesigning the welcome experience for visitors at your church or introducing soya or almond milk in your church café!

The time to change a carpet is before it looks worn out. What's the church version of all that? I heard someone say a few years ago that we should be conservative in our doctrine and contemporary in our means. I don't expect everyone to agree with either half of that statement but I find it a helpful challenge personally.

However we spend our waking hours, as we emerge from the pandemic let's all be encouraged by Jeremiah's reflection: 'Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed'.

John Heasman
Akeman Street Baptist Church

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Helen Godbolt Cello
with Tring Strings

playing Vivaldi, Tchaikovsky - and more!

Sunday 11th July
at 3pm

Live performance, to be held in
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Free admission, with retiring collection

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Piano & more series

An hour of music on Sunday afternoons

Icknield Trio

Arwen Newband *Violin*
Sarah Boxhall *Cello*
Anna Le Hair *Piano*

Tchaikovsky Piano Trio in A minor

Sunday 8th August
at 3pm

Live performance, to be held in
Tring Parish Church HP23 5AE
Free admission, with retiring collection

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



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

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

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

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

DementiaUK
Helping families face dementia

Visit the website www.tringteamparish.org.uk/our-charities or speak to Janet Goodyer on 01442 824929 or admin@tringteamparish.org.uk

The Pandemic: rambling memories for the grandchildren



I was looking back at my article written for the June 2020 edition of Comment and written at the end of April, and I had to laugh and wonder what I would have written then, had I known we would be back in almost the same place a year later. It is almost a 'Groundhog Day' situation. For those who have never watched the film it is a lightweight, amusing tale of someone caught in a time loop and the efforts they make to extricate themselves from the situation. Were our current situation so amusing!

We are, of course, not in the same situation as last year. Some of the world's nations have developed vaccines that are proving to be effective, although we don't know yet if there are any long-term side effects hidden away somewhere. Still better to risk it than end up in hospital and possibly die. This is a time to do something for the greater good and not just think of our selfish selves.

At the end of April 2020, when we were only really just beginning our lockdown and struggles with Covid-19, I wrote about how I had gained much pleasure from the simple things in life: the garden, the peace and quiet, time to spring clean and decorate. I was so glad that I was not living in the city or in a flat. I thought about friends and newly acquired technology skills. I did have some slow days but generally my thoughts were that we could all get through this with the usual British fortitude.

Nothing much happened until the beginning of June 2020, when some restrictions were lifted. On 1 June, we drove over to see our family in their garden, properly social distanced, of course! (Explain that to a 2-year-old.) As neither family had been out of their homes apart from a walk for exercise, there was very little risk of danger holding my grandson's hand, especially as my daughter kept following us around sanitising everything. The joy

of those weekly visits in the summer to Oxfordshire to see both grandchildren was very uplifting. Baby Freya was no longer a newborn and by June could turn over and roll about the garden. Axel was the most effected by the first lockdown. His language development had plateaued and Freya had become 'mummy's girl', taking time to respond to her grandparents. We decided that we wanted to continue to see the family regularly and support our daughter and so we drove to Oxfordshire to help two days a week when required. Sometimes Rachel drove the children here for a change of scenery; family before church during those months, if I'm honest.

I'm not a natural rule breaker, so I erred on the side of caution. I went to 'Eat Out' twice in August. In a pub garden was fine; only once did I eat inside a restaurant and it was crowded. I didn't feel comfortable, so that was the only time. I met several friends in their gardens on fine days, taking coffee and picnics. It was a pleasure just to talk and laugh.

I should say that I have attended the online church services throughout and thank goodness they are still here and now live. It must be hard work for Huw, Jane, Sarah and Michelle from the Tring Team, plus all the technicians that make live streaming possible and just for a few of us at home. Thank you so much: it has been a life line.

Lockdown 2 saw me in hospital for elective surgery, so I didn't mind being at home recuperating in November. The newspapers made grim reading, and when listening to the news, I could see that the government and the country were reaping the 'rewards' of opening up the economy, summer holidays, schools reopening and students returning to university and society generally trying to restart. It's easy to criticise the government and say, 'Too soon, too quickly' but there are no set rules on coping with a pandemic.

All set to visit the family on Christmas Day, it was cancelled and that was possibly the worst week of the year. How many families were coming out of lockdown in November and looking forward to Christmas only

to have hopes dashed as many areas, including Dacorum, moved to level 4 and were told to stay at home? The presents for grandchildren looked very out of place in our spare room over the next three months! However, I have to remind myself that some grandparents may only ever see their family once every three months for one reason or another. But it is not the norm for us.

Winter was hard. Rapidly rising infection rates saw us all at home again. I like the spirit-lifting, brisk walks in the cold crisp air of winter, but not the moist and murky grey weather we had. The garden had been pruned and weeded, the winter vegetables netted and there was little to be done there until February, apart from dig up the parsnips and pick the broccoli when required. It was time to get out a jigsaw and the genealogy research and set time aside to think; just be grateful for what we do have.

I joined Jon Reynolds' Advent and Lenten zoom groups for the first time and enjoyed meeting new members of our parish community. During the Advent Group I soon realised that I needed a new Bible. We have three at home, all old and with very small print. They were school Bibles of my mother, mother-in-law and husband. My husband was surprised when I asked for a large print Bible for Christmas! (An eye test in January confirmed that my eyesight is not what it was.) The second thing I learnt from these zoom meetings and by far the most important was that although I was 'fed up' with the 'stay at home mantra' I really had nothing to complain about. One of the group explained how exhausting it was trying to work from home and home-schooling young children. I felt rather ashamed that I had moaned, when I usually only have myself (and my husband) to consider. We can all learn.

I didn't return to church until the end of February 2021, continuing to participate in the church services from home all the way through. Now having been to St Cross regularly for a few weeks, I wondered why I was so nervous about trying to resume worshipping together. The first time

I went back to St Cross was a really big step mentally and I am sure I had become risk averse (and still am to some extent).

This spring, I've not felt particularly keen to spring clean and decorate. The

weather has been different too. Nothing grew in the garden until a very wet and chilly May, when all the weeds sprang to life in our garden. Surely summer must arrive soon? The noise on the bypass and jets flying overhead to

Luton have resumed and our tranquil time is passing. So, time to take a few more careful steps. Let's remember what happened last autumn and behave responsibly.

Vicky Baldock, St Cross, Wilstone

Have hymnbook – will travel



Lapford is a village in the heart of agricultural Devon, where residents are more interested in the new crop of maize and the falling price of milk than in serving clotted cream teas to tourists.

The church of St Thomas of Canterbury, Lapford, (commissioned as an act of penance by one of the four knights who murdered Thomas à Becket in 1170) is very beautiful: its wooden furnishings are original and include an intricately carved parclose screen with a pair of gates, through which the Vicar, celebrating without benefit of acolytes,

bustled backwards and forwards. Nowadays the church lacks only its medieval wall-paintings, eliminated by the Victorians. The congregation was predominately female, but we were assured that this was unusual, and due purely to the pressing need for the men to be making silage during every daylight hour.

The Congregational church also thrives in the village and its strength is in no small measure the result of a very damaging period in the life of the Anglican church. For 140 years (1727-1867) the vicars of Lapford were supplied from the Radford family and the last of these, whose incumbency the village endured for forty-two years, was a real black sheep. Always a reluctant servant of the Church, he passed his time during the week in riding to hounds and at the weekend in seeking out opponents for a spot of prize-fighting. He was not just a hearty, but quite clearly a violent man and

two curates and a housemaid came to a suspicious end. Whenever the Bishop of Exeter rode up to Lapford to investigate, Parson Radford took to his bed with a convenient attack of scarlet fever. Over the years he succeeded in alienating his congregation so totally that he was reduced to beginning his services with the greeting, 'Dearly beloved George...'

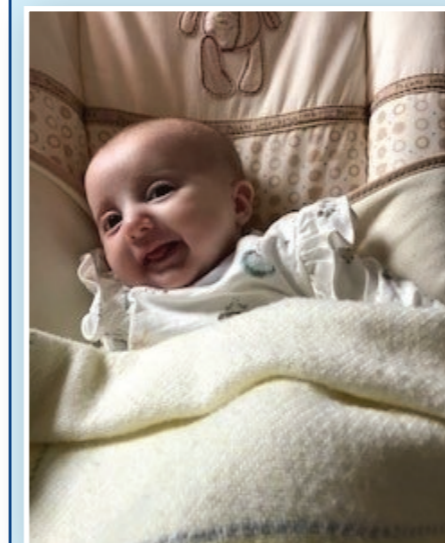
Yet the church and the community are resilient; born out of an act of violence and still today needing to absorb and transform violence (an addition to the names on the village war memorial is two local casualties of the Falklands Campaign), St Thomas, Lapford, continues to bear faithful and vibrant witness as it has done for centuries.

Here in Tring Corporal David Barnsdale, killed serving in Afghanistan in October 2010, is commemorated on our own war memorial.

**Martin & Carole Wells
St Peter & St Paul**

Baptisms are back!

Phoebe Elizabeth Mackinder-Fulford, who was born on 22 January this year to Charlotte and Matt and sister Evie, was baptised on a sunny 30 May in the beautiful outside setting of St Mary's Church, Puttenham. Charlotte's sister Fran and husband Tom Prescott were godparents.



Charlotte and Fran and dad Tony Mackinder were regular worshippers at Tring Parish Church before the pandemic while mum Hattie Mackinder worships at Corpus Christi. Charlotte and Fran used to be members of the choir in St Peter & St Paul's Church and members of TAYA, the group for young adults.



Congratulations to them all. We welcomed baby Phoebe into St Peter & St Paul's Church on 13 June and hope to see them again soon.

The Editor

‘Auscatraz’ – the darker side of Australia’s Covid-19 success

As we write this at the end of May, the Australian state of Victoria has just entered its fourth lockdown since the begin of the pandemic last year.

For our Tring friends this is, of course, now a familiar occurrence, so you might wonder why it is worth us writing an article about it. We are by no means in the camp of people that think all sensible restrictions to personal freedom in times of a pandemic are a bad thing. We approve of mask-wearing, social distancing and yes, if necessary, lockdowns. They have proven to be a valid and necessary tool to get a grip on this pandemic and significantly helped to reduce the burden on hospitals and the overall death toll. But here in Australia it seems we have become victims of our own success. Recent Covid-19 restrictions in some states seem to lack all sense of perspective and Australia now seems practically, if unofficially, committed to an elimination strategy that is all but impossible short of continued and prolonged isolation.

To illustrate this, in the latest outbreak, there have so far been a total of forty-five cases in the city of Melbourne, yet the entire state of Victoria has been put under a strict lockdown. Victoria is roughly the size of the entire UK with a tenth of its population, yet the inhabitants of every area – including the remotest farming communities in the Victorian outback – are now unable to leave their houses unless for exercise, food shopping and essential work. Regional tourism operators and hospitality businesses had to close once again with only a day’s notice. Last month, the city of Perth (population approx. 2 million) went into a three-day snap lockdown over a bank holiday weekend because of two confirmed cases. In both of these cases, contract tracers have a fairly clear picture of all the exposure sites and have been able to trace and check contacts and ask people to self-isolate. In contrast, New South Wales – where we live – has shown a more measured approach and has still managed to control outbreaks. Apart from the first lockdown early last year, we have been relatively free to roam within our own state. That

is not because there have been no cases. During a sudden outbreak in the Northern Beaches area of Sydney in December, with a total of 151 cases eventually linked to the cluster, a very localised lockdown, compulsory mask-wearing and increased social distancing measures across the city and surrounding areas were sufficient to bring the outbreak under control within a month, with no further community transmissions afterwards. This shows that it is possible sensibly to manage outbreaks and protect the population without hitting the panic button every time a case emerges.

The damage of continued snap border closures and local and state-wide lockdowns to businesses as well as people’s mental health is enormous, yet people seem to be happy to accept this. The approval rates for politicians most hard-line on border closures are through the roof and a recent Lowy Institute poll revealed that a whopping 95% agreed with the government’s handling of the pandemic. Only 18% agreed that Australians should be free to leave the country. As one of our Australian friends wryly remarked, ‘You might think we are all descended from prisoners, but we are also descended from the prison guards’.

In our own industry, higher education, the absence of international students owing to prolonged international border closures continues to wreak havoc on university finances, and we are well into the second year of record job losses. Recently, the Vice Chancellor of Monash University in Melbourne insisted that: ‘We should live the benefits of reaching out beyond our boundaries, of being an open, diverse and tolerant society – not cower in fear on our island, seeking comfort in our isolation... Our Australian students do not have a better education from being separated from the perspectives and experiences of other nations and cultures – or seeing them through a zoom darkly.’

For us, this is a deeply personal issue. There is no indication when the borders might be opened again, as the government refuses to commit to any specific targets – e.g. ‘We’ll open the borders when X-percent of the

population is vaccinated’. So far, the only clear announcement has been that it won’t be before mid-2022 (a further delay on what was predicted earlier in the year, owing to the slowness of Australia’s vaccine roll-out). That’s a long time for people to be locked into one country, even one as large as Australia. It’s not a matter of fancy foreign holidays. As noted in a recent news interview, almost a third of Australia’s current population was born overseas, so not being able to travel abroad means not being able to see relatives, friends and loved ones. We know what that feels like. As we mentioned in a previous article, if we had to leave the country for some reason at this moment, our visas would not enable us to return. Currently, only Australian nationals and permanent residents are allowed back in.

When things went from bad to worse in India in recent months, Australia tightened the rules, making it a criminal offence for Indian Australians who were visiting family to return to their home country. In any case, Australians also need permission to leave their country in the first place, and can only do so only in exceptional circumstances. When they return, they have to stay in hotel quarantine for fourteen days, at a cost of about \$3000AUS (approx. £1600) per person.

While the hotel quarantine system is not perfect – some recent outbreaks have been linked to it – it is at least temporary. Several Australian states are currently drawing up plans for multi-billion dollar purpose-built quarantine facilities. This development is worrying. The scale of these projected facilities indicates that they won’t be available – if approved – for a couple of years. So, what’s the thinking here? What will they be used for once Covid-19 is under control and people are vaccinated?

Meanwhile, we do continue to travel locally and try to make the most of the freedoms we have, but we very much hope and pray that it won’t be too long before we are able to see friends and family again.

Sylvie Magerstaed & John Lippitt

Building work and building blessings



Most people over the last year to eighteen months have taken the opportunity to freshen up their homes a bit; albeit repainting or rearranging rooms, building work, renovations, or landscaping the garden. We, at High Street Baptist Church have also taken the opportunity to redesign and renovate our building.



As you’ll see from the photos, we’ve removed our large baptistry that took up a huge amount of space at the front of church, and moved the stage back to create additional useable space which is more versatile, and modernise our worship area and technology to make it safer and workable. As part of this significant change, we will be purchasing a portable baptistry to replace the previous one, which will be eco-friendly, needing both less water to fill and less time to heat.

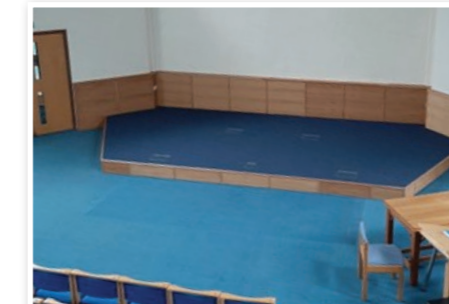
Now, in order for this work to be done, we had to remove and/or cover everything in the church sanctuary. This meant all the chairs were removed, banners and posters taken down, sockets and electrical items covered. The church looked bare and empty, more so than at any point in the last year or so when the doors had to remain closed due to the pandemic restrictions. It looked, in one word – dead.

After the work was complete, we began the big clean (dust from removing the baptistry literally went everywhere!) and we moved the chairs and communion table etc. back into place ready to resume hybrid worship services from Pentecost Sunday onwards. In doing this there felt like there was a degree of order and familiarity being restored in what was just an empty building. It was like the bones of the church building were being set back in place for the return of gathered ‘in person’ worship and fellowship.

This reminded me of a couple of verses from Ezekiel chapter 37: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’

Now, these verses are about spiritual life given through the Holy Spirit, but as I helped ‘reset’ the church after the building work in anticipation of resuming services and in-person activities I just felt there was something quite symbolic expressed in these verses. Despite the church building doors being shut because of the restrictions and then the building work, our church family has continued to be spiritually alive through the various online prayer, worship and Bible study meetings, small group socials and outreach activities; but there is a longing (on my part at least!) for the vibrancy found in a church also using its building in ways that help to bring life to people through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is part of the reason why we undertook the baptistry/stage building work. We recognised that the church building is not just for Sunday use, it’s regularly used throughout the week, for various activities and by all ages; a haven for many in various ways. The church building is a place to connect and a place to learn; it is a place to worship and a place to play. It is a place to find help and a place be active and serve; it is a place to pray and a place to give. It is a place to find peace and comfort and a place to grow together; it is a place to gather and a place to scatter from. It is a place to find love and encouragement and it is a place for truth. It is a place for all and a



place where all might experience the life-giving presence of God for themselves. The church building is in one word – a blessing! A blessing that we once again hope to use creatively over the coming months so others might experience the

blessings of God for themselves. Some activities will be familiar, and some are being re-imagined and redeveloped as we respond to the current needs of the community and seek to share God’s love in fresh ways. And so, moving forward at High Street Baptist Church, we are excited about the things that God is breathing life into which will enable us to continue bringing vibrancy, diversity and life not only to those that step into the building but also out into the wider community.

Hope to see you soon. Many blessings.

Joe Egan
High Street Baptist Church

Parish registers

Baptisms

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

Lennie Steven Hunt
Joe Pitchers
Kit Pitchers
Olivia Barton
Max Dominiak
Alexander Dominiak
Joshua Odams
Henry Sargent

Weddings

We offer our congratulations and prayers to these couples as they begin their married lives together.

Trevor William Petty
& Carol Ann Morris
David Spencer & Julie Young
Robin Walker & Olivia Higginson
Nicholas James Day
& Sarah Alice Rees
Tom Hanley & Jade Rodrigoe
Joel Large & Joanna Brown

Funerals

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

Margaret Littlewood 87

Canals and me



I have written before that one enduring legacy of my teenage years was a love of canals. The editor asked me to explain, so...

In September 2008 I was idling away time in WH Smiths and picked up the magazine 'Waterways World', attracted by the wording on the cover which read 'Braunston Celebration'. I know Braunston, a small village in Northamptonshire, six miles south east of Rugby. It is the historical centre of the Midlands canal network, where the Grand Union and the Oxford canals intersect, a place of huge commercial importance in the late 19th century and home to some renowned firms of boat builders. But these are not builders of pleasure craft; these men built working narrow boats (not barges – they are totally different) and the Braunston celebration in the magazine was to commemorate the launch fifty years earlier of Raymond, the last wooden working narrow boat ever built—and I knew Raymond.



In 1968 my father purchased a small boat. Puffin was a 16ft cabin cruiser and was berthed at Dunstable and District Boat Club, situated then, as now, at

Cooks Wharf near Cheddington. As a family of four we soon realised she was not big enough to provide overnight accommodation and, a year later, Puffin was changed for the four-berth Merganser. We spent many weekends and holidays on the canals.

A day's boating would take us to Leighton Buzzard, and a week put places such as Warwick within reach. I loved every minute of it but even at such a young age – I was only 12 – I was absolutely fascinated by the working boats which carried coal from the Coventry and Warwickshire coalfields down to Kearsley and Tonges jam factory at Southall in London. Seventy foot long and a maximum of 7ft wide, the boats worked in pairs; a motor boat towing a butty boat (no engine), beautifully decorated, and with a family of two or more living in the tiny 7ft square cabins. There was nothing romantic about the life; the cabins were often damp – when the boat was loaded most of the living space was below the waterline. Fresh water was carried in the decorated cans set on the cabin roof; milk was condensed, as there was no refrigeration, and fresh milk often hard to access. It was a dying trade by the time we started boating but we were extremely fortunate to get to know one working boat family very well – the Brays.

Blue Line Canal Carriers was based at Braunston and they had three pairs of boats. Arthur and Rose Bray, and Rose's son Ernie, operated Roger (a motor boat) and Raymond (a butty) and they had become close friends with a colleague of my father's. Mike had met the Brays by crashing into the back of Raymond (boats don't have brakes) when trying to moor his own boat behind theirs. For some reason they forgave him and through Mike we were also accepted.

Working boatmen were very private people; you would never be invited aboard, the tiny cabins being the only private space they had, and they were wary and distrustful of strangers, especially pleasure boaters who frequently hampered their progress, failing to understand that time was money. But to us they were kind and generous, and one of my Dad's proudest memories was when they towed us through Blisworth Tunnel. We were truly honoured and we knew it.

One of the Brays' greatest joys was when they moored at Kings Langley and Mike would take them to the cinema and treat them to fish and chips afterwards. But a life on land was totally alien to them. The motor boat Roger came to the end of her working life and was replaced by Nutfield and when the canal trade finally ended in October 1970 the Brays were able to keep the boats and lived aboard, moored at Braunston.

When Rose Bray died in January 1971 my father, along with Mike, attended her funeral. Nearly all midland boaters are buried at Braunston; the village church is known as the 'cathedral of the cut', clearly visible from the canal. ('Cut' is the working name for a canal). Boat women would also attend the church for 'cleansing' after the birth of their children. Arthur remained at Braunston for the rest of his life, a well-known figure to everyone passing by, until he died in 1998 aged 96.

But with the loss of trade we no longer saw the working boats and many were simply abandoned and allowed to rot, a tragic loss of industrial history and the end of a unique way of life. When family commitments meant we could no longer use our own boat, our connection to the canal ended. That is until 2008, when I fortuitously picked up that magazine.



The celebration of the anniversary of Raymond's launch included mention of a support group but no details. I wrote to the editor explaining my interest, my letter was published and the floodgates opened, as readers sent me information and photographs. I was soon a member of The Friends of Raymond, who had rescued, rebuilt and preserved the boat and were later fortunate enough to be able to buy Nutfield. The boats are now

decorated in the full Blue Line livery, complete with the traditional roses and castles on the cabin doors, and remain virtually the only pair of working boats in existence still paired as they were when trading. To see them is a joy and the unmistakable deep throbbing sound of the engine instantly reminds me of our days on the canal, when you would often hear the boats before you saw them.

The current owner of Braunston Marina is hugely enthusiastic and knowledgeable about canal history and one day I hope to attend the annual rally held there which attracts restored working boats from all over the country. I regularly walk along the local canals here and just the sight of a working boat,

old or new, is a pleasure. To be able to help restore an old working boat is an unattainable dream but I do harbour ambitions of walking the length of the Grand Union towpath, 120 miles, passing 102 locks. It took the Brays 3.5 days to do the trip; I think it might take me a bit longer.

Alison Cockerill
St Cross, Wilstone



The Berkhamsted Walk 2021

Whilst it has been a disappointing year for events and fundraising, we are delighted to announce that we will be putting on a smaller version of the Berkhamsted Walk on Sunday 19 September 2021!

The walk will be slightly different

from our normal event – there will be one twelve-mile route, but you will be able to walk as little or as much of it as you like – and join the route wherever suits you best. As usual, the route will be marked, and we will be providing maps – we are also aiming to have one

checkpoint available. For more information and to register, visit www.berkhamstedwalk.com To find out more about The Children's Society's work, visit: www.childrenssociety.org.uk **Vicki Blake**



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Escape to the country – in a tent



A 12-year-old boy called Max attracted press attention this year when he camped out in his garden to raise money for charity. His parents thought he would last a week, but, in fact, he slept out in a tent on his own for a year – and wanted to continue! He must have enjoyed it even in the winter months. Hikers and ramblers often share a tent on their travels for a week or so and family camping has become a popular holiday for some, especially in France. Across the world many, sadly, have to live in tents as they have fled their home and country, hoping for a permanent home in the future.

Abraham and his descendants lived in tents and moved around to different sites as we read in the Exodus story.

In normal times, many young people go and have a cheap, fresh-air holiday with very little in the provision of basic needs. It all adds to the excitement of being away from home, studies or work with all their restrictions: a very healthy way of living – for a while!

My first experience of camping was at the age of 13 when my school in Highbury, North London, organised a trip to Somerset for four weeks to assist the war effort by helping farmers, particularly in the harvest time in August. This was in 1943 and I did the same for the next two years. I remember on that last trip, whilst working, the news that an atomic bomb had been dropped in Japan and that war was ended.

The first trip was in Stogumber and about eight of us were put in bell tents – feet to the middle, army style. There was a marquee for eating and staff tents. Families were there to help with the cooking. We were taken to our work sites each morning by car (surprise, as petrol was rationed) or we cycled, having put our bikes on the train. The first day, two of us were put to thin turnips in a huge field. After half an hour, I felt as though I had done a day's work – it was so boring! But when we started harvesting, always controlled by the weather, we worked really hard all day. Put on top of a hay cart, my job was to stack the bundles of corn. The horse would suddenly start up on rough ground, nearly throwing me off! The highlight for me was when the farmer's wife appeared at teatime with a large hamper and we would rest for half an hour before continuing until dark, making the most of the daylight. As the last square of corn was cut, rabbits would run out and would be shot for a rabbit pie!

We did have some fun as well, cycling to Minehead and Dunster and bathing at Blue Anchor Bay. I remember when I returned home, my mother thought it odd that I should want to keep my clothes in a case!

Our church at Highgate held an annual camp based on the system which the Covenanters movement used. We were big enough to run our own, so a girls' camp was held for ten days, with the boys following, also for ten days. We camped in various parts of the coastal country for twenty-five years. I was doing National Service in 1949 and was asked to help with the camp at Milford-on-

Sea. After three years, I was asked to be Quartermaster. I enjoyed ordering the food and making sure that the cook had everything needed for very hungry boys. I was taken aback the following year when the young man who was Cook suddenly said he was asked to go for a trial with Bolton Wanderers Football Club. I was left high and dry, never having cooked before at all. But we managed.

We had about fourteen ridge tents and two marquees – one for eating and talks and one for wet day games. We always had to lay pipes for water from the nearest source – often quite a way off. Cooking was by calor gas. Latrine pits had to be dug and filled in at the end of camp.

Two years later I was asked to be 'Adjy' (Adjutant) as second in charge. This coincided nicely with me starting my teaching career. As I was a sports teacher, camping became another outlet and I invited many of my pupils to join the camp over the years.

As all good camps do, the day started with 'Tent Inspection'. 'Reveille' was sounded at 7.00am giving an hour to wash, put all equipment outside in neat lines and tidy up the tent. This was done to a very high standard and was competitive. I think newcomers wondered what had hit them on the first morning. After breakfast, there was a Bible talk and a prayer. Then came chores: potato-peeling etc. before we embarked on the day's activities.

I am sure many readers will have experienced the camp system. It was to give the campers a really fun time, lots of fresh air, especially good for these London boys, and an informal introduction to the Christian faith, all part of the church's

ministry to young people, and a chance to live together forming friendships, many of which have lasted years.

I had kept up with Bill since 1952 when he became a Christian at camp and went on to be an avid Bible student, later going to India each year to teach the Pastors and students there. Sadly, during one of these missions, he died four years ago.

There were lots of games including a real Camp game – 'crocker', a Sports Day when parents and church members came to visit; trips to the beach, treasure hunts and always the most popular – Hunt the Officer, when the leaders hid in various parts of the countryside or local town. The boys were given clues to find them. There were so many funny incidents that I could write a book about them!

I was asked to run the camp in 1956 and was nicknamed 'Commy', short for Commandant. This sounds a bit military

but worked well.

We always challenged the local town for a football or cricket match and I remember a notable match against Watchet Youth Team. We were once challenged by a local scout camp to play them at rugby (their game) so asked for a return match at football (our game). We won both!

When it became dark (in August) we had some camp yells and choruses and then a Bible talk from 'The Padre'. Often he was a missionary, home on furlough, or one of our own who was particularly good with young people. A camp fire was always popular, when leaders would give the testimony of their Christian faith and what it meant in their own lives. Many boys, over the years, were introduced to Jesus for the first time.

On Sunday morning, we invited local people to join us in a service and many

did, partly perhaps to see what these noisy campers were up to.

On the Friday before we went home there was a hilarious concert when every leader produced an item and then waited on the boys at a seven-, or once, a ten-course dinner. No wonder, the next morning, when we had to take tents down, that everyone was tired out until the coach arrived. It was with a sense of great relief and profound thanks to God as the coach left the site with all the boys safely going home. A few of us stayed to do the final clearing-up to leave the farmer's field as clean as when we started. Back home, exhausted, was an understatement!

I reluctantly had to stand down from these amazing holidays when we moved out to live in the country in 1975.

John Young
Akeman Street Baptist Church

Thank you to Chris 'Countless Jobs' Hoare

This Spring saw the departure of Chris and Jenny Hoare for pastures new: literally, as their new house near Oswestry boasts plenty of land and space and many new hobbies. At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, fulsome praise was heaped on Chris and genuine thanks given for his service for St Peter & St Paul and for the Tring Team Parish as a whole. Here is just a sample of his valedictory address.

'I have enjoyed getting to know Chris and Jenny through church and also through music. Chris has been a staunch supporter of the Piano and More concerts, always there when he was able to be, and always ready to help. He has been a rock, and I will miss his quiet, calm presence hugely. Conveniently, Nant Mawr is more or less halfway between Tring and Anglesey, where my parents and sister live, and so Edmund and I will be popping in for cups of tea on a few occasions, I'm sure! I wish them all the very best in their new life in a beautiful part of the country.' Anna

'Chris is a tremendous chap, no question. Loved by people and rams (well, maybe Roger the ram isn't quite so keen). His mastery (some say wizardry) of the Tring Team Parish accounts was wonderful to see, which was always bolstered by the rental returns (post year one, of course!). I for one shall miss sharing an ale or two post PCC meetings (in times when you could do such a thing) but send all my

many best wishes for a wonderful next chapter in the Hoare family life.' Ian

'I will remember Chris as someone who thrived on commitment, the more responsibility he took on, the more at ease he seemed to become. Taking on the roles of Treasurer and Warden at the same time was more than could reasonably be expected of anyone, but not so with Chris, who took it all in his stride and, despite the enormity of the task, was always there to give friendly advice.' Ken

'Chris has been an absolute rock for me and my family, especially in helping us settle into Tring and my role as a curate. He was always around when I needed him, not just for practical stuff, but to offer emotional support and encouragement too. He always seems to be smiling, despite obviously being pulled in all sorts of directions. He's one of the most caring, thoughtful and hardworking people I know.' Sarah

'Chris - the man who does everything! The only other person apart from my husband who goes around with untied shoelaces. I have learnt not to tell either that is the case as they will do nothing about it! Will be missed at the sound desk, at the lectern and when clearing up and also at Morning Prayer, with his phone in one hand for the service, and the heating controls in the other.' Jane

'The thing I will miss most about not having Chris around is deep theological questions about the state of test match

cricket...' Jon

'Chris has taken on pretty much every role in the church; church warden, treasurer, bell-ringer, baker of cakes and Master of Ceremonies for Piano and More, pew shifting for concerts, go-to-for-every-service reader and intercessor, boiler repair man, heating controls expert and procurement of anything that is needed... and is always enthusiastic about everything that happens in the church. By our reckoning it will take at least ten people to replace him.' Vivianne, Roy and John

And, a final word from Huw Bellis, Rector of the Tring Team Parish: 'One of the things I appreciated about Chris was his spirituality. He often expressed this through listening to classical music, but he was very well read too. At Morning Prayer on the day the church was commemorating Richard Rolle, up piped Chris, 'Oh yes, Jenny and I met when we were reading the "Fire of Love" by Richard Rolle at a club at university'. Of course, he then took Jenny bell ringing and the rest is history, but I love that our church warden grew up on the writings of 14th century mystics. To our shame, none of the clergy knew his writings.'

Vivianne Child, Roy Hargreaves & John Whiteman, St Peter & St Pauls



Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's



One of the many frightening things about the pandemic, from which we hope and pray that we are emerging, is the cost in financial terms. Of course, the human cost in pain

and loss of life cannot be expressed in financial terms, yet in one sense it has to be. We heard the Chancellor of the Exchequer talk of billions of pounds as the cost to the NHS and of supporting the economy and so on. Some of us find such large sums baffling! It does not seem to relate to our personal finances, and yet it does. It made me think a lot more about finance at different levels – that of the state and that of the individual. It also made me think about the text which heads this article.

As with so much of Our Lord's teaching, it sounds clear and simple. Yet on thinking more deeply it is not so. What does it mean in terms of our lives and finances? What does it say about the priorities of the State and the Church? For some, the emphasis has been on the State's demands. If we go back to the text and its context we remember the Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus into saying something that would get him into trouble with the Roman authorities. We are pleased that Jesus came up with a smart and snappy answer about taxation. But a little thought leads us on to deeper considerations. For us, Caesar means the State and the Church represents God. But how does it work out in practice? Rendering to God what is God's is often represented to us in financial terms. We give money to the Church and charities as a token of our love for God and for our neighbour in need.

Some interpreters of the text have taken it as primarily about our duty to the State. We are to obey the powers that be and that includes paying taxes. I was interested to learn that a 19th century Russian commentary on this text said that believers are obliged 'to serve the Tsar with a willingness to sacrifice one's life for him until the last drop of blood' (an understanding helped by the fact that Tsar and Caesar are the same words). This commentary was republished in 1994! Certainly it is our Christian duty to obey the laws of the land unless we conscientiously believe they are against

the will of God. That involves paying our taxes.

The interesting thing is that in one sense a lot of this comes down to money. The State cannot function without money and the way we serve God often involves money. Over the centuries the proportions have changed greatly as we now expect more and more to be done by the State, paid for by us. In the days of Jesus, the Roman Emperor needed taxes to pay the army (law and order), communications (roads), some public buildings and so on. But a lot of what we now expect of the State was provided by the Church – care of the poor and needy, the sick and suffering, education and so on and all that was not as well organised as we have come to expect today. One major issue which separates us from the days of Jesus is the amount of property and money most of us have in this country. Once the wealthy few could, say, found a monastery which might care for the local sick and perhaps educate a few boys. Now we pay taxes for a much wider variety of services as well as giving to church and charity. In Jesus' time the economy was very different because of the free labour provided by slaves!

Should we try to earn more and more and so, in theory, be able to give more and more away to God through good causes and charities? The Old Testament in part suggests the righteous prosper and so wealth is a sign of God's favour. Experience shows that this pious idea is not true and the book of Job deals with the problem of the righteous man who loses prosperity in spite of his piety. Things then change when we find Jesus talking about the need to follow the Way of the Cross, the instruction to go and sell all to follow Christ – Blessed are the poor and so

on. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God'. This hard saying is softened a bit as Jesus goes on to say 'for mortals it is impossible but for God all things are possible'.

Jesus' words are a great but somewhat difficult reminder that we have a duty to God and the State. This is often expressed in financial terms, for in this life a basic question always has to be 'Who pays?'. Sometimes people have confused Caesar and God, some have profited out of religion. One reads of tele-evangelists in the USA living like millionaires and history has bishops whose incomes were huge. Our use of money is complicated and changing; our expectations of what the State should pay for and what we as individuals pay for are always changing. We cannot manage nowadays without money – it can achieve great benefits and can cause great wickedness. We have to remember, however, it is not money which is the root of all evil, but the love of money which is the cause of problems.

Martin Banister
St Albans Cathedral

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Please note that the closing date is 15 November 2021, to lodge a completed application for grants payable from autumn the following year.

Tring and beyond



In August 1993 Gordon, my husband and I came to Tring from Canada, to be closer to my parents who lived in Wigginton.

We were soon members of St Peter & St Paul, and became welcomed members of the choir. Gordon (then 8 years old) had never sung in a church choir but took to it straight away. In fact he sang the 'Once in Royal' solo that first Christmas – well, nobody else wanted to and he said 'No problem!' Typical Gordon.

At that time there was a merry group of youngsters and we all enjoyed various outings, the highlight being the annual week of singing in various cathedrals – Exeter, Chichester and most memorably Portsmouth, where we were there the weekend Princess Diana

died. Suddenly, that Sunday morning, everything changed and our choir had to adapt the singing at the services that day. Very sad and moving.

Gordon and I have benefited hugely from so much musical experience with the choir, under Timothy Phillips, Norman Hodge, Jane Nash and now Cliff Brown. Our house had a large garden and, for a number of years, we had a summer barbecue there. We were always blessed with good weather and the hosepipe sprinkler was much used!

Now it's twenty-seven years later and Gordon is happily married to Lucy, with two young sons, and living near Leeds, hence my move from Tring. Of course, I am sad to leave all my friends here, but I have moved often enough in my life – born in Co Durham, then to London, Uganda, Canada and Southern Ireland – to know that life is what you make of it. I am looking forward to new challenges, with the comfort of having family close by.

At the moment I am renting prior to buying in Saltaire, a town of great historical interest and with lovely surrounding countryside. I have already joined the local church of St Peter, (St Paul's is at the other end of the town!). There is a choir, yet to restart of course, and they are delighted that I am an alto. They will be even more pleased when I tell them that Gordon is now an excellent tenor!

With this move I take with me many, many memories of my life centred around the church, from the Good Friday walk down the High Street behind the carried cross, which I always find incredibly moving, to the 'Happy Birthday, Jesus' balloons floating down from the balcony on Christmas Day; and the regular support of Sunday worship, always with the involvement of music.

Yes, I have a lot to be thankful for, and many people of the congregation to thank for their good fellowship.
Jane Legg, St Peter & St Paul

Love without limits



When we adopted our first son, more than thirty years ago, friends said they couldn't adopt as they couldn't love someone else's child as their own.

Either our friends have changed or times have – because now we are fostering, friends say they couldn't foster because they couldn't part with them after getting to know them.

It's remarkable that when there is something all consuming in your life – whether that's astronomy or cricket or family history or an issue in your family like dyslexia or dementia – you keep bumping into people who share that same thing. People often assume our son Jon is the father of the babies we foster; they assume we are their grandparents. Mostly we don't disabuse them but as people question further, we admit that we are carers. A huge number of those people – including my hairdresser, the manager in Rennie Grove, the lady I met in the pub garden – turn out to be adopted themselves; quite a few of the Tesco delivery staff foster or have someone in their family who does. If you

visit the Vineyard Church in Aylesbury, you will find they encourage church members who are able to foster to do so as part of their Christian service and actively support them as they do it. This can include offering to do the ironing for them or cooking them a meal, or taking the children to the park to give the carer a few hours' respite.

Looking back at our second placement, a newborn baby boy whom we cared for for nearly six months, we were told there was nothing like the first baby and the first 'loss' as you give them away to their 'forever family' to be adopted. It was an intensely emotional and stressful time as I tried to be a professional carer while at the same time feeling as if I were giving away part of myself. In the event the lovely new parents have made us an extension of their family and keep us up to-date with his progress and often send us photos and videos. By the time you are reading this article we will have attended his 2nd birthday party!

Our next placement was something I could never have imagined – not just one baby but two – and almost my first experience of baby girls (I cared for my now 37-year-old niece occasionally to help my sister a few times when she

was a baby). Not just twin baby girls but 10-week premature baby girls – with all the extra care and support needed for babies who needed to catch up. It has been challenging as you would expect, not just the sleep deprivation but also the 24/7 caring with no days, weekends or weeks off in eight months. But I wouldn't have missed this opportunity for anything and yes – I love these babies to bits and losing them – as we probably will have done by the summer – will be painful all over again. It won't be any easier than before because love has no limits – I can't half love them to protect myself from the pain of loss. That is what love is. Whether you are reading this knowing the pain of a child's loss or a loved one to death or even dementia, you will understand. We love because we can't help ourselves. Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

As we part with our baby girls we will hope for another extension to our family in getting to know their new parents and building a new relationship with them. Perhaps we won't be losing these babies so much as gaining new extended family members and watching them grow from a distance.

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul

In support of the national health service



The articles 'The Power of Prayer' by Michael Demidecki and 'Letter from Orkney' by Carrie Dodge in the May edition of Comment struck a chord with me;

and I thought that I would share my experience of the hospitality of the NHS from late 2020 and into 2021.

In September of 2020, after 75 years of good health, I began to feel unwell. A video call from the GP resulted in a likely diagnosis of a probable muscular problem which 'should resolve itself', but to keep it under review. A few days later it got worse and I called 111.

After a number of questions, I was informed that an ambulance was on the way and within fifteen minutes I was being examined by two paramedics. They decided to take me to Luton and Dunstable Hospital. Little did I know that this was the start of my hospital stay until 11 January 2021. Upon arrival I was immediately hooked up to a dozen cables and from then on, my memory becomes confused. Initially I was under the management of Cardiology but then Rheumatology became involved. Over the next few weeks, I benefited from all sorts of sophisticated tests and scans including visits to Harefield Hospital and Mount Vernon before eventually being transferred, as my condition deteriorated, to St Thomas's in London.

I was described by a number of

consultants as having an 'interesting condition' which was diagnosed as 'Undifferentiated Connective Tissue Disorder' coupled with a heart problem which impacted upon the body's immune system. For three days I was in intensive care. After five weeks I was considered well enough to return to Luton for a further four weeks and then on to Potters Bar for rehabilitation. This, of course, all took place against the background pressures of the Covid-19 infection placed upon the NHS.

What thoughts do I take away from this experience? Having arrived at Luton & Dunstable Hospital, at a few minutes notice, I received the expertise and professionalism of the NHS triage team. Highly sophisticated tests and scans were required and these were rapidly made available at a number of centres of excellence for specialist diagnosis. The nursing staff in all wards acted as a co-operative team, all aware of their individual roles and responsibilities. They were remarkably tolerant of 'difficult' patients. I was attended by numerous consultants including Cardiology, Rheumatology, Urology and Neurology, along with other allied healthcare professionals. All were friendly and took time to explain matters. The human body has a remarkable ability to erase from memory the stressful aspects of this period.

Having returned home, both my wife and I then contracted Covid-19. First my wife and then I was admitted to Stoke Mandeville Hospital, where I

remained for ten days. You could not make it up.

I am most grateful for the continuing support from Healthcare Professionals, family, neighbours and friends all of whom have considerably aided my recovery. The NHS is a remarkable organisation. Being state funded and also very large, it is subject to a lot of scrutiny. It is the nature of its operation that requires tight management systems to be in place. The message is that IT WORKS!

It is a large employer and very many of the employees come from all over of the world bringing their own faiths and cultures. It must be one of the largest of employers to have such a diverse work force and it works.

Throughout the world, medical professionals aspire to work for and come to the NHS for greater experience. We all benefit from this.

As we, hopefully, are approaching the Covid decline, we will look back over what has been achieved.

The Covid pandemic has brought a new dimension to health care provision. Let us not be diverted by critical voices who have not been at the work face or those who have the benefit of hindsight.

Yes, there is a huge backlog of more routine healthcare and many people have suffered as a result but I know that healthcare professionals will do their utmost to resolve the backlog.

**Tim Varley,
Grove Road**

'A Birthday' by Christina Rossetti



Two joyful and lyrical verses to celebrate the birthday of the poet's 'love'. On first reading it appears to be a conventional human love poem.

However, many of the allusions and references are also found in the Song of Songs (birds, apples, grapes and pomegranates) and the peacock is a traditional symbol of the Resurrection. So it would seem to include divine love and, like the Song of Songs, this poem can be seen as a commentary on the human heart in love with the Divine. It serves to remind us of the different layers of overlapping love. In addition, it is hard not to see in the intricate natural descriptions the features of some pre-Raphaelite art.

Well known as the author of the carol 'In the Bleak Midwinter' Christina Rossetti was born in London 1830 into a gifted family of artists, poets and intellectuals.

*My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with
thick-set fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.*

*Raise me a dais of silken down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleur-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.*

(Note: vair is an archaic word for variegated fur)

Her father, an exile from Italy, held the Chair of Italian at the recently opened

Kings College. Her brother, Dante Gabriel, was one of the founding members of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. She was educated at home, studying religious works, the lives of the Saints, the classics including Dante and stories of fantasy and imagination.

When her father became unable to work because of ill-health and the family was in financial difficulty, Christina became isolated at home and suffered frequent bouts of depression. With her mother and sister she became interested in the Anglo-Catholic Movement and works of religious devotion. She never married, though she had several proposals. She wrote many poems for children and numerous meditations on death, loss and spiritual struggle. Praised in her lifetime by many, including Tennyson, she has remained one of the finest Victorian female poets.

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

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A closer walk with God



Trinity Sunday – the Sunday after Pentecost in our Western Church – is a significant festival in our church year: the end of the season of significant

festivals and the beginning of

Ordinary time, stretching all the way to Advent and another new beginning in that familiar cycle, a Festival like no other as we seek to punctuate our daily lives with significant occasions in our quest to be closer to God.

All the other festivals, the Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost... are a commemoration of Christ's Life and his missionary journey of salvation for us all. But not Trinity Sunday. This Festival does not commemorate Christ's living journey, nor indeed the acts of the immediate group of Apostles who took – and led – the way forward after Pentecost.

Searching to define God

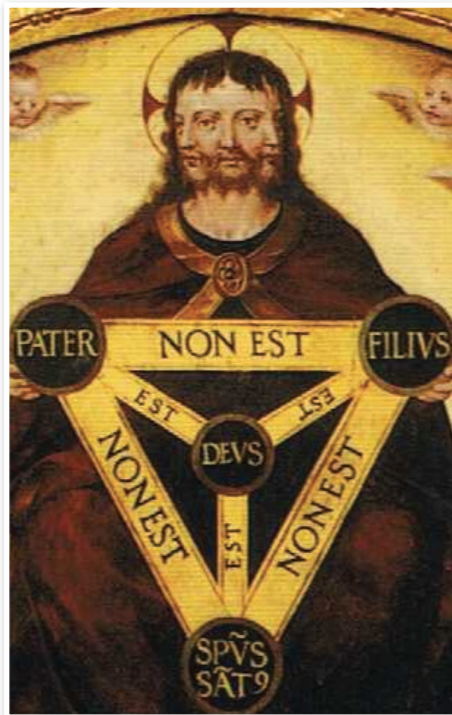
Trinity Sunday celebrates the journey of humanity itself as it struggles to understand and comprehend the nature of God. It shines a light on the prayers and thoughts of countless scholars and faithful followers of Christ over centuries; it celebrates our restless yearning to know God, to see him more clearly, to love him more dearly, to follow him more nearly.

Trinity Sunday celebrates the best the human mind has managed to define and understand God – the doctrine of the Trinity. Arguably one of the best of human minds was Albert Einstein's and arguably his Theory of Relativity has been a defining doctrine of our understanding of the Universe. But is it right? Apparently the latest discoveries about the nature of 'Dark Matter', widely described in the media this May, have blown something of a hole in Einstein's Theory... but that doesn't mean it's wrong. Perhaps more likely it is incomplete. We don't know everything (or possibly all that much) about the universe, so how could we have a theory or doctrine that gets it all right? We will know more when we can see more clearly, rather like our search for knowledge and understanding of God.

The Festival of the Holy Trinity

This is something of a 'new boy' in the annual cycle of our Church. It was Thomas a Beckett who instituted the Sunday after Pentecost as a festival of the Holy Trinity in perpetuity on Whitsunday 1162; or at least some scholars say that while others, of course, disagree – the nature of the human search for certainty!

What is certain is that the practice was not adopted by the Church in Rome until centuries later and has never been adopted in the Eastern Church which celebrates the Holy Trinity on the day of Pentecost. During the first millennium after Christ the Trinity itself was the subject of huge debate and study and learned discourse across the Christian world.



The Nicene Creed – after half a century of debate and anguished argument – finally adopted by the Western Church in AD381, clearly defines the Nature of the Trinity – but not everybody agreed. Schisms and wars and uprisings and revolutions and Inquisitions and persecutions have followed in the wake of this human definition of the nature of God, and it's still not over.

And then there's the Athanasian Creed which followed a couple of hundred years later (long after the death of Athanasius of Alexandria to whom it was rather loosely attributed). That defines the nature of God even more closely and in much more detail.

It's in our Book of Common Prayer to this day and the mandatory Creed for Trinity Sunday though it is very long. 'We worship one God in Trinity... The Godhead of the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost is all one...' It goes on to say: 'The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible; and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible... yet they are not three... but one.' It's perhaps all rather too much for our mere human minds!

This medieval concept of the Trinitarian God-head was widely used and debated by scholars and it attempts to make the mystery clear: 'The Father is not the Son; The Son is not the Holy Ghost; The Holy Ghost is not the Father... The Father is God; The Son is God; The Holy Ghost is God.'

This version is from a painting by Jeronimo Cosida in 1570 and is a very skilful artwork expressing the theology. Called the 'Scutum Fidei' – the shield of faith – it was widely used throughout the medieval world and often taken into battle as an actual shield. There have been many, many battles in this cause.

At the beginning of Trinity 2021 perhaps we should ponder the lessons of our human history and hopefully find the faith to move forward in spite of the problems we have of ever coming to a common understanding. Perhaps we can acknowledge that whilst there is much we do know, there is much more that we do not know or comprehend – both about the nature of the Universe or the frankly unknowable nature of God.

The identity of God – according to Paul

It was St Paul, speaking in Athens, who connected these things together: 'Dear Athenians, I see many altars in this city to the unknown God... I will tell you who this unknown God is... he is Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, died and rose again... HE is the unknown God... HE is the one in whom we live and move and have our being.'

It seems to be our human nature to struggle to define and contain what we do not know and argue endlessly about it. It is, after all, God's nature to be above and beyond all things, unknowable, invisible, incomprehensible, God only wise.

Seeking to be closer to God

The Shield of Faith perhaps gets us a little closer to God, but the truth is we can never actually know until we meet him face-to-face. Every Lent we acknowledge that our bodies are 'but dust'. Our souls, our spirits are made of finer stuff – stardust – and in God's good

time this will bring us face-to-face. In the words of Joni Mitchell: 'We are stardust, we are golden... We've just got to get ourselves back to the garden...' or the Book of Common Prayer Trinity Sunday Gospel, John 3:1: 'That which is born of Spirit is spirit... Marvel not that I said to you "ye must be born again".'

All we can really do is approach our God with awe and reverence and faith as we go forward into 'Ordinary Time', hoping for a closer walk with God.

Grahame Senior
Tring Team

Time for change



There is a very popular photograph taken at weddings – signing the register. Normally it is the bride seated at a table, holding the pen so that it hovers over the register, and her

bouquet carefully placed on one side of the table. Behind her stands the groom, stooping over and also smiling. As always, the style of the clothes are a giveaway as to when the photo was taken, and, if taken in church, the backdrop is often cupboards, radiators or some dark corner.

The registers and the certificate will have been signed before the photograph, so this is just a re-posing, and just after this, the awkwardly large certificate will have been handed to bride and groom, who have nowhere to put it, so normally give it to one of the mothers, who carefully roll it up and put it into their handbag.

As of 4 May 2021 however, this has changed. It is no longer the signing of the registers, but the signing of the schedule, which is a single piece of paper. This then has to be taken, either in person or by post to the local registry office to be put onto the electronic system. The couple can then apply for their certificate once that has happened, and they can do that by phone or online. The church therefore no longer holds any marriage registers or

certificates, and cannot issue any certificates for historic marriages – all this now goes through the local registry office.

It is a big change: for me, there was always a sense of being part of history when I filled in the registers by hand and with a proper ink pen. In the villages, most of the registers had been in use for many years – Wilstone's was started in 1914 – and you could trace family history through them. It was fascinating to see the change in jobs – no one puts down farm labourer any more – and also seeing the same local surnames over and over again. There was also, to be fair, the difficulty of trying to read some of the handwriting, and the knowledge that historical documents should be kept in an environment that is less damp and full of mice.

There is another change to the documentation in that mother's name and occupation are included instead of just the father's. At last! In fact, to reflect modern life, there can be up to four parents listed, so that step-parents can be included as well.

I was fortunate enough to be the

last person to conduct a wedding under the old system in our parish and the first under the new, and in between, I had drawn a literal line through the

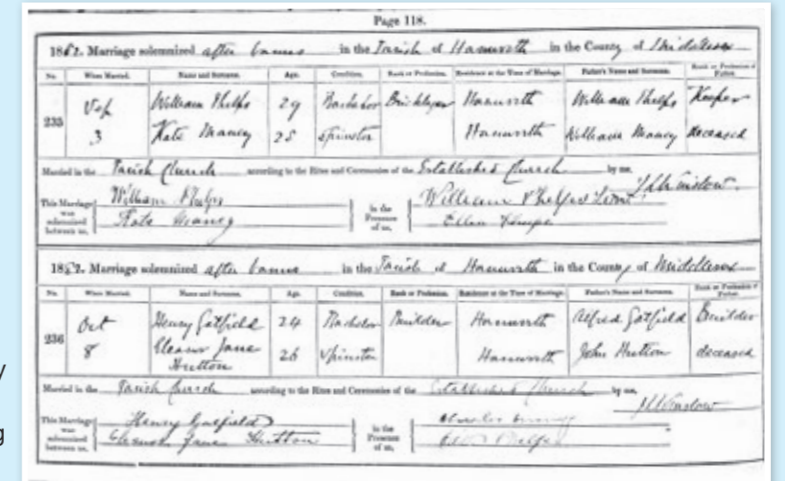
last pages of the registers that would no longer be in use. It did feel like a momentous moment, and a slightly sad one. Writing up the registers in an empty church before a wedding was always a time of quiet and preparation for me and I shall miss it. The schedule can be handwritten, but more often it will be filled in online and printed, which has a very different feeling to it.

Change, however, is nothing new, and it is right, if long overdue, that both parents are now included. We are also living in an age when, while I had the great privilege of looking at old registers first hand, not everyone does, and now there is so much transferred to the internet that everyone can have access.

And what was most important of all was that for both couples I married in May this year, one under the old system and one under the new, is that while it was vaguely interesting that this was happening, what was far more important was that they were able to have their weddings, in church, with the small congregations of those who loved them most there, making their promises in front of them and in front of God.

So we pray for all those who marry in our churches: Loving Lord, may their marriages be life-giving and life-long, enriched by your presence and strengthened by your grace; may they bring comfort and confidence to each other in faithfulness and trust. Lord of life and love: hear our prayer.

Jane Banister, Tring Team



Next year's holiday – the mystery of faith



I am always fascinated by the numerous overseas destinations Comment contributors have visited, either professionally or for holidays.

Working with M&S for forty years in Aylesbury, the furthest I ventured on a professional basis was Harrow-on-the-Hill for a month and nearly all holidays were spent in this country. I have never been to Scotland, although I do have lovely memories of a couple of weeks spent in North Wales. But there are a few exceptions to these domestic holidays: time spent in France, visiting the battlefields of WWI and WWII, and the Normandy beaches where my father landed on D-Day; a couple of trips to Paris, and three trips to Belgium, specifically Bruges. And the trips to Bruges turned out to be very special indeed.

We first went to Bruges in 1998 and were thoroughly captivated by this small beautiful medieval city, where everything was in walking distance – wonderful architecture, museums, friendly cafes, canals, chocolate, and churches – lots of churches and, unbeknown to us, two of those churches would be centre stage during our visit – the Cathedral of St Salvatore and the Basilica of the Holy Blood.

We were there on Ascension Day and for Bruges that is the most important day of the year, both spiritually and historically, beginning with an international Papal Mass in the cathedral and following with the Procession of the Holy Blood. The relic of the Holy Blood is kept in a small oblong rock crystal flask and consists of coagulated blood. This flask is concealed in a glass cylinder, which is decorated with golden crowns. It is said, in the historical tradition of Bruges, that after the descent from the Cross, whilst washing Christ's body, Joseph of Arimathea 'took of His blood and preserved it'.

Old tradition records that Derrick, Count of Flanders, brought the relic of the Holy Blood with him after the second crusade in 1150, having received it from the patriarch of Jerusalem following exceptional heroism during this crusade. More recent research suggests it was

one of a number of relics connected to the suffering of Christ, held in the Maria chapel of Constantinople. In 1203 the city fell into the hands of the crusaders and the Count of Flanders was chosen as the new emperor, with access to all the treasures the city held. The relic of the Holy Blood is first recorded in Bruges in 1256 and has been the subject of veneration ever since. The first known procession took place in 1291 with detailed records from 1303 onwards. Because the relic was city-owned the procession was civic, with horsemen, guildsmen and artisans, marksmen, city councillors and clergy carrying the relic around the city walls. But over time the veneration and spiritual importance of the relic became the main focus of the procession and remains so today.

In the 15th century Bruges was one of the most important commercial centres north of the Alps and this close relationship with the rest of Europe brought international trade and art to the city in abundance. The resulting guilds, chambers and brotherhoods are still strongly connected to the Ascension Day commemorations, presenting the historical and religious life of Bruges in a series of tableaux that winds its way through the narrow city streets.

The day starts at 10.45am when the Bishop of Bruges leaves the Bishop's Palace, accompanied by all the visiting international clergy, and processes into the cathedral. The first year we attended, the British representative came from Peterborough, joined by a few lucky congregants from the diocese. The cathedral was packed, standing room only, and we were lucky to be able to squeeze in. The service was mainly in Latin, with some Dutch, but also with some parts spoken in the language of the visitors. It was remarkably easy to follow and music was superb. For communion, the wafers were in large open baskets, and were passed along the lines of pews for everyone to take, while the Bishop took the wine on behalf of all present.

Following the service, we wandered around the streets, wondering where to stand for the afternoon's event. Large stands had been erected in the main squares but outside every shop, café, bank and restaurant, lining the streets, were rows of chairs, supplied by the proprietor of the establishment. For the

equivalent of 50p you could reserve a chair, a raffle ticket was stuck on it, and you were given the matching ticket to present later in the day. We were rather cynical, not really believing this would guarantee us a seat, but it did and with thousands of others we took our place at 2.45pm to witness the most spectacular procession.

Split into four parts, the procession depicts events from The Old Testament, the life of Christ from The New Testament, the historical deliverance of the relic from Jerusalem to Bruges, and finally the shrine containing the relic, escorted by the Noble Brotherhood of the Holy Blood and accompanied by religious and civic dignitaries.

It takes an hour and a half for the parade to pass any one point and starting with man's transgression in paradise, it moves on to Abraham, Joseph, Elijah. The parade pauses every 500 yards or so and the individual stories are enacted, allowing each part of the route to witness the tableaux in turn. Christ's life is told in full-scale scenarios – the shepherds travel with their sheep, not one or two, but flocks of thirty; the Magi arrive on camels – the noise of the Roman soldiers tramping (not marching) can be heard long before they come into view; the crowds on Palm Sunday really are crowds. To be chosen to play the role of the adult Christ is considered a great honour and people observe the last stages of his life in silence.

The depictions in the historical re-enactment featured the most glorious costumes, all authentic and lavishly adorned. It also featured a lot of large horses as the Count of Burgundy returned from the Crusades to Bruges and, when they passed, it became clear how narrow the streets were! This part of the day also included lots of music, with brass bands and choirs.

Finally, the most important part of the day, the fourth part of the procession, as the relic is carried through the streets, led by the Bishop of Bruges. The golden shrine dates from 1617 but throughout the ages has been enriched by gifts. It is set with hundreds of precious stones, among them the 'black diamond' from Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, and cameos and emeralds from various Belgian kings. Small golden statues decorate the niches of the shrine.

Every year the Bishop of Bruges invites a number of cardinals, bishops and prelates from all parts of the Christian world, to follow the shrine in the procession. To all who attend as spectators, the Brotherhood of the Holy Blood ask that they should uphold the deeply religious character of this event and thank the Lord for his grace bestowed on all peoples. As a token of esteem everyone is invited to stand and pray when the relic is carried past.

In the annual Procession guide the introduction is written by the Bishop of Bruges. The year we attended part of his message read: 'Good friends of

our diocese and dear visitors of the whole world. The annual procession of the Holy Blood has a great symbolic force for our own life. The scenes in the street bring the same joy and sadness, the same strong and weak moments, that we ourselves experience. I invite you to see the events with a pilgrim's eyes: someone who is searching, asking where does life lead me, where shall I find strength? The answer that is given in this procession is that Jesus Christ takes you with him to God; this is an invitation to renew your life, and in the stillness of your heart to meet God more intensely.'

It is an intensely atmospheric occasion, whether or not you believe the relic really does contain holy blood. Should you be in Bruges on a Friday, the Basilica of the Holy Blood is open for visitors to view the relic on the altar, the simple phial unadorned by its glorious shrine. People sit in silence and then take their turn to slowly mount the altar steps and venerate the relic. We joined the people in the Basilica and as you look at the phial you wonder, just wonder, if maybe, just maybe – who can say?

Alison Cockerill
St Cross, Wilstone

Being connected



The clergy are encouraged to take an annual retreat. For many years in my ministry, I didn't do this. However, in recent times I have started going away to

write either a Lent or Advent course for the parish. I think there is too much of the protestant work ethic in me to think that I can just go away and sit and think or pray. I need to do something tangible and practical. Let me be clear, these writing retreats aren't all work. I have combined them with my love of walking, and in fact, time walking alone helps the thinking and writing process. It allows that which I have read the night before to seep in and (hopefully) to make sense.

This year has been slightly different. The lockdowns have come at the wrong time so, when restrictions eased, with no particular project to focus on, I thought I would try to do this retreat thing properly. Why not go away by myself with no agenda, just time to think, and connect with God?

The first problem was going on 17 May (the first time you could with the lockdown easing). All of my usual haunts were either fully booked or ridiculously expensive. No problem there, camp instead. My tent, being my parents' tent, was over fifty years old so with the vagaries of the weather in the Lake District in Spring, I decided to borrow one of the scouts' tents and booked myself into the beautiful National Trust campsite in Great Langdale.

This is a place with great memories for me. At the head of the Langdale

Valley is the Band which leads up to Bow Fell. It was my father's favourite walk and it is the last walk he managed before he was hospitalised with cancer. Going back there roots

me to my family holidays, and walking with my friend Dan Pawlyn (we used to go miles and pick off a ridiculous number of fells with a level of fitness I can hardly imagine any more). What I had forgotten, however, was that the Langdale Valley, being a deep glacial valley, gets no mobile phone signal and the campsite certainly doesn't have wi-fi. I might be connected to my past but I was disconnected from my present. Getting away from work might be good, not being able to share WhatsApp messages with the kids and being able to phone Jane was less good.

I am not a great one for phone conversations. Jane would probably say I'm not one for ordinary conversations either. However, not being able to be in touch was odd. Should I embrace this isolation? Back when Dan and I walked, my parents would drop us off and then we would meet them at some undetermined time later. There was no way of calling to say the weather is good, we have added in a few more peaks and will be a couple more hours. I suspect, looking back, there were many anxious hours from them seeing if they could spot us coming off the fells.

Today we have got used to the ubiquity of a quick text message or call



to catch up. Although I couldn't call from the campsite, up on the peaks I could call home, and I did. However, even this obsession with communication technology is nothing compared to some. There are people who track each other's phones. Youth who use SnapChat can see where all of their friends are through the mapping feature – that feels a bit stalky to me. Maybe I should have used the time to embrace being totally out of contact, or is that purely a time gone by?

So what about connectivity with God? This, of course, is the point of a retreat. I think my conclusion is that without a specific bit of work to do, at best I would be marked as a 'C': could do better. It is, I suspect, one of those things which get better with practice. However, having said that, there were moments alone in the hills, feeling far more tired than I should have been (lockdown was harder on my fitness than I realised) with just an equally tired dog for company, when a sense of huge peace filled me. The fells were still pretty empty with not many walkers. You could sit and hear only the sound of the wind. To be filled with the breath of God, maybe you don't need moments of great insight, just sitting and 'being' in the presence of God in God's creation.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

A meeting with our MP



On Friday 28 May the Justice & Peace Group was very pleased to have the opportunity of meeting virtually with Mr Gagan Mohindra, MP for South West Hertfordshire,

which includes Tring. We were very grateful to him for giving his time to meet with us and to address the questions we put to him about relief of poverty and climate change – world issues which the Justice & Peace Group believe are opportune to pursue at this time given the G7 meeting in June and COP26 in November. Our government has a great opportunity as host of both meetings to influence world governments to behave in a way which would be of enormous benefit to the world and everyone within it.

Following discussions among members of the J&P Group it was agreed that three questions should be put to our MP. After I posed each of the questions as the Group Secretary, Mr Mohindra responded. After each response there were supplementary questions, so the meeting took the form of a discussion.

Question 1

150 million people are set to fall into extreme poverty as a result of the pandemic. But instead of increasing support to fight global poverty and support the global recovery, the UK government is slashing the aid budget this year. With 2021 being the year that the UK has a leadership role to play on the global stage, we are saddened to see Britain turning its back on the world like this. Will you support our calls to increase the quantity and quality of UK spending on overseas aid?

Response

I have to politely decline. The global pandemic has meant that the Chancellor has had to make difficult decisions, and consequently, the UK government has spent a lot of money. I appreciate the reduction from 0.7% of GDP to 0.5% on aid and a smaller GDP has meant a double whammy. I'm hoping that as we come out of this pandemic, we will come back bigger and stronger. I know there is an aspiration to return to 0.7%.

Supplementary Question 1a

Julian Eaton, High Street Baptist Church: *The consequence has been very bad*

for Britain's reputation abroad. I work in global health. We spend a lot of time working out how to spend the money allocated. What's most painful is not just that the money has been cut but the fact that we've cut money for the most vulnerable people.

Response

I will feed this information back to my colleagues. As we come out of the pandemic, I hope we will introduce more funding. I understand, though, the rationale for taking the decision. It's not the place any of us wants to be.

Supplementary Question 1b

Olive Conway, Corpus Christi Church: *People all over the world need vaccines. Are vaccines included in the cuts? 'None of us are safe until all of us are safe.'*

Response

I would be shocked if vaccines are included in the cuts. After all, we receive medicines ourselves from other countries. If you hear anything which conflicts with what I've said, then please let me know.

Question 2

Pope Francis has been clear in his calls for debt cancellation and the head of the World Bank has said that more debt cancellation is essential for low-income countries. We know that cancelling debts is the easiest way to allow poorer countries to recover from the pandemic. Will you support our calls for full debt cancellation for low-income countries that need it?

Response

The idea of debt cancellation is right. I'm a firm believer in the soft power that Britain has, and questions of debt reduction can allow us to set conditions with regard to certain other issues within some of these countries.

Supplementary Question 2a

Julian Eaton, High Street Baptist Church: *Anyone who works in international development knows it's not non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that will change the world, it's international trade.*

Response

Trade is very important. I know when I speak to Department of Trade ministers that if we argue just on price we will always lose.

Supplementary Question 2b

Michael Demidecki, Corpus Christi Church: *The G20 countries have suspended debt until the end of 2021. But private creditors have so far refused to take part in these debt suspension efforts of those wealthiest countries. The UK is the key jurisdiction for international debt contracts. The UK parliament has passed legislation in the past to protect poor countries from being sued by lenders who refuse to participate in internationally agreed debt deals. We need the government to act now and update the law to prevent this immoral practice. Would you write to the Chancellor asking for his support for new legislation to prevent a debt crisis?*

Response

Mr Mohindra indicated he would like further information and so Michael Demidecki continued as below.

It was in 2010 the UK passed the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act. This prevented any creditors suing one of 40 countries eligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for more than the creditor would have got if they had taken part in the debt relief.

Question 3

Millions of our sisters and brothers worldwide are already facing the reality of the climate crisis, with homes, livelihoods and loved ones at risk from more frequent and more severe storms, floods and droughts. Yet it is the world's richest countries, including the UK, who bear the greatest responsibility for the greenhouse gas emissions driving temperature rises. What will you do to ensure that our government takes the climate crisis seriously at COP26 and that an agreement is reached that ensures we stay within 1.5 degrees of global average warming?

Response

This is a really important subject. There is gathering momentum and Government is starting to talk about COP26. We saw with the Paris Climate Accord that if big parties walk away, we fall over. So there needs to be a coalition effort and we need to use our diplomatic skills. We need to treat sovereign nations with respect and help developing countries.

Supplementary Question 3a

Polly Eaton, High Street Baptist Church: *I appreciate that we cannot do this by ourselves, but we can lead. We can say what we think the future could look like.*

Response

In the run-up to COP26 you will see a lot more coming out. We will talk about a decarbonisation plan for transport; I am a PPS in the Department of Transport. We need to encourage innovation and influence change rather than force it, improve design standards and well thought through planning strategies like the Local Plan.

Supplementary Question 3b

Nicky Bull, High Street Baptist Church: *What do you think about local plans when we don't include a better environmental plan? I'm concerned that the government have not introduced building regulations that would ensure all new-build housing and other premises are constructed to the highest possible sustainability and environmental standards.*

Response

We need better sustainable strategies. By way of background, I used to be a Councillor in Essex. I still remember the situation before local plans were introduced. Local plans are better than that. They should give the opportunity for people to say where they want housing to be built to a certain standard. So, I would encourage the community to speak

to their local councillors and influence change at grass roots level.

Supplementary Question 3c

Nicky Bull, High Street Baptist Church: *What would be your experience of how much lobbying local councillors can achieve when it comes to building standards?*

Response

It seems we are in the hands of the local councils. If we want property to be of a certain quality, it can be extremely expensive. What do we do with those properties built in the early 60s/70s which would cost a great deal to be brought up to scratch? Developers just wish to know what standards are needed. I believe there's enough existing regulation for the local government arena to get the result it is hoping to achieve.

Comment on response

Nicky Bull, High Street Baptist Church: *It is my understanding that it will be difficult if not impossible for local people to influence the standards to which housing is built. The President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, The Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Mayor of London are among those who have raised significant concerns about the fact that once local housing plans have been finalised, there will be little or no opportunity for communities to influence subsequent development. Surely what is needed is a strengthening of the national building regulations*

in favour of genuine environmental sustainability?

Supplementary Question 3d

Polly Eaton, High Street Baptist Church: *It should be a rule. Something we can do right now is to say no new house will use natural gas?*

Response

The question is what is there now in the marketplace? There will be some flexibility, but I don't think we can impose this and expect it to happen tomorrow.

Supplementary Question 3d

Olive Conway, Corpus Christi Church: *With regard to the standard of new house building, improvements are being made especially with regard to the use of solar panels. When I sold houses for developers standards were more environmentally friendly. Hopefully this will continue?*

Response

I will look into it and this should be part of the Local Plan process.

In concluding, Michael Demidecki thanked Mr Mohindra very much for meeting with us. He said he felt the discussion had been most useful and hoped we would meet with him again on future occasions. Mr Gagan Mohindra MP is a Tring resident.

Michael Demidecki
Corpus Christi

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The things that clutter up my home!



My first recollection of any form of hobby started when I was about 8 or 9 years old. My dad brought home an envelope of old stamps that one of his work colleagues had offered him after inheriting his great aunts' substantial collection. Needless to say, the ones in the envelope were duplicates and of no value other than as a good start for a young would-be collector. These stamps just caught my imagination.

The only atlas we had in our house was one that had belonged to my mum – pre-WWII! Dad helped me find the countries and then we used an old encyclopaedia to sort out the unrecognisable names. I remember Helvetia and Suomi and Magyar Posta (Switzerland, Finland and Hungary) in particular. Then there were fascinating names such as Bechuanaland, Tanganyika and Myanmar.

I'm never quite sure whether my parents conspired to provide me with a sedentary hobby as I was rather a tomboy and always 'on the go'. The stamps appeared one autumn and – low and behold – a stamp album, along with stamp hinges, appeared as a Christmas present. Whatever the reason, I was hooked and continued actively collecting well into the 1980s. By that time stamp collecting was becoming rather an unfashionable hobby. I continue to keep the few stamps that are sent to me from different parts of the world. Alas letter writing is declining also.

About five years ago I gathered up my numerous stamp albums and thought I might give them to Rennie Grove as I had only added about three Christmas stamps every year for a considerable time. Never looked at, they were cluttering up my shelves. However, as soon as I started to leaf through the pages, I just couldn't part with them. The story of my life was reflected in those stamps. For example, I have many Nigerian stamps from my two years as a VSO and Lebanese stamps from the six months Mike and

I spent there before the civil war. Then there are the stamps from relatives in the USA and Australia, our own visits to New Zealand and Canada and USA. My mum brought me special edition stamps from Guernsey when she went there with Dundale School in the late 1960s and 70s. Every year, new events and inventions were recorded on UK stamps; First flight of Concorde, maiden voyage of QE2, the moon landing and so on. A real visual history lesson. The original stamps from that envelope are also still there too.

As a young teenager I had many interests although little evidence of them remains. For a short time, my bedroom shelves were adorned with airfix models – not of planes and ships – but historical figures. I had about ten in all. I remember Henry VIII, Richard the Lionheart, a Beefeater and a Roundhead soldier. These were probably disposed of when I was in my early 20s and it was obvious that I wasn't returning to Tring to live. I remember Mum asked me if I wanted to take them away and I said no. It would have been quite 'uncool' to have them in my shared flat. ('Uncool' hadn't been invented as a word at the time!)

As a teenager I spent a lot of time dressmaking. (That could be an article in itself probably entitled 'The trials of a very tall teenager with enormous feet!') Reading has also been a lifelong pastime. At one point, not so long ago, I counted at least 400 paperbacks (mostly novels) in our home. There are now only a few. If you buy a book, read it, then leave it a shelf for years, the pages go yellow and spines crack. So about ten years ago, we sorted out those we wanted to read again and sent the others to a charity shop. Gradually, as I read my favourites again, some were also dispensed with. I still read avidly either using my kindle or going to the library. That was a real de-cluttering.

Throughout my life I have enjoyed being active and spent a good deal of time playing sport of one sort or another. I still go swimming and play table tennis. I started Tai Chi, which is really good exercise for the mind and body. Walking is something I do every day if possible. Whether it is walking into town and back again or going on a

longer walk in our beautiful countryside, I think it is so important to keep moving for as long as I can. I have always been happy to try anything once. So potholing, climbing, skating, skiing, paragliding, bungee jumping, white water rafting, wild water swimming and snorkelling are all activities that I tried. All very exhilarating, but not for me now!

Postcards, theatre programmes and sugar sachets were other items I collected avidly from my teenage years until my 30s and 40s. The sugar sachets, from all over the world, were ditched first as they started to disintegrate. The postcards and theatre programmes went as our children also started to accumulate 'stuff', and as a family we started to run out of space in our house.

Periodically I have spent time water colour painting but I am not a natural and often find other more active things to do. The same applies to my genealogy research and doing jigsaws; definitely winter hobbies.

In the summer my main activity is gardening. I'm not particularly good at it, and I can't remember plant names, but I like growing vegetables and at one point, I shared an allotment with my friend Rose. Now with raised beds in the back garden I can grow enough for two of us. There is nothing better than picking things just before cooking. Fresh carrots and tomatoes in summer, broccoli, parsnips and chard in winter months, taste wonderful. No matter how good (or bad) I am at caring for the plants, gardening is immensely therapeutic and I am out in our little plot most days unless it rains!

If you look around my home now you will see few traditional ornaments, other than the little ceramic animals my children bought me when they were small. The majority of items are those collected on travels around the world: thorn carvings from Nigeria, a ring of cedar tree from the Lebanon, fossils from Scotland and Australia, shells from Fiji and New Zealand, fossilized wood from Arizona and Canada plus rocks from many other places. Truly I've been fortunate in having the opportunity to travel.

Vicky Baldock
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COP 26 Glasgow



There is much optimistic talk about climate action, but to me it all sounds rather hollow and wishful thinking: much chat, but not much money! It is a far more complex problem than

our current crop of politicians would have you believe. Most of them will have left the public arena well before the really hard issues arise. There are already clear winners and losers emerging. Canada and Russia will see major climate improvements for example. Central Africa looks like becoming a disaster area.

Things are not looking too good for COP 26. Apart from anything else, Covid-19 concerns may well prevent a full attendance. Will delegate numbers be significantly reduced with representatives from some major countries being refused entry to Scotland, even if the UK government and the Biden administration in the USA support it?

'Zoom' is at best only a weak and partial answer.

COP stands for 'Conference of the Parties', and will hopefully be attended by representatives of the countries that have signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – a treaty agreed in 1994.

COP 26 GLASGOW



1st – 12th NOVEMBER 2021

This last year has put COP on its back foot. It has lost momentum for several reasons and will struggle to regain it. For a start, its annual conference was postponed in 2020 for a year because of Covid-19.

The UN itself was started up with the best of intentions, but it seems to have lost its focus. I worked on and off for the UN from 1967 to 1983 in a number of roles including as an employee and as a contractor. I saw both its strengths and its weaknesses.

Powerful national and special interest groups have successfully subverted it to promote their interests, and UN senior management seems powerless



to stop them. The international climate change lobby (UNFCCC) is one of those groups.

The proposed conference centre venue is shown here. It is clearly a very attractive focus and has done much to support Scotland's drive for more independence. Glasgow, however, has been lucky to keep its host position.

The queue to host COPs is long. Many cities are fighting to get on the list. The Glasgow COP will not be postponed again and the next one (COP27) will almost certainly be held elsewhere whatever happens.

Most of my working life has been spent as a professional engineer. As an integral part of it I attended a number of conferences literally all around the world. I went to most as a representative of private sector organisations and presented papers at two of them (Frankfurt, Germany, 1981 and Santiago, Chile, 1986); the pattern was almost standard.

Formal conference duration was usually three to five days, coupled with fringe informal events, potential supplier and customer meetings/ hospitality, commercial presentations and visits to operating sites. Part of the work, apart from being a representative of my employer(s), was professional networking.

The fairly recent climate conference at Katowice (see illustration) had a reported 14,000 delegates from just under 200 countries and lasted almost two weeks. This meant an average seventy representatives per country. The pattern of the conference appeared broadly similar to my experiences.

Conferences are a major international business. In addition to the delegates there is a large number of professional organisers, local support and administration staff, as well as all the

service personnel needed to look after the transport, domestic and hospitality needs of delegates. I estimate that in total over 20,000 people were involved. The numbers grow with each new COP.

For Katowice it has been a major economic stimulus. It could be the same for Glasgow, if it happens as planned. My estimate of a full Glasgow conference cost is US\$300 million. These conferences are held at the rate of one a year. Allowing for more delegates as each conference expands, and for inflation, we are talking of US\$ four billion a decade and rising.



Who pays? Largely thee and me via the UN, British Government Overseas Aid, and historically the EU. What have they achieved climatically that we can quantify? In my view, very little, either short or medium term.

What will be the main result of the Glasgow conference? A decision on where to hold the next one (please excuse my cynicism).

Now, what might we do with that notional three hundred million US\$ (say £250 million plus) of public money a year if it were applied directly to the agriculture of the poorest countries in Central Africa that, as said already, will be hit hard by a climate change over which they will have minimal, if any, control? Answers please, in writing.

Bill Bradford
St Peter & St Paul

Hello again!



A while ago, I was flicking through my illustrated Bible and looking at my favourite stories and I found the one where God tested Abraham's faith. God tells Abraham

to sacrifice his only son and to return Isaac to him. Abraham had complete faith in God and nearly killed his only son, when God stopped him and told him he had proven himself.

So my godmother and I had a big discussion about the meaning of faith and trust and whether they were the same thing. In the end, with the help of an English Dictionary, we came to the conclusion that faith is the belief in the things that cannot always be seen and that faith and trust are the same thing, with faith being a slightly stronger version of trust.

One of the reasons that we decided on this was to imagine that your friend

told everyone your secret and you lost trust in them. But although you didn't trust them, there was still some faith that remained strong. Trust can be broken but faith is eternal.

So how do we build up our trust in God?

You see, some people might have trust, but are not yet ready to have ultimate faith in God. This is okay because it takes time to trust anyone like that.

An example I find helpful is to imagine that there is a toy or a book or an ornament that you really, really want but can't yet afford. So you begin saving up by putting a few pennies in your jar each day, until, a few weeks later, your money box is full and you go and buy that gift that you really wanted and you feel completely happy. Now imagine that the gift you really want is complete faith in God and that each of those pennies are little things that you do which build up your trust in God until you reach the level where you trust God

with everything. It doesn't have to be anything massive, for pennies are not worth much at all, but when you put them all together you get something worth a lot more.

Maybe it could just be something like having to make a tricky decision and praying to God for guidance. Eventually you will reach a point where you have complete faith in God.

Something that ties in nicely to this example is one of Mother Teresa's famous quotes: 'We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.'

Your faith in God would be less without each and every one of those times that you trusted God. So try thinking about building on your relationship and getting more faith in God – it'll be worth it!

Fern Asquith
High Street Baptist Church

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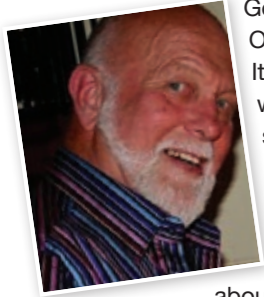
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COMMENT

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

Letter from Orkney



Good morning from Orkney everyone. It is lovely and warm, the sun is shining and the sea is glistening, the grass is green, lambs are bouncing about in the fields and life is looking pretty good. Except, the builders have started today. In Orkney this is normally a reason for breaking open the bubbles but NOT at 7.30am.

I had forgotten this hour existed and especially at present with my unfortunate circumstances requiring thirty minutes to get out of bed and shower, plus thirty minutes for having my shoes put on and breakfast, it means I have to move at 6.30am at the latest. Those who know me will also know this is a complete anathema, trying to have a site meeting – gulping strong coffee with matchsticks under my eye lids is not a good look.

Did you know the sun shines at that time? Looks like I'm going to have to get used to it for the next two weeks.

The good news is, visitors are piling up here, every hotel and guest house is fully booked, houses are extremely difficult to buy and builders, plumbers and electricians are like hen's teeth, so all in all, Orkney has sprung back to life, which is great news for local businesses, which will in turn be great news for Orkney Island Council and eventually great news for us by way of local facilities.

Here's a quick and incredibly easy simple VEGGIE Pasta AND it's tasty.

Mac Dodge
St Mary's, Stromness

VEGGIE Pasta

Really quick, really tasty. I've done it twice when I couldn't spend hours doing preparation but wanted a good meal.

Ingredients:

- Two packs cherry tomatoes
- Three small packs of basil leaves
- Three cloves garlic
- One medium chilli
- One packet of feta cheese
- Salt & Pepper
- Olive oil

Method:

- Take two packs of cherry tomatoes and pierce them as you would sausages. Put them in a casserole dish with an eggcup of olive oil and a good twist of ground pepper. Then place one complete feta cheese on top as a block and a small drizzle of olive oil and set aside.
- Finely Chop two packs of Basil with 3 cloves of garlic and set aside.
- Put a saucepan of water (salted) on the heat for the pasta and measure out 75g of tagliatelle per person (maximum of 300g for four people).
- Heat the oven to 220c and put tomatoes and feta in for 15 mins max.
- While this is going on chop one more pack of basil with a medium chilli pepper and set aside.
- Set the pasta cooking for 15 mins once your water is on the boil.
- Remove the casserole and mix tomatoes, oil and cheese which is now soft and add in the chopped basil and garlic. Mix well.
- Briefly pop back into oven for 5 mins then add basil and chilli and serve.

The Beatitudes and social media

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends eight beautiful qualities. But what do the Beatitudes mean for social media and life online?

- > **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**
I will remember that my identity comes from being made and loved by God, not from my online profile.
- > **Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted**
This world is full of grief and suffering. I will tread softly and post with gentleness and compassion.
- > **Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth**
I will not boast or brag online, nor will I pull others down.
- > **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled**
There are many wrongs to be righted. I will not be afraid to name them and look for justice in the world.
- > **Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy**
I will not judge others but be generous online. I will be conscious of my own failings.
- > **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God**
I will be truthful and honest, and I will not pretend to be what I am not.
- > **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God**
I will seek to reconcile those of different views with imagination and good humour.
- > **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**
I will not add to the store of hate in the world, but I will try to be courageous in standing up for what is right and true.



Bible verses are Matthew 5:1-10 (NRSV).
Social media commentary by the
Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford.

What is Whit Sunday?



Whitsunday or Whit Sunday or Whitsun is the Christian Holy Day of Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples. Whitsuntide is the week following Whitsunday. Pentecost

was on the Jewish day of harvest – Shavuot. The Whitsunday islands in the Great Barrier Reef are so named as Captain Cook discovered them on The Day of Pentecost 1770. However, as the international date line did not exist then, it was actually the day after!

Pentecost is seen as the first day of the Christian Church's existence – so is the birthday of Christianity. Pentecost comes from the Greek Pentekostos or fifty, as it is fifty days after the final Sabbath of Passover. This means it falls on a different day each year. It is not known when Whitsunday was first celebrated, but there is a reference to it in the 2nd century in an Eastern Church document. The early church had a period with Easter Sunday the first day and Whitsunday the last day which was the Pascal fifty-day season of Pentecost.

Whit, or wit is old English for white. Some believe that Whitsunday comes from the fact that those being baptised into the church on Whitsunday (very common in the early church) were dressed in white. In the North West there are still Whit Walks which are Whitsunday parades with brass bands and the young ladies all dressed in white. These Whit Walks were also called Walks of Witness with all the churches taking part behind their own brass band – a bit different from Tring's silent Walk of Witness on Good Friday. There is also an Anglo-Saxon word wit meaning 'understanding' and others believe the name comes from the fact that the disciples received understanding on Pentecost. The first official English reference to Whitsunday was in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI in 1549 when the day was named

Whitsunday officially.

Traditionally Pentecost/ Whitsunday was one of the three main days of the Christian calendar. Christmas Day, Easter Day and Whitsunday. These were the three days in the year when taking communion was compulsory for all Christians if they wished to maintain their standing as communicants. It was a very important day. It is also known as Trinity Sunday in the Eastern Church (but not in the Western Church where Trinity Sunday is the Sunday after Pentecost).

The medieval church in England celebrated the whole of Whitsuntide as a major holiday. During Whitsuntide the serfs and villeins were temporarily freed from serving their Lord of the Manor and spent the week in festivities. There were fairs, pageants and general merry making with Morris dancing, cudgelling, wrestling and racing. After industrialisation the week was still kept as a holiday when all the machinery in factories could be mended and maintained.

In 1485 Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur has the Knights of the Round Table having a vision of the Holy Grail on Whitsunday – leading to their quest for the Grail and many stories based on this including The Da Vinci Code.

The early church had a ceremony called Whitsun Eve. Most being accepted into the church would profess their faith, be baptised and receive their first communion on Easter Sunday after a vigil the night before called Easter Vigil. Others would attend an evening vigil the night before Whitsunday when six prophesies would be read out followed by baptism. The newly baptised Christians would then be dressed in white. These two days for baptism were the first day and the last day of Pentecost Pascal Season.

There is a theological discussion around the concept that the old Jewish



Pentecost El Greco c1600

Temple ceased to exist with Christ's death and the church had the new Temple given through the tongues of fire that descended on the apostles at Pentecost. The argument is that 'the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is a description of the inaugurated eschatological descent to earth of the heavenly temple to establish God's end-time people as a part of this temple'. I find this a complicated argument and prefer to see Pentecost as the inauguration of the Christian church and its mission.

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

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Anthony Kent
Tring School Chair of Governors

Attempt great things for God



This is part two of an article that began in the June edition of Comment.

During our time in Congo we worked in three mission stations. The local chief had agreed with Grenfell that missionaries could live and work in Upoto and in 1890 the Peace dropped Frederick Oram and William Forfeitt on the bank of the river there.

You can imagine the situation. They knew nobody. The people knew nothing about these strange white men who had come to live among them. The missionaries spoke not a word of their language and none of them spoke any English. They had to find somewhere to live and food to eat and had to deal with the tropical climate. They had no means of communicating with the outside world. Other missionaries arrived soon afterwards to work with them.



The priority for the missionaries was to learn the language – initially by just listening to ordinary people talking and trying to communicate with them. It required great skill and patience but they did learn to speak the language of the Bapoto people among whom they were living. They started to translate parts of the Bible and to talk to people about Jesus. They were soon able to take the gospel into the surrounding area. The language had never been written down and they recorded it in writing for the first time. Health was always a problem and Frederick Oram died and was buried in Upoto in 1894 at the age of 29.

The first local people were converted and baptised in 1896. They were Likundu and Limanima, who had worked closely with Oram. Many others followed and they played a crucial part in the evangelisation of the surrounding area. Youngsters were taught to read and basic medical care was provided. Relationships

with the local people were generally good. Some tribes could be rather warlike and inter-tribal conflicts sometimes resulted in violent situations.



During this period commercial companies looking for rubber and ivory moved into the country. Their treatment of the Congolese population was often appalling. They were used as unpaid slave labour and were severely punished if they did not provide the companies with enough rubber and ivory. People in this area and all over the country suffered terribly. It is estimated that over a period of about twenty years 10 million people in Congo died as a result of this commercialisation. Missionaries and others reported what was happening and eventually international pressure resulted in the expulsion of these companies and a total reorganisation of the Congolese state.

Over the years the Christian community at Upoto grew in size and churches led by African pastors were created in many villages in a large area around Upoto itself on both sides of the river. In 1935 a hospital was built in Pimu, on the other side of the river, providing medical care for people over a huge area (our son Julian was born there). It was staffed by BMS missionaries and medical staff whom they had trained.



Congo became independent in 1960 but for some years things were very unstable. There was serious civil unrest all over the country in support of different potential leaders. There was fighting in the Upoto area in which church members were

killed although no missionaries were hurt. At this time the churches along the river, started by missionaries from the BMS, joined together to form the CBFC (Baptist Community of the River Congo) which was independent of the BMS.

When we arrived in Congo in 1968 peace had been restored in most areas. All the churches in the region of Upoto were now led by Congolese pastors. Church leaders invited missionaries to work with them when needed. At Upoto there were BMS missionaries working under the leadership of the Congolese pastor. There were teachers, a lady working with women in the church and a nurse midwife providing healthcare in the surrounding area, fields in which qualified Congolese were still in very short supply.



Upoto itself had a large primary school, a medical centre and a secondary school. The church had several thousand members in Upoto and surrounding villages. Many children in the area were in primary schools run by the church. Students who passed through the secondary school often became teachers or worked in government administration.

I was initially responsible for the Secondary school, which among other things involved building classrooms for it. I later became responsible for all the church schools in the region. This involved a lot of travelling. Jennie looked after our children, did some teaching in the school and worked with women in the church and the church leadership team.

From early in the 20th century protection had been available against malaria and with appropriate care health was no longer such a serious problem. Languages, however, were still a challenge. Secondary school work and official business was in French – primary schools, church work and communication with almost everybody else was in Lingala, one of five state languages. Church services were in both Lingala and Lingombe (another local language).

While we were in Upoto, BMS

missionaries and Congolese Christians finished translating the whole Bible into Lingala and it was printed and made available. It was all very exciting and many people walked for miles to get their copy. What a privilege it was to be there at that time!



Today the church in Congo is strong and independent. There are no longer any BMS missionaries working in the country – all the work they had been doing having rightly been taken over by Congolese people. At Upoto the schools and medical work continue and the church, recognising the lack of careers in the locality for students completing secondary school, has created a university department in Upoto – training teachers, midwives and hospital technicians. There is also a pastors' training school. The senior pastor is now Pastor Gbamo, who leads over a hundred pastors working in surrounding villages.

We were very privileged to share in the work of the church in Upoto. It continues to grow although it is not

without problems. Pastors are being trained but there are never enough to meet the need. Distances are huge, transport is often unavailable and pastors and churches are often very isolated. The country is one of the poorest in Africa and that affects life for everybody. Everything, from Bibles to fuel and building materials, is very expensive.

The government is inadequate and often corrupt. There is still serious fighting in the east of the country where there are also outbreaks of Ebola and of Covid-19. We pray that younger generations will be able to solve some of country's enormous problems and achieve its real potential.

Today the BMS works in about thirty-five different countries supporting local churches financially and with personnel. Missionaries still have a variety of roles – as evangelists, and in training teachers and pastors, and medical workers. There are also engineers digging wells to provide clean water, lawyers working with oppressed people, agricultural workers and others providing relief when natural disasters occur. The vision in every case remains the same – to bring people to faith in Jesus and to enable them to experience the abundant life only available through him.

'Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God!' was Carey's great hope for the BMS in 1790. The Holy Spirit is working through his people all over the world. Great things have been achieved and will continue to

be so. The financial and prayer support of Baptist churches in this country enables all this to happen.

'For all the saints who from their labours rest' we sing. We have been thinking of the saints who through the years have been involved in bringing the good news of Jesus to Congo and to Upoto in particular. That church exists through the prayer and support of Christians in this country. The Christians in Upoto belong to the same church of Jesus Christ that we do. In some ways things are very different but we worship the same God, believe that Jesus is his Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit. What a privilege to be part of this worldwide church witnessing to God's glory.

It is interesting to note that today the biggest and most active Christian churches in the world are no longer in Europe but in Africa and South America. Indeed, many of these churches are themselves sending missionaries to other parts of the world, including to Europe.

When we first arrived in Congo we went to church on Sundays. Services were very long and we didn't understand a word! However, we were able to follow Communion services and knew what was happening and we quickly learnt the Lord's Prayer in Lingala – the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples and that is shared by Christians throughout the world.

Chris Sugg

Feedback



I enjoyed reading the article by Chris Sugg in the June edition of Comment and it made me think of a club I used to go to at High Street Baptist Church many years ago when I was about

8 years old.

It was on a Monday evening and was run by Nell Goodman and her husband, Bernard. It was called Ropeholders because the idea was that it supported missionaries. We used to take twopence a week and would then be given a stamp to stick in a book and when, and if, completed, it would tell the story of William Carey, the great Baptist missionary. We would play games for much of the evening and a favourite was 'Stations'. This involved

us being given the name of a railway station and then two would be called out and we would have to run to change places whilst the person in the middle tried to intercept them. I'm afraid we weren't very well travelled because I remember we were called Stations such as Aston Clinton and New Mill, but it was all good fun and I enjoyed going along each week.

At every meeting we used to sing the Ropeholders' hymn shown in the panel here. It was an introduction to missionaries and what they did. Dated words in the song but it meant well, I'm sure. The problem was that when I was playing skipping games with my friends my dad used to say that as a Ropeholder, I should have always been the ender!

Thelma Fisher
High Street Baptist Church

*Down the mines for buried treasure
See our gallant comrades go
Down into the lonely darkness
Seeking lost ones far below
"Hold the ropes" their voices calling
"Hold the ropes" the while we bring
Back from depths of sin and sorrow
Gems most precious for our king*

(Twiddly bit then played by Nell on the piano before the chorus)

*"Hold the ropes, then hold them bravely
Hold them firmly to the end
Oh remember, Oh remember,
Precious lives on you depend."*

Mrs Humphry Ward – social reformer and novelist

For a short period from 1892 – 1920 the small village of Aldbury was high on the cultural map. A famous author and activist, Mary Augusta Ward had bought the 185-acre estate of Stocks with its imposing mansion and attractive gardens. Round her flocked the intellectual greats of the day: the historian Trevelyan (married to her daughter), the novelist Henry James, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, Lewis Carroll, the Darwins, Gladstone – all were her friends and often her guests. Added to which were visits from her own eminent relations – Dr Arnold of Rugby was her grandfather, Matthew Arnold, the poet, her uncle, her sister married a Huxley and we can imagine the Huxley children, Aldous and Julian, playing around the pond.

Born in Tasmania, the family moved back to England, and Mary's childhood was unsettled as her father often changed jobs (and religion), eventually becoming a Professor of English in Oxford. There she extended her knowledge, became proficient in French, German, Italian and Spanish, read widely and lapped up the controversies and questions of the day, especially those concerning faith. This was the time when the established church was challenged by the ideas of Darwin's 'Origin of Species' and the reality of Jesus' miracles and the Resurrection questioned by books like Strauss's 'Das Leben Jesus' and Renan's 'Rational and Critical Christianity'. Equally challenging were the 'High Church' ideas of Newman and Keble, promoting a rigorous practice



of faith and the importance of belief. Add to this Frederick Maurice and Christian Socialism and the arguments were extreme and often angry. This was the stuff of Oxford debate that influenced the young Mary Arnold.

At the age of 21 Mary Arnold married Humphry Ward, a writer and journalist and started a writing career of her own, soon to surpass that of her husband. In 1888 her novel 'Robert Elsmere' was published, an instant best-seller with more than a million copies sold in the UK and the US. This was no sentimental Victorian story – although the love interest is strong, but a serious attempt to portray, through fiction, the conflict tearing apart the Church of England at that time. It is indeed a novel with a purpose and in its own right a genuine historical resource for the ideas of the period.

The novel explores the religious ideas of the day with the result that Elsmere has a crisis of belief and gives up his position as a vicar in leafy Surrey and goes to the East End of London and sets up an adult centre where the working man can gain an education and search for truth. The story echoes reality, for Mrs Humphry Ward herself proved to be a remarkable social reformer. She was part of the movement to extend Oxford education to women and helped found Somerville College. She set up the first school for disabled children, started the idea of play centres for the children of working women, and founded what became (and still exists) the Mary Ward Settlement for adult education.

In 1908 she visited the United States where she dined with President Roosevelt, a link she exploited later on behalf of the British cause in WWI. Her book 'England's Effort' had a real influence on the US deciding to enter the war. Dedicated to Roosevelt it took the form of letters based on her tours of munitions works and personal experience of the worst conditions of the western front, the only woman given permission to go behind the lines.

Considering all this cultural activity and social awareness it seems quite paradoxical that she was the founding President of the 'Women's National Anti-Suffrage League. She believed strongly that 'constitutional, legal, financial, military and international problems should

be only solved by men'. Perhaps that explains why she only ever referred to herself as 'Mrs Humphrey Ward'.

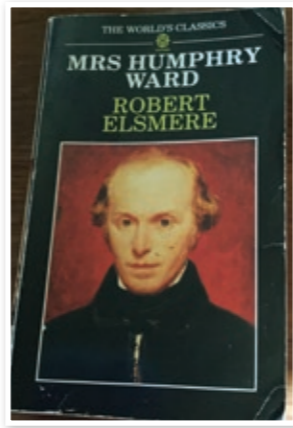
Tolstoy is reputed to have said that she was amongst the greatest English novelists – certainly the novels of her later years (she wrote twenty four) are considered to be less successful and the result of a need to make money rather than achieve literary quality. All her novels are notable for their evocative settings and natural description and several are set in what is recognisable as Aldbury, 'Marcella' and 'Bessie Costrell' being the most interesting for their local colour. A number are still in print or available on kindle and 'Robert Elsmere' can be accessed on line (and is well worth a read).



She died in 1920 of a heart attack aged 68 and you can find her grave in the churchyard at Aldbury. There she lies, a perpetual reminder of a past age when Stocks was known as the home of a remarkable and accomplished woman. Was she a Victorian anti-feminist or a new woman activist? Basically conservative, she nevertheless could not resist the tides of reform that washed around her in the intellectually stirring society in which she lived.

Stocks was not to be so famous again until the Bunny Club arrived, and that's another story!

Caroline Ellwood
St John the Baptist, Aldbury



Tweet of the month

I am sure most people are aware that birds make noises – most birds call and a good number of them also sing and these are collectively known as songbirds. Songbirds are typically smallish land birds, i.e. not birds of prey, ducks, geese and seabirds. It will probably come as no surprise to be told that the warblers are songbirds – the name rather gives it away.

Most of the warblers found in Britain are migrants and visit this country for the summer and spend the winter in Africa. We do have a few resident species such as Dartford and Cetti's Warblers. We also have a few species that are a curious mix of summer and winter visitors – Chiffchaff and Blackcap being the best examples of this. Basically Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps from southern Europe and North Africa migrate here in spring and leave in the autumn. Where they differ is that Chiffchaffs from northern Europe move to here for the winter, whereas Blackcaps from central Europe, notably Germany, come here for the milder winters we enjoy.

Anyway Blackcap is the one I want to focus on this month. Firstly the male lives up to its name and does indeed

have a black cap – the female is brown. Otherwise they are a fairly plain grey and brown bird, with a hint of olive thrown in. However, what they arguably lack in looks they make up for by being accomplished songsters. Indeed they are sometimes confused with Nightingale – undoubtedly our most famous songster. It is thought that the Nightingale singing in Berkeley Square was most likely a Blackcap, which are happy to overwinter in people's gardens and are frequently seen in London.

The Blackcap's scientific name is *Sylvia atricapilla* and *atricapilla* means black-haired and it is easy to see why it was given this name. When I was growing up there was a sub-group of warblers known as *Sylvia* warblers and while Blackcap is still a *Sylvia* warbler many of the others have been changed to a different genus. *Sylvia* is derived from *silva*, which means wood and this is also appropriate as they are mainly a woodland bird.

One aspect of the songs of some of the songbirds is that they imitate other species. Marsh Warbler's song is totally made up of mimicry and Blackcaps can insert bits into their repertoire too



but still retain bits of their song that are typical of their species. This mimicry is not done to deceive other species, as that would be counterproductive. It is done to impress the female Blackcaps as the more varied the song, the more likely the male is to attract a mate and breed.

While writing this I thought about mimicry in The Bible and the mention of false prophets and warnings about mimicking the wrong people. It just goes to show that mimicry is not always wrong: the Blackcap does it for a good reason. It is not the act that is always wrong but the intention with which it is done that matters.

Roy Hargreaves, St Peter & St Paul

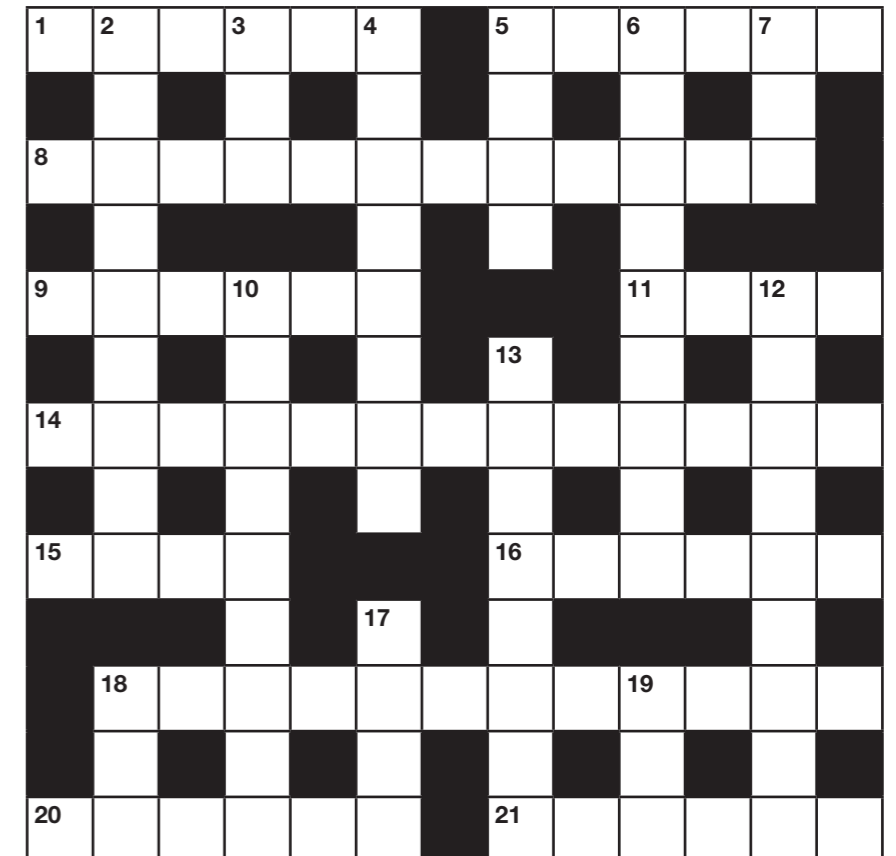
Crossword

ACROSS

- Migrant bird (6)
- Those, heading monasteries (6)
- What I say is true (5) (2) (5)
- Area south of Liverpool (6)
- Slender (4)
- Crowds of angels (8) (5)
- One who needs it (4)
- Place for your holiday (6)
- Restatement of belief (12)
- Clergyman (4)
- Skilful lawyer (6)

DOWN

- Robust and strong (9)
- '...' and downs (3)
- Where you live (8)
- Pain (4)
- Very good-looking (9)
- Tiny one (3)
- Great respect (9)
- The places within (9)
- Honey and water drink (8)
- Droop (4)
- Vehicle (3)
- Pull with effort (3)



The Queen's Award

We are delighted to announce we've been awarded for The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2021 The equivalent of an MBE for charities. So it's a massive thank you to all our volunteers who work with us and our 150 trainees at our 3 sites. The Queen's Award represents a tremendous achievement for our charity and we are all immensely proud to receive it - the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.

Sunnyside is one of 241 charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award this year. The number of nominations remains high year on year, showing that the voluntary sector is thriving and full of innovative ideas to make life better for those around them.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service aims to recognise outstanding work by volunteer groups to benefit their local communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate The Queen's Golden Jubilee. Recipients are announced each year on 2nd June, the anniversary of The Queen's Coronation. Award winners this year are wonderfully diverse. They include volunteer groups from across the UK, including an inclusive tennis club in Lincolnshire; a children's bereavement charity in London; a support group those living with dementia and their carers in North Yorkshire; a volunteer minibus service in Cumbria; a group supporting young people in Belfast; a community radio station in Inverness and a mountain rescue team in Powys.

Representatives of Sunnyside will receive the award crystal and certificate from Robert Voss CBE CStJ, Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, later in July. Furthermore, two volunteers from Sunnyside will attend a garden party

at Buckingham Palace in May 2022 (depending on restrictions at the time), along with other recipients of this year's Award.

Sunnyside provides meaningful and enjoyable work opportunities for learning specific skills that enable young people and adults with learning disabilities to achieve greater independence and employment. We aim to offer paid, supported employment posts to people with learning disabilities and currently have six former service users in paid positions with Sunnyside - including caretakers, head of animal care, a barista and gardeners. As



only 6% of all people with learning disabilities in the UK are in any type of paid work, this is a significant number. Sunnyside challenges the public's perception of people with learning disabilities by focussing on what they achieve rather than on their 'disability'. Trainees, at Sunnyside are enabled to gain horticultural skills and, more significantly, to develop valuable social skills, becoming "confident, independent, happy, and healthy individuals ... with ... lifelong learning skills." We have been described as being 'a life saver for our son, our family and hundreds of other families within our local community' and "life at Sunnyside has transformed these



already incredibly special people, into confident, independent, happy, and healthy individuals." Working within new safety protocols over the last year, staff and volunteers have continued to work with trainees throughout the pandemic. In a typical week we have 150 trainees supported by our paid team, and 37 volunteers, providing some 200 hours of work, across our three Sunnyside sites. Volunteers support our vital work by supporting trainees to undertake hands-on horticulture, work with the animals and do other practical tasks; volunteers often lead a team of trainees. Others are involved in marketing, fund-raising and administration, working in one of the Farm Shops or off-site market stalls, helping make jams and preserves or craft making. Some also drive a minibus to transport trainees or assist the driver to support trainees. Volunteers with particular skills are encouraged to use them start new work - baking or working with bees for example. At the strategic level

the Trustees are all committed to the work of the charity and bring experience and expertise in specific areas. www.sunnysideruraltrust.org.uk/volunteering/

The day-to-day operation of the charity depends so much on the hard work and commitment of our volunteers, as they contribute so much and undertake tasks that mean we can offer the great service that we do.

For more information please contact Keely Siddiqui Charlick, CEO Sunnyside Rural Trust keely@sunnysideruraltrust.org.uk 07545 590 939

Registered Charity No. 1004264
c/o Civic Centre, 161-163 High Street,
Berkhamsted, Herts. HP4 3HD



A big Sunnyside Thank You

'We all feel very proud of this significant achievement and well-deserved recognition for the tireless efforts of every trainee, volunteer and team member. We look forward to helping our community grow in the years to come'
Keely Siddiqui Charlick, CEO

Around the world...



This is part 2 of an article that began in the May edition of Comment.

Many of the market stalls in Hong Kong were offering food items. The most popular were the chicken sellers. They have bamboo or metal cages about four feet in diameter into which are stuffed as many live chickens as they can get. There were several of these cages, each taking different sizes of bird. You choose your chicken and it is killed and plucked for you while you wait. The Chinese have a thing about food being fresh. Fish is kept alive in tanks for the same reason. Vegetables were cut and sold on the same day.

Just short of the border we wandered through a 'Hacker' village, the ancestral homes of the original Chinese inhabitants. Most of the houses were tiny grey square blocks and again decked out with red lanterns and brightly coloured banners for the New Year. The banners bore poems to bring the owner wealth and good luck throughout the coming year. Whole families lived in the one small house where the rule is that the eldest male son inherits the property, while any girls get absolutely nothing.

Land is at such a premium that it is not allowed to remain idle for long. On death a body is buried in the usual way, however after ten years the body is disinterred, the bones are cleaned and placed in a small urn. The urn is then

moved to a small 'Wendy house' on a hillside area set aside for the purpose.

Later we went for lunch to the new, very grand, Satin racecourse. In one weekend the racecourse took six billion dollars. The profits from the racecourse are used to build hospitals, hospices, golf courses and housing. Housing is at a tremendous premium and everywhere you look, new high-rise accommodation is being built on any land which can be found or reclaimed. As soon as one building is demolished for any reason, a high rise goes up in its place. During construction no metal scaffolding is used, only long bamboo poles, all tied together with rope.

Finding the right place for your house is a very serious business and you employ a 'Feng shui Master' to determine if all the omens are good in the place you have selected. Bruce Lee, the actor who died mysteriously at the age of 32, ignored much of the advice of his Master who told him the site he had chosen was full of bad omens. Bruce however chose to ignore him and decided to go ahead. The Feng shui Master told him that the only thing he could do was to have a mirror on the roof of the house to repel the bad dragons which were inevitable in the area he had chosen. On the very night he died, the mirror on the roof was found broken.

Hong Kong harbour is continuously alive with water traffic and, like most of the harbour areas all around the city, is home to myriads of fishing folk families who spend their life on board a boat fishing for a living. Hong Kong eats over 200 tonnes of fish annually.

Hong Kong means Incense Harbour, which is definitely a misnomer if you go out on the water for a Sampan ride in the evening. We visited Stanley Market on one day which turned out to be very much like any other market, full of open-air stalls or tiny shops up back alleys selling rather questionable items. If you go there, try to avoid using the public toilets! They are very reminiscent of scout or guide camping holidays in the wild. The Chinese do not spend money on unnecessary refinements. The 'toilets' are simply holes dug in the ground and no running water!

One of the places we had on our long itinerary for a visit was a ride on the cable car up to the Peak. The Peak tram hauls itself, at an unbelievably steep angle, up the hillside on a cable much like the cable cars in San Francisco. We reached the summit to find swirling mist and rain and a view of a few yards instead of the wide panoramic vista of Hong Kong which everyone had told us about.

We left Hong Kong airport wrapped up in sweaters and jackets to keep out the cold and arrived in Cairns, Australia, some twelve hours later to an oven-like heat and humidity of 85%. Our driver, meeting us from the hotel, dressed in open-necked short sleeve shirt and shorts, gave our sweat-soaked faces a pitying look and politely inquired if we realised it was summer time! Having just been given a third degree dressing down and search for being suspected of bringing fresh fruit into the country, we were not amused at 5.30 in the morning!

To be continued...

Phillip Lawrence, St Peter & St Paul

Another Alec Vidler Story



When I read in last month's edition of *Comment* Jon Reynolds' account of his weirdest day and poor Alec Vidler, the esteemed clergyman, falling through his deckchair, it reminded me of a BBC Documentary made in the 1980s, looking back on the life of Malcolm Muggeridge, who famously came to faith in middle age.

A clip was shown from the 1970s series 'In the Steps of St Paul', showing Alec Vidler and Malcolm Muggeridge riding donkeys on a path over which St Paul had once travelled. Malcolm Muggeridge was in raptures recounting St Paul's journey, oblivious of his donkey bumping into poor Alec Vidler's donkey. In contrast, Alec Vidler was not saying much at all, but was clearly getting annoyed with Muggeridge's lack of control over his donkey!

Following the programme, Peter Cook and Dudley Moore made their

own version called 'In the Steps of St George', with them both riding clashing donkeys around Neasden. The take-off was very funny, but funnier still were the clips of Malcolm Muggeridge in stitches watching the mockery of his serious programme - such a gift to be able to laugh at oneself! His comment on Pete and Dud was, 'I think that was better than the original!'

**Rosemary Berdinner
St Martha's Methodist Church**

'Remarkable Creatures' by Tracy Chevalier



'I have always admired most those who lead with their eyes, like Mary Anning, for they seem more aware of the world and its workings.'

So writes Tracy Chevalier of the novel featured in last month's Tring Parish Book Club, 'Remarkable Creatures'.

This wonderful book was gifted to me on my birthday by Rev Jane Banister and I could not put it down. I immediately fell in love with the story, the characters, the style of writing and the thought-provoking themes.

'Remarkable Creatures' was written by American-British novelist Tracy Chevalier, an author possibly best known for 'Girl with a Pearl Earring' which was adapted into the award winning 2003 film starring Scarlett Johansson and Colin Firth and based on the famous painting by Vermeer.

Before reading 'Remarkable Creatures' I hadn't actually watched or read 'Girl with a Pearl Earring', so wasn't sure what to expect, so I approached the book with an open mind.

The book itself is written in a 'faction' style, based on real people and well documented events, but filling in the gaps of history with what 'might have been', not too dissimilar to Paula Gooder's 'Phoebe', if you have ever come across that (another excellent book from our Book Group).

This historical novel is based on Mary Anning, the once overlooked, self-taught fossil excavator, based in Lyme Regis in the early 1800s. As a child I once had dreams of becoming an archaeologist and often visited the Mary Anning and other fossil exhibits in the Natural History Museum (London) so immediately the subject matter had me hooked!

The chapters alternate between the viewpoints of Elizabeth Philpot, a genteel spinster in reduced circumstances who moves to Lyme Regis by the sea (a hotbed for fossil-hunters) and discovers a passion for fossils, and Mary Anning, the daughter of a destitute cabinetmaker's widow, who supplements the family income by finding and selling fossils.

Despite their differences in age and social status, the two form a friendship based on their mutual fascination with fossils that lasts for many years and survives a number of ups and downs.

Chevalier tackles a number of controversial themes of the day which include: talent/recognition being overlooked due to sex; issues of class divide; the status of single women; creationism and evolution. I would say that, out of these, the major theme running throughout the pages of the book is the role of women. Despite clearly being superior to their male counterparts on the subject of fossil excavation, Mary Anning and Elizabeth Philpot battled consistently to gain any respect or recognition for their accomplishments. It was only due to the higher education and class level of Elizabeth that any recognition even came about for Mary. It was a crushing reminder that such levels of sexism and inequality existed in our not-so-distant past and a reminder of how much, sadly, it still exists today.

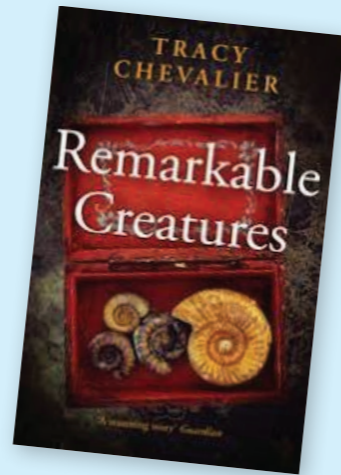
Another subject that arises is when Mary is speaking to the local vicar about her fossil findings, which brings about such questions as 'How can we believe in animals that are extinct if God never makes mistakes?' and 'How can we rationalize dinosaur fossils with the belief that the earth was created only a few thousand years ago?'. The vicar's response is understandably defensive (given the time period) and he is suddenly caught up in a line of questioning he is unprepared for!

In terms of the subject of love and marriage, it was refreshing to see a more realistic take on what women at that



Mary Anning

time could expect, other than the often idealised view of Regency romances that are so popular. There was the very real situation that not everyone married; however, this not being seen as a desirable outcome for a woman, Mary 'sank into spinsterhood beside Louise and me'. 'Sank' being the operative word, got me thinking about how we view or treat single women over the age of 40 in our world today; not very well I would dare to say.



Aside from the main themes, 'Remarkable Creatures' was also wonderfully vibrant with descriptions: the saltiness of the sea air, the grub and dirt of the excavations, the detail Chevalier gives the reader about the characters and their surroundings, was vivid and intense. As a reader you feel completely drawn into the Jurassic coast world.

As a group, we enjoyed reading this book, overall, it was met with positive reviews, even if a couple of comments were that it tailed off towards the end or didn't include quite enough action. It was one we would recommend for the reasons above. I shall leave you with a quote which we thought was quite beautiful and got us thinking about how we see other people in our own lives,

'There was something different about her, though I could not say exactly what it was. It was as if she were more certain. If someone were sketching her they would use clear, strong lines, whereas before they might have used faint marks and more shading. She was like a fossil that's been cleaned and set so everyone can see what it is.'

Sarah Marshall
Tring Team

In memory of Lilian Purse

Lilian has been ever present in the south aisle of Tring Parish Church as a worshipper and as a welcomer on Monday mornings. She was part of Craft and a Cuppa and helped with the Food Bank and was a friend to all. She was part of the fabric of St Peter & St Paul's. Lilian died on 10 May aged 90 and, at her funeral on 28 May, her son Nigel shared some reflections on her life.

Nigel began with an apology that he was pleased for his mother because for the last two years since the death of her husband, Douglas, all she had wanted was to be re-united with the man who meant the world to her. In the words of the poem by Emily Bronte:

*No other Sun has lightened up my heaven;
No other Star has ever shone for me:
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given –
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.*

There was a relief that at the end death came on swift wings and Nigel and Melanie were able to be at Lilian's bedside. There was comfort too that her ashes were to be interred with Douglas. At Douglas' burial I had used some words from Psalm 121 'I lift up mine eyes to the hills'. Nigel had discovered an old white prayer book given to Lilian by her Aunt Flora at her confirmation. In the prayer book Flora had inscribed those same

words. Lilian had been a member of the church and a believer from her youth. Douglas and Lilian were ever present in St Peter & St Paul's, but they also did everything together, the Card Shop, Barclays and M&S.

Lilian's life journey took her from birth in Stoke Newington to death at Stoke Mandeville. Growing up in the East End in the Great Depression shaped her life. Her dad was a working class upholsterer and her mum a seamstress. She grew up on Vallance Road at the same time as two more notorious residents of the street, Ronnie and Reggie Cray. Two particular events had a great bearing on Lilian: first, acquiring the childhood inflammatory disease, Saint Vitus Dance, a form of acute rheumatic fever which required stays in hospital and nursing homes and cold showers (Lilian retained a life-long adversity to water). Second, evacuation as at the beginning of the war, Lilian, aged 8, was evacuated to Norfolk with most of her school and was billeted with three families. One family rejected her because she ate a tomato. Years later this still affected Lilian and she broke down in tears in retelling the story. Later, whilst her father was fighting in the Far East, Lilian and her mother were evacuated to the Kings Langley and Watford area.

Lilian's first job was a telegraphist for the Post Office. This is where she met 'Dad' who at the time was a Postman.



Douglas had competition though, as Lilian told her grandchildren 'I wasn't short of suitors'. Douglas, however, got the nod because he had a car, the competition only had a motor bike. Douglas and Lilian made their home in Tring where they brought up Nigel and Melanie. Lilian worked as a dinner lady at Dundale School, cleaning people's houses, at the Arts Education School (Tring Park), packing eggs at Deans and working at Cox's to ensure that Nigel and Melanie had holidays and new bikes.

It was only in the 1980s that Lilian first got to go abroad but then travelled widely. It was, however, as Grandma that Lilian was at her finest. She delighted in the company of her four grand-daughters: an indomitable lady of great fortitude.

In church, sitting in the south aisle, she was overheard commenting 'Huw doesn't like us sitting here – but he won't win!'

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

In memory of Frances Bowman

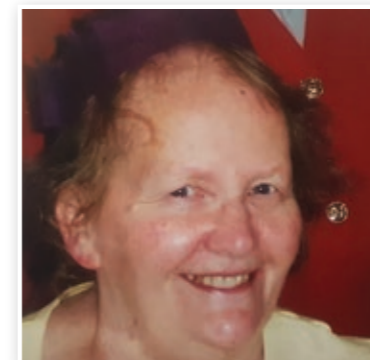
Fran trained with the Children's Society as a children's nurse and later trained to work with disabled people. She later became a Sister in Somerset.

She came to Tring as a live-in carer and companion to David Glue, who worked for the British Trust for Ornithology in Station Road. Shortly afterwards, she came to help with the Red Cross Valiant Club, which was started by Mary Fuller in 1974 for disabled people of all ages. Fran would help in the kitchen, preparing tea for the members, chatting to them and also supplying transport.

She also worked at Drummond Ride Playgroup until they closed, and then came to us at Akeman Street Baptist Playgroup from about 1988 until 2009.

Fran was a very calm, reliable person with a lovely smile. She never minded

what we asked her to do, from washing paint pots to judging the children's Toy Pet Show and we were all very fond of her.



She managed to fit this in while looking after David, ferrying him to and from work etc. David died in 2014, and thanks to Fran's care, he was one of the longest living spinal patients.

When it became apparent that Fran

had MS, she moved to a sheltered flat in Tring, where her friends could visit. Ian Hines used to take her to the MS centre at Halton for treatment and he also took her up to Penrith to visit her sister Ruth.

In 2016, she moved to Colbury Nursing Home, to be near her sister Margaret. She spent the last five happy years there, where she was much loved and was able to keep in touch with her Tring friends by email. She had a short illness, only thirty-six hours, and died on 11 May. Her funeral was at Eling Church on 2 June at 1.15pm.

Many people in Tring will remember Fran and her smile and warm Hampshire voice. She had a love of children, and a caring and compassionate way with all in need.

Erica Guy
Akeman Street Baptist Church

Useful contacts

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Vacancy

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affiliated to
Churches Together in Tring

Secretary
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07887 980004
michaeldemidecki@gmail.com
www.justiceandpeacetring.org

OUR CHURCHES ONLINE
www.tringteamparish.org.uk
www.tringchurchmusic.org.uk
www.stmarthas-tring.org.uk
www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
www.newmillbaptist.org.uk
www.akemanstreet.org
www.berkotring.org.uk

SOCIAL NETWORKING

 Tring Parish

 @revhuw

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Please contact Barbara Anscombe if you would like to take a subscription to *Comment*: £10.00 for 10 issues each year. The magazine can be posted to you with an additional cost for postage at current rates.

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

Crossword puzzle answers From page 33

| ACROSS | DOWN |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. THRUSH | 2. HARDINESS |
| 5. ABBOTS | 3. UPS |
| 8. CROSS MY HEART | 4. HOMELAND |
| 9. WIRRAL | 5. ACHE |
| 11. THIN | 6. BEAUTEOUS |
| 14. HEAVENLY HOSTS | 7. TOT |
| 15. USER | 10. REVERENCE |
| 16. RESORT | 12. INTERIORS |
| 18. CONFIRMATION | 13. HYDROMEL |
| 20. PRIEST | 17. WILT |
| 21. LEGIST | 18. CAR |
| | 19. TUG |

 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

TRING
TEAM PARISH
Living God's Love

Tring Team Parish

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

Aldbury, Long Marston, Puttenham, Tring and Wilstone Churches.

Please visit our website for everything.

Services - Resources - Pastoral Care
Support - And Much More!

It's ok to contact any of the clergy

Team Rector Revd Huw Bellis 01442 822170 or 07411483229 huw@tringteamparish.org.uk
Team Vicar Revd Jane Banister 01442 822170 Long Marston and Wilstone: jane@tringteamparish.org.uk
Team Vicar Revd Michelle Grace 01442 851200 Aldbury: michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk
Curate Revd Sarah Marshall 07538 888502 sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk

Open Churches for Services

We have services in our five churches throughout the month, **subject to current government restrictions**. You need to book through our website, to allow space and for NHS Test and Trace.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events.

Aldbury, Sundays at 10am, and 1st Sunday at 8am
Tring Sundays 8am* & 10am*, once a month zoom Worship for All 3pm,
Tuesdays 9.15am, Thursdays 10am
Long Marston Sundays at 10am or 6pm.
Wilstone Tuesday at 10am,
Puttenham 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month 3.30pm.
* denotes live-stream service on our website or YouTube

Open Churches for individual Prayer

Tring Church open daily, 10am - 12noon
Wilstone daily 9am - 4pm
Long Marston Church open Sundays (daylight hours).
Aldbury Church open daily, 11am - 3pm



Join in with our worship on the web. Some streamed, some recorded.

Services featuring our clergy and others coming into your home! Different styles, something for all ages and activities for families. Access to daily prayer and services from the Church of England.

Pastoral Care and Support

We are here for you, please contact any of our clergy. - Keep in contact with church friends - Prayer support and resources - Protecting your mental health, lots of ideas about staying focussed and in balance.



The Foodbank in Tring Church is open on weekdays, 10am - 12noon, to collect food and to drop-off food donations.
www.dens.org.uk



So many supporters have expressed regret that our traditional Garden Day has been “off the agenda”. We are now planning a small event to say thank you to all supporters and box holders here in the garden at Greenways. Please do come whether or not you have a box... all you have to do is believe in the value of what the Children’s Society offers to our most vulnerable young people.

CHILDREN’S SOCIETY GARDEN DAY

The Children’s Society

No child should feel alone

GREENWAYS • 88 GROVE ROAD

11AM – 2PM, SATURDAY, 24TH JULY 2021*

WE’RE BACK

(IN A SLIGHTLY SMALLER WAY!)

BIG PRIZE RAFFLE

We’d like to thank everyone who supports The Children’s Society. If you need any information please call 01442 822 770.

Please note if you haven’t had the chance to use your box please feel free to offer a donation which can be collected on the day. The Children’s Society needs all our support in this challenging time.

A slightly smaller event than usual, but a really BIG warm welcome.

We shall be open from 11am until 2pm offering coffee and cakes, wine and a ploughman’s lunch.

There will be a combined stall with bring and buy items, homemade cakes and preserves and a few garden plants. Do come and join us - all are very welcome.

* Please note change to date due to lockdown restrictions.