

MARCH 2021 £1

# COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



# High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



Visit our website for Worship at Home resources, updates of services and special events. Although we are not able to meet in person at the moment, please join us at our services and prayer meetings via Zoom.

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**zoom**  
Meeting ID: 978 9592 0392

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

**Church office** admin@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
**Revd Joe Egan** 07521 513493 or joe@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
**Revd Ruth Egan** 07521 513494 or ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

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#tringbaptistchurch High Street Baptist Church

## Editorial



Was your *Comment* magazine a bit later than usual last month? Did you miss it? I am told that a number of people made phone calls to find out why they didn't have it on time...

Apologies if you were one of them!

For the last year we have been operating without the usual editorial meetings and without events to advertise and comment on. Some of our *Comment* team have moved away and sadly, some have died... We have had periods when we couldn't hand deliver but had to rely on the post and the extra costs that involved. Many of our advertisers have put their adverts on hold. And in our home we have two small additional helpers in the form of tiny babies. Let us say that while this is a wonderful experience, it is also making many things a little more challenging than usual...

At one level it's a miracle there is still a magazine to publish! I am extremely grateful to those who have risen to the challenge of finding something interesting to say for the last year in the absence of the seasonal events. But we need more of you! If you love reading your *Comment* magazine, please do think of what you can share to continue to make *Comment* your magazine. Variety is everything, and while that is certainly true of the subject matter, it most certainly applies also to different voices. If you have never contributed before, we would love to hear from you. (And if you have contributed before, please don't stop!)

At a recent service in St Peter & St Paul's, Sarah Marshall talked about the Transfiguration, that moment when Peter realised who Jesus was... Sarah encouraged us to think of our 'wow!' moments, the 'mountaintop experiences' in our lives. Take a moment to do this. I found myself quite moved and emotional, thinking of the many blessings I have received, the 'wow!' moments in my

life. If you would like to share those with *Comment* readers to encourage them, please do send them to me! Maybe one of your Lent decisions could be to write a *Comment* article? (Well, I can but ask and hope!)

The next edition of *Comment* will be the one that celebrates Easter – and we all know that last year our events, at least in the flesh, were cancelled. We are still hoping for better things for 2021. I can tell you that we already have articles coming in about some 'Desert Island Churches', the power of music, religious poetry and art, Saint Melangell, Easter(!) – and dung beetles! What would you like to see in the April edition? Please help to make it happen!

### The Editor

*Lord Jesus, raise our expectations of what it means to encounter God not just in our churches but in every place, in all the places we shall be in the days ahead. Help us every day to discover something new about God, to change how we see the world, and how we respond to it.*

## God is always there



March is said to 'come in like a lion and out like a lamb', a reminder that at the beginning of March we are officially still in winter, but by the end we have moved into spring and the warmer weather has begun to show its face.

This March I suspect there will be much marking of the anniversary of the first lockdown which was announced on 23 March 2020. We may have been looking forward to the warmer days of the summer, but we had little awareness of the months of restrictions that were to come. For the country, March began as a lamb, but went out like a lion, with many people concerned about what the future might hold.

This March feels different however. Many of the older population have now had their first vaccines with second vaccines in sight; at the time of writing, the government have suggested that schools may be able to go back in March, and the better weather and longer days will enable us to get out for our daily

exercise more easily. We will still need to socially distance and wear our masks, I'm sure, but the light at the end of the tunnel seems to be getting larger and I suspect that that will make many of us more hopeful.

As humans we will often find that our mood, our energy, is affected by things around us. The weather, items on the news, the time of year, how much exercise we have, can all affect how we feel. We look forward to the better weather of spring, to being with other people, to good news about vaccines and reduced restrictions, and yet the Bible reminds us that the things around us are constantly changing and it is in God that we should find our hope, that God's steadfastness and love are what we can rely on.

Psalms 62 says, 'Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honour depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge'.

I was also reminded recently of a prayer of St Theresa of Avila: 'Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you,

all things are passing away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices.'

We have lived through a year of uncertainty, of constantly changing guidance, of difficult restrictions and for many there has been grief, loneliness and fear; but throughout the year I have been reminded time and again of God's presence with us and his love supporting us and that has always given me hope, despite all the changes around us. The vaccines have given us hope that once again we will be able to start meeting, even if that is not for a few months yet, that children will be able to get back to school, that masks will no longer be needed; but ultimately it is in God that we can find security and the hope that we need to move forward and face the future, whatever that might bring.

I give thanks that no matter who we are or what life might throw at us, God can always be relied on and will always be there.

Blessings,

**Rachael Hawkins**  
**St Martha's Methodist Church**

# Two truths and a lie

How much do you know about people who live in the Tring community and write for *Comment*? Here are three clues about them, inspired by Edmund Booth's icebreaker in the February edition of *Comment*. (Only two of the clues are true!)

### Mystery person 1

1. I've been introduced to the Queen twice.
2. I've been round the world twice.
3. I've won a photography competition twice.

### Mystery person 2

1. I read 66 books in 2020.
2. I hosted 66 on-line zoom meetings in 2020.
3. I drank 66 bottles of wine in 2020.

### Mystery person 3

1. In my 20s I went skydiving.
2. In my 30s I went up in a hot air balloon.
3. In my 40s I went parasailing (three times!).

### Mystery person 4

1. I trained with the Parachute Regiment as an army-to-army signals specialist, but never jumped.
2. I took an M.Phil degree at the Open University in Adult On-line Learning, focusing on Erasmus MOOS.
3. I have written six books translated into ten languages, one retailing at £280.00.

### Mystery person 5

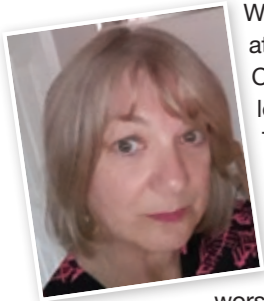
1. I was a National Record Holder in Archery.
2. I used to do Martial Arts and reached Blue Belt before I had to give it up due to injury.
3. I once ran the 100 yards in 10 seconds.

Please contribute your clues for the April edition of *Comment*!

**The Editor**

Answers on page 19.

# New Mill Baptist Church



What's happening at New Mill Baptist Church during these lockdown periods? The church itself was closed, but quickly re-opened in September 2020 when

worship was allowed on site. It was good to see friends attending each Sunday morning, suitably disguised with face masks or face shields. There was always a welcoming wave or conversation held across the empty pews to encourage each other through the difficult time we've had.

IT expertise ensured that words appeared on the screen for us all to read with accompanying music. Dutifully, we nodded our heads or tapped our feet along with the praise worship, no longer permitted to sing out loud. We enjoyed listening to visiting speakers with their encouraging sermons and reading from God's word.

If you ignored the yellow tape marking, the No Sit pews, it almost felt like the services held before the pandemic prevented everyone from attending in person. Fellowship with sociable tea and coffee after the service is a valuable and precious time for laughing or commiserating with each other. It's greatly missed.

Our services lacked the opportunity for Communion, and we were discussing how to do this following Covid-19

guidelines, just as the latest lockdown restricted use of the church. It has, however, taken place in Zoom on-line services. We've sat in our homes with food and drink to participate with the scriptural words and prayer.

At the beginning of the first lockdown the church address book was distributed so that we could all contact each other by telephone. This has been a great way of keeping in touch and having a lively chat or offering some encouragement to one another.

Until recent times, the words '... where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them ...' were taken to mean gathered in person. In

the 21<sup>st</sup> century of advancing technology there is a new meaning to 'gathering together'. Through Zoom for example we can see each other in person, waving and smiling on screen.

We can sing out loud with the hymns if we choose to, through the freedom of sitting at home. The advantage of doing this isn't possible for everyone. Thanks to the BBC, there is still the weekly Songs of Praise on TV. Many people have said that

they are encouraged by television and radio church services.

God is everywhere. We thank him for giving wisdom and intelligence to all the people working hard to resolve this latest medical issue. Thanks to their dedication we have hope that at some point we can all gather together at New Mill Baptist Church. Then once again we can reach out to the local community to join us in services or at the lively weekly café.

On behalf of all of us at New Mill Baptist Church, we pray for good health for everybody. God Bless You.

**Julie Harris**  
New Mill Baptist Church

Tring Churches Together invite you  
**Lent Lunch**  
*(with a laugh)*  
**Wednesdays at 12 Noon**  
**24 Feb to 31 March**  
 Join us via Zoom for a short activity followed by lunch  
**For Zoom code please email**  
**janet@tringteamparish.org.uk**

christian aid We encourage you to donate to Christian Aid  
<https://donate.christianaid.org.uk/Donate/Step/1>

CHURCHES TOGETHER

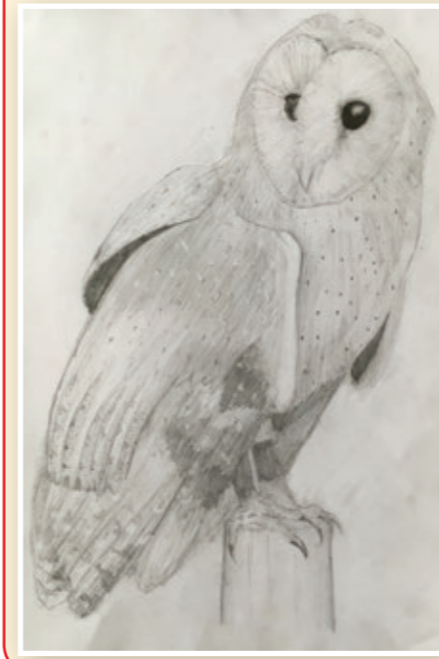
# Eyebrows, art skills and moonwalks, oh my!



Anyone seen that 2009 Cadbury's advert – the really weird one where they've got the two kids in grey and purple? Now, you know where they start playing some rock music and they start eyebrow dancing? Super weird right? But we all have that superbly useless talent that we're desperate to learn. For me, I've always wanted to be able to moonwalk! It's so cool – I mean you're walking backwards... but it looks like you're walking forwards! Who couldn't love that?!

What I find very irritating is when people put off learning new skills because they 'can't'. Yeah. They say that and then I'm like, 'Well no, obviously you can't, that's why you're learning how. If you knew, then you wouldn't need to learn...'

At some point, everyone has declared that they 'can't do art' and use it as an excuse to get out of putting in some effort and doing something creative. But anyone can do art! Everyone's had that moment when they've gone into an art gallery and seen one of the famous paintings that is just some lines and some coloured squares and thought, how can that be worth millions of pounds, I know toddlers who could draw that to the same standard! And that is the attitude you need when starting art!



Just draw a line on some paper, add a red circle and a green square and call it an abstract representation of a parrot sitting in a tree upon a mountain in Southern Italy! But seriously, to 'do' art, all you need to be able to do is make a mark on some paper, clay or other medium. Rip up some magazines (mwah ha ha haa) and stick it on some paper. Use the end of a paintbrush to splatter some paint or try using clay to make a pot. Then do it again, and again and again! You'll keep getting better and then finally you can rise to my level of telling others that anyone can 'do art'!



But whatever your skill, there's always a moment when you just truly appreciate your talent, not because someone told you you're good and not because you've reached a certain level, not necessarily for any reason, but you just get the idea that you've really achieved something.

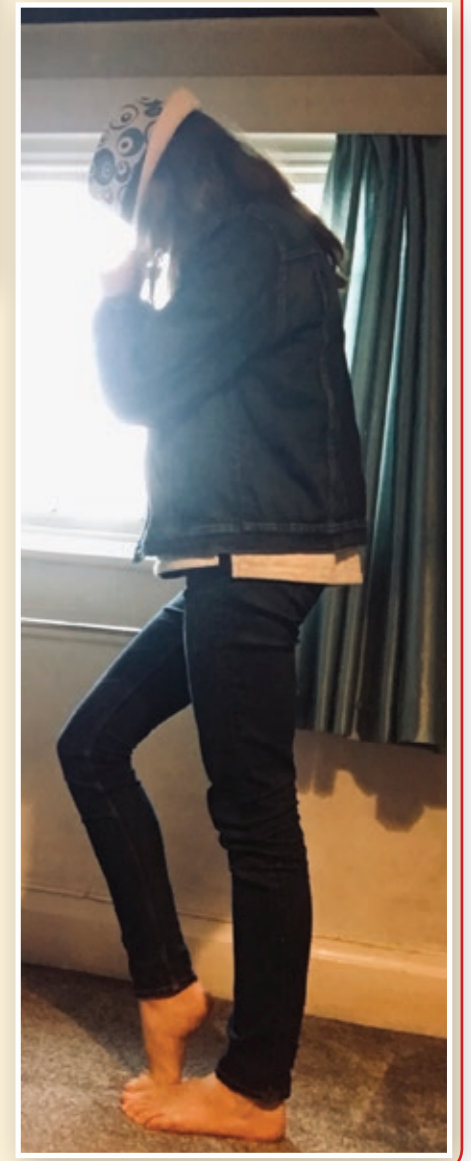
I've been playing the piano since I was 7 and have come a long way, but it's so easy to get caught up in the hours and hours of practice, that you don't appreciate how good you've become. It's the moment when you just sit down with a totally new piece you've never seen before and play it all through so that you get that feeling of pride – in a good way. There's boastful pride, those who use their talents to show off and make themselves look better than everyone else but there's also quiet pride, a sense of self accomplishment and joy in what you are doing.

There's a verse in the Bible, Galatians 6:4 which says 'Each one should test their own actions. Then

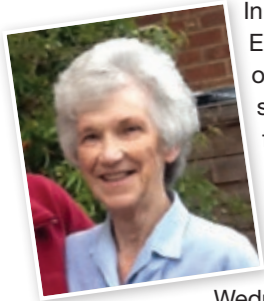


they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else' which I think perfectly sums up what I'm trying to say. Trust God to be able to shrink my entire article into two sentences. Ah well, I hope you enjoyed reading it anyway! Get out there; do some art, start learning the piano or start moonwalking (wooo!) and let me know if you manage it!

**Fern Asquith**  
High Street Baptist Church



# Jesus is here...



In November 1999, Elizabeth Inall, our then curate, started a group for young children and babies, accompanied by parents or carers. It was held every

Wednesday afternoon during term time. This coincided with Rosemary and Bill Carpenter arriving in Tring. By May 2000, Elizabeth had asked Rosemary and me to assist her. We were both keen to do so, and I was pleased just to have reduced my teaching hours. When Elizabeth moved to another parish in September 2001, she asked us to take over. Fortunately, we had got to know each other and felt it would be a good partnership. We arranged a meeting to discuss how we should proceed.

Initially, around fifteen children attended and on arrival they and their parents put on their name badge, and the children put a sticker on their chart, not knowing at first, that when they had ten stickers, they would get an award, usually a little Teddy Horsley book. This system went down very well.

We needed plenty of help, especially as the numbers increased, and we were blessed in having four service leaders, taking turns, three pianists to help us with songs, and a very good team who provided us with refreshments after the service. When it was possible, our clergy would drop in to see us, and occasionally would take the service.

We assembled by the chancel steps, children on the new carpet, and parents on the chairs. We always had Teddy Horsley, Betsy Bear and Loving Lamb, our Toddler Worship friends in attendance. Our candle was waiting to be lit and our wooden church with a slot in the roof was also waiting for our collection.

Our introductory prayer was 'Still, still, Jesus is here. Still, still, angels are near. Jesus, we come to you, here in our church today. Now we are close to you, Jesus is here.'

We used Susan Sayers 'Little Stones' book, for young children, to guide us through the church year. We needed plenty of action and visual aids for the story, to hold attention. Erica always had some good things in her special bag! We usually sang two songs and our favourite

was 'If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands'.

To end our service, children were chosen to carry our teddies and lamb, and lead us to the altar rail, where we knelt for our closing prayer: 'Loving father of all children, I belong to Thee. Through the day time, through the night time, please take care of me.' If a priest was present, each child was given God's blessing.

In order to broaden our families' church experience we started a holiday service, once a year in August, to satisfy the parents! We invited the Sunday Club children and their leaders to join us and divided into groups for part of the time, to suit the different ages. It was good to share some time together.

The FOTCH Family Fun Day was always a good opportunity for mixing, as well as for enjoyment. We put up a display to show what Toddler Worship was all about and we organised children's activities in the children's corner, along with handing out balloons.

Christmas time was very exciting and we held our own Christmas service with the children all dressed up. Our youngest, unsurprisingly, thought it was rather

strange. On one occasion a little boy ran off with baby Jesus! One year one of our mums was brave enough to offer her newborn son to be Jesus at the church's nativity play. Fortunately, he was perfectly safe!

Our annual summer picnics were great fun and we tried to have a different person's garden each year.

Sadly, in 2007, Frank Mercurio left our parish and we gave him a special card that we had made, to remind him of us. We were all very sad to see him go, but fortunately Huw Bellis and Jane Banister were to move from Aldbury to Tring,

along with their three children.

Our numbers were rising by then to about 19-25. Our regular families were bringing along friends, neighbours, and children they were minding. We were kept busy but it was a privilege for us to be so involved with so many families. Shortly after, our numbers peaked at 32-34 on a few days. Sadly, this did not last as mums were returning to work shortly after having their children and therefore were not available. This put us down to low teens and even single figures, which saddened us immensely.

Rosemary and I decided that things

needed to change. We arranged to meet with Huw who was about to contact us. It was decided that we close down on Wednesdays and that there would be a group on Sunday mornings instead.

Rosemary and I and all our helpers were very sad to see this happen, as were our remaining families.

I was sad to write this article without Rosemary Carpenter, who is not enjoying good health. She would have enjoyed the memories of such happy times.

**Margaret Gittins**  
**St Peter & St Paul**



# To linger or not to linger, that is the question



When life gets back to normal, Tring School will be a very different place. As you will have read in Fern Asquith's wonderful article, you will know that being in school

last term was all about change because of the building works and the restrictions due to the virus. Everyone has had to learn to do their job in a new way, which can reveal some benefits, can be very stressful and is also exhausting. Let's go for the good news first!

Tring School introduced students to working online via Google Chrome some years ago, and while that was a change that not all were happy with, it was clear that this was the way that the world and communication were going. It has also meant that the school was ahead of the curve when it came to education under lockdown, and it also meant that all children had access to an electronic device. Some children have flourished under home learning without the distractions of others, and one primary school teacher said how lovely it was to see how some parents had grown – those

who had not had further education and who did not have a high view of their own knowledge, realized that they could do more than they thought.

One major change that I think will stay is that of Parents' Evenings online: babysitters not required, parents can log in from wherever they are, appointment times are much easier to keep to. Add that to an Open Evening for parents to see school in reality when life is more normal, and that should be a much less stressful way of using the time.

Collective Worship is recorded, and where previously we might have seen 200 students once a week for a 'pearl of wisdom' from Michelle or myself (tongue in cheek there), now we have a recording that can be seen by all staff and all students. Of course, we have no record of how many see it, nor how many fast-forward through it, but in theory, we are reaching a far larger community. The fact that one teenager yelled at me 'Saw your video vicar!' makes me think at least some are watching.

Morning Prayer with staff started again last term and we had to meet in the library, surrounded by the noise of building work: but that is the reality of that community. We are back now to sending our prayers weekly while school

is online.

And those are the plus points.

The negative ones are that much of our role as School Chaplains is 'lingering', which is now an illegal activity! Our lunchtime clubs started up for a while last term, with separate games and packs of cards for each year group, but it was very hard to start developing relationships and having conversations, as break and lunch were shorter in time, and there is far less space because of the building works.

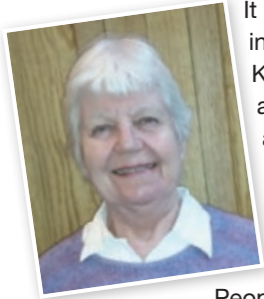
As we all know, keeping in touch with those closest to us is all right at the moment – we can ring or zoom our families and friends. It is all the people who do not come into that category – the people you met on the bus regularly, those we saw in the library or Tesco's – that we do not see; and this is the same in school. We are in touch with staff, but it is the wandering through school, smiling at people, the quick conversations where you can find out a lot, that are all missing.

So we do what we can: we try to find new ways of reaching out, and above all we pray for our schools, for all the staff and students, the parents and carers, asking that God may give them strength and peace.

**Jane Banister**  
**Tring Team**



# On being a twin



It has been interesting to read Kate Banister's article about being a twin, because I, too, am an identical twin. I can identify with much she says.

People often ask what it is like to be a twin, but what can you say, except that you don't know what it is like not to be a twin? As I have grown older, I have begun to think of my twin, Kathleen, as an extension to me – my other self. All the things she has been able to do which I have not, have kind of filled gaps in my life because, in reality, I should have liked to do them as well! So being a twin is a blessing.

Mum did not know, in 1947, that she was expecting twins. She was ill and went into hospital early. I imagine being doubly pregnant on war-time rations was no joke. Dad had come out of the army in 1946, they were buying a home and Dad was trying to get a settled job, which was not easy. He rang the hospital to ask how things were and was told 'You are the proud father of twin daughters!' He made some expletive and put the phone down. The nurse thought he had fainted. It must have been quite a shock to both Mum and Dad. We were almost born on different days; Kath, the elder, was born just after midnight and I appeared twenty minutes later. We both weighed 5lb 8oz, quite a weight for a 5'2" young lady to carry!



As small babies mum always said we slept in shifts; one slept while the other stayed on watch. We were bottle fed and on one occasion a friend swapped us over in the pram so one of us was fed twice while the other was left to starve. A noisy night followed! We always had a playmate – or a partner in crime, as happened sometimes.

There are stories... Mum used to 'spattle' the washing, (sprinkle water over it before ironing). One day we helped but 'spattled' it with cocoa, 'Only doing what you do, Mummy!' On another occasion we put our rag dolls, which were stuffed with straw, onto the fire and set the chimney alight. We must have thrown them over the fireguard.



We went to the same schools and shared our friends throughout, for we always met up at 'playtime' or breaks in secondary school. In the second year of secondary school, we were put into different classes. This opened up lots of opportunities. Twice we went to each other's classes on 1 April. The teachers didn't notice, but when we told them at the end of the day, they were amused. Recently we went to a reunion at our school in Warwick. Kath got out her diary written during our school years. She came across an entry that read 'Today I did Jill's homework and she did mine'.

As far as I can remember, our O-level results were similar and we both studied Physics and Maths at A-level and got the same grades. We went to the same college of London University but did try to do different things. Kath read Physics and I read Maths. In the end she veered

towards theoretical Physics and I did Applied Maths, so things were not too different.

We were dressed alike as children and made sure that happened. On one occasion Mum could not buy two pairs of shoes alike, so we insisted on wearing one of each. As teenagers we went out independently to buy fabric to make skirts, then came home having bought the same fabric. When attending a university reunion in Windsor, we met at the same time arriving at the hotel, having come from different ends of the country, and wearing virtually the same clothes.

We both had the same thyroid problem but at different times of our lives. Kath had her problem at secondary school; my problem flared up at university and I was ill during my final year. It was not a happy time and I wanted to get as far away from the sadness as I could. This is when we split up. Kath did her Postgraduate Certificate in Education at Bristol and I did mine in Durham where I knew no one and could start afresh. Since then, we have always lived in different parts of the country.

My first five years of teaching were in Sunderland, Kath worked in the Forest of Dean. I joined a mountaineering group, met my husband-to-be, and moved south when we married. Kath, meanwhile, moved up to Cumbria in the same year as our marriage and continued the mountain walking with her school, sometimes getting a big wave on the top of a fell when she was mistaken for me by the Sunderland mountaineering group. See what I mean when I say she is part of me? It was a big move away from the hills of the north, but Kath keeps that link.

Kath has never married. I have had the family she has never had, whereas she has climbed the hills I never got to, gone further in her career, bought an old house to make home (which is something I would have liked to do), and lived in a part of the country which I hold dear. We are fulfilling parts of ourselves through the other.

From the years of my playmate in the garden, to those of reading poetry together, to the years of separation and the last forty-odd years when we have been apart, I have had someone very special who has been there through thick and thin. She is a true blessing and I thank God for her.

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

# Loneliness



Being alone is something many people long for when they lead busy stressful lives. 'If only I had a minute to myself,' says a harassed working mum, trying to get the children off to school, throwing something together for supper and then rushing off to work... I guess that is true even during lockdown for some families; but for many people, especially the older ones among us, it is the last thing we want!

Jenny and I went to be vaccinated in Stevenage at the end of January. As soon as it was over we were invited to sit for a few minutes to chat to one of the volunteers. When I asked the point of this, he answered that some people had not been out of their home for months and coming for the jab was a major event; a quiet chat was very important. One man the day before had talked for nearly forty minutes. just because there was someone to listen.

I guess many people can identify with that man. He did not choose to be alone; he was just lonely on his own. Covid-19 has made this a stark revelation for many people. Jenny and I are lucky in that we are together, though we take exercise separately to have some space from each other! But when you are alone all the time, life can be hard and loneliness can affect our mental health.

We are on the cusp of Lent as I write this and it is the time when we think of

Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, alone as he prepared for his life's work. A number of years ago Jenny and I went on a diocesan pilgrimage led by the then Bishop of Hertford. We visited the wilderness a few miles from Jerusalem and it is a bleak, seemingly endless stretch of sand with the sun blazing down, interrupted only by the occasional bit of scrub, a few cacti and this sense of utter loneliness and being apart from other human beings. We had a Communion service under a tree facing the sea of sand. One small boy passed by leading a camel and it seemed we were back in the days of Christ – even if the boy's reasons for visiting us were not entirely altruistic! But the silence was eerie and I thought then how Jesus must have felt as he coped with the inner voices of the temptations to take the easy way out.

But, you may say, Jesus chose to go to the wilderness of his own free will. That is true; but nonetheless during those forty days he must have felt lonely. Loneliness is not just something that happens in desert places or in the Covid-19 pandemic. It happens in many ways: maybe when a person retires from work and feels no longer valued and their purpose in life is gone? Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, once wrote 'Loneliness is want of intimacy' and intimacy is something we all need. It is not always being physically distant from anyone else. You can feel acute loneliness in a room full of people when you don't know any of them – or if you feel they don't want to know you. That is why it is so important to welcome a newcomer

into our churches, make them know you care and are pleased they have joined us. One of the loneliest places in the world can be in a packed underground train in London in rush hour: hundreds of people but no one knows or cares who you are.

Loneliness is not just something felt by old people. An extrovert can often find it easier to make superficial new relationships while deep down feels less confident than he seems; the introvert who is shy might find it hard to make friends but find friendships are deeper when they come. Many teenagers can be lonely because perhaps they don't fit in with the enthusiasms of their contemporaries. Don't shun the boy or girl who is lonely. Try to make a link with them and make them feel appreciated. But for the immediate time of Covid-19, how can we help people on their own to feel less lonely?

Social media is not always something older people understand, but if you can cope with the technology, Zoom can be a great boon. Talking even through a computer screen is a small substitute for the real thing. The phone is a tool everyone can use. I try to ring up friends on their own on a regular basis even though we cannot meet. A friendly voice can mean a great deal. Try and think of three people you know, living on their own, and give them a ring maybe once a week or fortnight and show you care. We are told by Jesus to love our neighbour as ourselves. In these lonely days of Covid-19, let's see if there is some way we can bring a smile to someone's face...

**Ian Ogilvie, Tring Team**

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# No sacred language...



From time to time, I used to say to adult Confirmation candidates classes that there is nothing easy I can't make difficult. This was usually said in

terms of explaining the Ten Commandments and how they are to be understood today. But it applies even more so to the Bible. If you go out to buy a Bible, what do you expect to come home with? A collection of books in one volume and with what title? And in what language and how many books? We think of the Bible as the Holy Book, the Word of God and so on, but in what sense and in what language?

For Jews, the Bible is a fixed collection of books in Hebrew; for Muslims the Holy Book is the Qur'an (Koran) in Arabic. In both cases there are translations but they are not authoritative, as is the text in the holy language. For Christians, the certainties are not there. English speakers sometimes think so, especially as there is an Authorised Version. The word Version gives it away. The authorisation is that of King James I, but the version is the result of a lot of history, change and scholarship. Although Hebrew and Greek may be considered holy languages in that the Scripture was largely written in those tongues, yet the books witness to Jesus whose mother tongue was Aramaic, and the New Testament only reveals a few words in that language.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that the fourth Gospel tells us at the beginning that Jesus is the Word. The Scriptures, then, for us, are words about the Word! So we are now into the problems of language, and hence versions and translations.

Some of us (many of us?) don't like change and yet we live in a world of change. Nowhere is this clearer than in language. We are fortunate (or unfortunate?) in that we speak the most widely spoken language on earth. As a result, many of us have not studied and learnt other languages and so we do not know about the problems involved in translation, nor how languages change and evolve and how very different other languages can be.

A simple example is that if I am asked how I am, I say, 'I am well', but my

grandchildren say 'good'. I do not say 'good' as that is a moral judgement about myself; I say 'well' as a health issue. But usage has changed. For me if something is 'cool', it is cold; nowadays this means it is 'good'...

So we all live with the results of the story of the Tower of Babel – the confusion of languages, the babble of tongues. But this is, as it were, being put right as a result of the Day of Pentecost, when the Apostles spoke in tongues so all could understand. Helping people to understand is the work of translators as well as of preachers and teachers. We use words to explain our faith in Jesus, the Word of God, and have always to remember that, while Jesus is the unchanging Word of God, the words we use about him change from language to language and from time to time. Hence there are many versions of the Bible even though many people have a particular attachment to the Authorised Version and its use of Tudor and Stuart language. For Christians there is no sacred language or version.

Some of the Scriptures were first put into Old English in the Anglo-Saxon period, but, to all intents and purposes, it is not English as we know it. (Old English can be studied through St Albans Cathedral Education Centre!). Latin, in fact, was regarded as the language of the Scriptures for centuries, so much so that some people read the Psalms as a devotional exercise without fully understanding the words they mouthed. To say the sacred words was enough.

In the Middle Ages some were hesitant about translations, fearing that ignorant people would misunderstand the Scriptures and this attitude hardened. In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, we have Wycliffe translating the Bible and this led – after persecutions and disputes – to a series of versions. The year 1537 saw a version by Tyndale. This was dedicated to Henry VIII who licensed it for general reading. The next year produced the Great Bible to be set up in every church, although it was not generally available until the next year! In 1540 this was reissued by Thomas Cromwell and this is the Bible familiar to Shakespeare, Donne and Herbert. Then in 1568 came the Bishop's Bible, a new translation under Archbishop Matthew Parker, and this, though not popular, was the official version until the Authorised Version of 1611, also known as the King James Bible, produced over six years by

a committee of scholars. It was in fact a revision, not an innovation, and even in 1622 some of its language was archaic!

Amid these translations it is worth noting (at least for those familiar with BCP Morning and Evening Prayer) that Coverdale's version of the Psalms was used in the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549 and was retained through the changes in the versions of the Bible. It is often inaccurate but 'the language is evocative and rhythmically excellent'.

We then leap to 1870 when a Revised Version was produced. Since that time there has been a plethora of translations – some revisions of revisions, some produced by churches or ecumenically, some by individuals such as Moffat, J.B. Phillips, Knox and so on. 1960 saw the New English Bible, which was later revised. The Roman Catholic Church produced the Jerusalem Bible, in French, which later came out in English. Prior to that the Douai-Reims Bible was the version traditionally used since the 16<sup>th</sup> century by English-speaking Roman Catholics, based on the Latin Bible.

What then do we expect from a translation? Is accuracy and closeness to the original our concern, or is it more important that it sounds good when we hear it in worship or can understand it easily when we read it at home?

So, a few questions to end with!

How modern should a Bible translation be? Is there a special and suitable style for the Scriptures? How close to everyday speech should a translation be? Is there any place for 'thou art' rather than 'you are'? Should our translations of ancient languages reflect modern concerns? Should the Greek word for 'brothers' or 'brethren' be translated 'brothers and sisters'? Does inclusivity mean Psalm 111 should not reflect the Hebrew 'Blessed be the man who...' but rather be rendered 'Blessed are they who...'?

Most significant of all is how we address God. What names or titles are appropriate? Two particular issues here – one is the sacred name of God in the Old Testament: should Yahweh or Jehovah be used? And the second – what about 'Our Parent' for 'Our Father'?

Many more questions could be asked but we must remember the Word of God cannot be confined to human words. Yet it is only with words that we can express our faith and worship our God.

**Martin Banister, St Albans Cathedral**

# Why is Easter not a fixed date?



changes each year.

The reason is that Easter Sunday is not a date linked to a calendar, but rather to the moon. To be precise, the ecclesiastical moon which differs from the observed astronomical moon. Easter is set as the first Sunday after the Pascal full moon date, based on mathematical calculations (the Metonic 19 year cycle), that falls on or after 21 March. If the Pascal full moon is on a Sunday, Easter is celebrated on the following Sunday. The Pascal full moon constitutes the ecclesiastical Spring Equinox. This was decided in AD325 although the exact method of calculating came later in England – at the Synod of Whitby in AD664. The early British Christians had been using a different method of calculating Easter from the rest of Europe – shades of Brexit!

The earliest Easter we know about was in 1818, Easter was on Sunday 22 March – the earliest date possible, as a Paschal full moon fell on Saturday 21 March (the ecclesiastical fixed date for the Equinox). It will not fall on this date

Christmas is a fixed date – always 25 December in Western churches and 7 January in Eastern churches. Easter Sunday, however, seems to be a very variable date that

again until 2285, in 264 years time. The latest Easter was on 25 April 1943 and this will not occur again until 2095.

Father Kevin Laughery has calculated the Easter dates from AD326 – AD4099 [www.kevinlaughery.com/east4099.html](http://www.kevinlaughery.com/east4099.html) – although he thinks he miscalculated dates before 1818 and after 2105!

Until 1582, all churches used the Julian calendar computation, but after 1582 Western churches adopted the Gregorian calendar leading to different Easter dates in the East and West. In 1997 the World Council of Churches proposed a reform of the method of determining the date of Easter at a summit in Aleppo, Syria: It was proposed that Easter would be defined as the first Sunday following the first astronomical full moon following the astronomical vernal equinox, as determined from the meridian of Jerusalem. This would have moved the calculation from the ecclesiastical equinox. It was never ratified. Although the Eastern and Western Churches have different Easter dates, they fell on the same day in 2014 – 20 April on the Gregorian calendar.

A major problem with using the moon is that it is not constant in its 'month'. An astronomical lunar month is 29.53059 days (29 days 12 hours and 44 minutes) on average, but the exact period varies monthly. This year the lunar month will vary each month from 29 days 10 hours 09 min to 29 days 16 hours 29 min –

quite a substantial difference.

It can be argued that the Christmas date is based on the winter equinox and the pagan celebrations round this. In the same way it can be argued that Easter is based on the Spring equinox where there were many pagan celebrations. In the first century AD the Cybele cult worshipped on the Vatican hill in Rome and clashed with early Christians. They believed that Cybele ('the Great Mother') had a lover Attis who was born of a virgin and after his death rose from the dead annually at the Spring Equinox. Around AD170 Montanus, who had been a priest of the Cybele cult, proclaimed a New Prophecy based partly on the Cybele-Attis cult and speaking 'in tongues', which started to be accepted by some Christians leading to a synod held at Iconium in AD268 that ordered that converts from Montanism be re-baptised. The early followers of Montanism including the prophetesses Priscilla and Maximilla were called the Illuminati or 'enlightened'. The Illuminati are now one of the greatest conspiracy theories, based on a modern Bavarian version of the cult.

All this is a far cry from the Easter we will celebrate. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. The date does not really matter, it is the fact that counts.

**John Allan  
High Street Baptist Church**

# Journey into faith



I was taught to say my brief prayers each evening before bed. Grandma Whiting used to visit fortnightly and she was more fun at prayer time as she would always sing a couple of hymns – mostly 'Now the day is over' and 'Loving shepherd'.

From about the age of 5 I was sent to Sunday School in the afternoon which I wasn't keen on, but some of my friends were there so it wasn't too bad. It was about this time that Dad disappeared for

Growing up in a council house on a Liverpool suburb during WWII might not seem an auspicious start to my life. But Mum and Dad were church goers so

three years. He had volunteered for the RAF and was posted to Egypt servicing aircraft radios.

Faithwise there is nothing much to tell until I joined the local Boy's Brigade company at our local church at the age of 12. The stated object of the Boys' Brigade is 'The advancement of Christ's kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness'. I had joined a disciplined organisation and I revelled in it. Parade night Tuesday, PT and games Thursday and Bible class Sunday morning plus occasional Church Parades. I remained with the company for ten years.

Being with the BB had taught me the difference between right and wrong, sin and virtue etc, but there seemed no

way of telling how well or badly you were doing. God doesn't send you a monthly statement.

I then took a job in London and, as the only person I knew there was a girl who worshipped at All Souls Langham Place, I went there myself. I was not impressed to start with – everything seemed artificial. Then one sermon I heard, I don't know what it was about, the preacher said 'I know that when I die I will be in heaven with the Lord'. How could he be so certain? He might not deserve it. Then it dawned on me – none of us deserves it. It is a free gift God paid for when Jesus died on the cross. What matters is my commitment to him.

And so he is my Lord, my Saviour and my Friend.

**David Whiting,  
formerly St Peter & St Paul**

# Music I have loved



In the 1950s, children's music was quite a separate genre from that of adult styles. We seemed to be children for a lot longer than the children of today and our whole life style – music, books, clothes etc were not just a copy of the adult varieties but quite different and separate.

Our family didn't have a television until I was 14, so my brother and I listened to 'The Light Programme', later called Radio 2, where 'Children's Favourites with Uncle Mac' was broadcast on a Saturday at 9.00am for an hour. Memorable songs include: 'You're a pink toothbrush, I'm a blue toothbrush' sung by Max Bygraves, also 'The Ugly Duckling', 'Nellie the Elephant', 'Tubby the Tuba', 'The Kings New Clothes', and the teacher's nightmare, 'I taut I taw a puddy tat'! All were considered suitable for children up to 9 or so. Today they would be suitable for the under-5s, I suspect!

On a Sunday, at teatime, there was a programme called 'Sing Something Simple' which we used to listen to as a family whilst we had tea. It was a mixture of all types of music, sung by a group called The King Singers, I think.

Mum and Dad bought a record player whilst we were living over our toy shop, so that must have been in the 1950s. Mum seemed really pleased as it was the latest model. It had an automatic arm and could take up to six 45s at once and drop each one down on to the turntable as the previous one had finished (for the uninitiated, a 45 meant a record playing at 45 revolutions per minute and generally had one song on either side – A side and B side).

Mum liked music from the musicals and we had LPs of music from 'Carousel', 'Oklahoma', 'Carmen Jones' and 'West Side Story' among others (Long Playing records rotated at 33

revolutions per minute).

We all also learnt and sang traditional songs in music lessons in junior school: 'Greensleeves', 'My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean', 'Blow the wind southerly', 'Scarborough Fair', 'Bobby Shaftoe', 'Bladon Races', and so on.

I belonged to a recorder group for three years in primary school. This group was led by Mr Hamilton who was a very patient recorder teacher! In our last year at Tring CofE Junior Mixed School, we entered a music competition at Chalfont St Peter. There were many schools taking part and – to our amazement – we won. There is a picture of the group in the 'Around Tring' book edited by Mike Bass and Jill Fowler. I can remember all the children in the group, even if the editors could not find all the names!



As a child I knew very little about jive and jitterbugging and the American modern music 'Rock and Roll' – I was too young. However, hitting 11, grammar school and discovering pop music all came in one rush. The Beatles had their first No 1 in 1963 with 'She Loves You' (the year I went to Cavendish) and I could sing it all the way through on the bus to school. There were inter-friendship rivalries as to who was the best Beatle. Was it Paul, John or one of the others? There were chewing gum cards to collect of the 'Fab Four' and I joined in with card swapping whenever I could. I have to say that some friends always had more pocket money and always managed to collect the whole lot! These cards were eventually banned in school!

Pop music arrived on TV and as soon as we had a television, 'Top of the Pops' became a 'must' for me on Thursday nights. 'The Monkeys' TV show was shown on a Saturday late afternoon, and that was also essential viewing. I think the adults thought it all a bit of harmless nonsense and indulged my brother and me. The Rolling Stones were not generally in the same category as far as I was concerned. They were rather too extreme in behaviour, dress and lyrics!

By the time I was in the sixth form, I was finding folk music reasonably interesting. Joan Biaz, Bob Dylan, Donovan and Otis Redding and so on. And of course, Tamla Mowtown came along – Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross and the Supremes and many more. Their songs were catchy and you could dance to them. Even today they still make me feel happy.

In 1970, at college, the Fresher's Ball was something special each October. We hosted Status Quo before they were really famous and then next year, Shaking Stevens and the Sunsets. Those were the days when I could dance and party till dawn! Stevie Wonder and Rod Stewart, Carly Simon and Carole King's 'Tapestry' album

were all favourites at college. Rod Stewart still is! The rugby team were good and played in a Birmingham League. There were always lots of rugby songs in the bar when the team won. I could join in with those too!

Mum and Dad had nothing to do with classical music; neither did we listen to any at Grammar School. It was all a foreign country to me until we had a drama course at college. We (a group of about twenty 'would be' primary teachers) were all introduced to 'The Planet Suite' by Holst. It was quite a notable moment. Our tutor taught us how to teach dance drama by teaching us first. So, we had to mime and dance following her lesson plan which used much of the Planet Suite to convey different moods and actions. It was

quite an emotional moment when we performed our group dance to some of our peers.

Not long after, during the Easter holiday at home, I watched a very old film called 'Scheherazade'. The music was by Rimsky Korsakov and it was as thrilling as the Planet Suite. I went and bought the LP of the music when I spotted it in a sale. So, classical music gradually worked its way into my life. Some I will never like, but I am now happy to listen to operas and ballet and some of the more popular pieces. The music can be very soothing and I like going to live performances. The proms on television are a good time to try out new works. There is always the 'off' button!

Like my mum I love musicals and over the last twenty years have been to the theatre to watch musicals such as 'Les Misérables', 'Miss Saigon', 'Showboat', 'Phantom of the Opera', and many more. Most of these were visits to the theatres in London with one or more of my family. I thought that a treat for my children was a day

out in London, taking sandwiches with us, visiting a museum in the morning and then the theatre in the afternoon. I took them to see 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' at the Palladium (starring Phillip Schofield). The next year we went to see 'Starlight Express', then 'Oliver'. I also went with daughter Rachel to see 'Bombay Dreams' and 'Billy Elliot' when my son was too old to go out with his mum! Rachel also came to see 'Swan Lake' and 'Carmen' in the round at the Royal Albert Hall.

I'm not too sure about the pop music these days. I don't seem to be able to hear the words properly and much of it seems synthesised. I'm never sure whether the singers can actually sing. I know of Blur, Oasis, Foo Fighters and Take That from my children, but they are groups from the 1990s. Time passes quickly and I realised during the Olympic Opening Ceremony that there is a whole decade of music and singers that have little relevance to my life! Dizzy Rascal was unheard of until then!

Still, the music that influenced

me was that of the 1960s and 70s and when those songs of the past are played on the television or radio, I know the words and can sing along. They must have been reasonably good as so many have been used as sound tracks to modern films and re-released by today's pop groups. So generally, they have stood the passing of time. Nowadays, though, I turn on Classic FM or Scala Radio if I want to sit and listen quietly to music.

If I had to take eight records to a desert island they would be: 'You are the Sunshine of my Life', Stevie Wonder; 'Scheherazade', Rimsky Korsakov; 'The Long and Winding Road', The Beatles; the sound track from the film 'Dr Zhivago'; the sound track from the film 'Ryan's Daughter'; 'Do you hear the people sing' from Les Misérables; 'Benedictus' from 'The Armed Man', Karl Jenkins; 'How Great Thou Art', hymn.

**Vicky Baldock**  
**St Cross, Wilstone**

## Coping with lockdown



*Revd Brian Dorrington, father of Gill Kinsey (St Peter & St Paul) normally attends St Andrew's Church, Stratton, Cornwall. He was asked to write an article for Stratton Parish Magazine, and has shared it with Comment, as he now worships virtually, through St Peter & St Paul.*

How am I coping with lockdown? The answer must be 'Yes, coping'. I find daily life is just as busy as it was before. Living now on my own I find that I can truthfully say about tasks that should be attended to 'Sorry, I don't have time'. Nonsensical it may sound but in the daily round of things it's true.

After the usual tasks after breakfast the thought of lunch comes to mind. That decided upon, the menu for the evening meal has to be dealt with. Then what? What have I actually achieved this day? What about all those jobs I promised myself to be dealt with in retirement – digitizing all those colour slides, the paintings I promised myself to try and so on. No longer capable of gardening I muse on the glories that once were, of

the dinner plate size dahlia blooms, the incurved chrysanthemums and others. Perhaps that seems rather negative but perhaps there is a positive side.

All Church of England clergy are bound to say the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer every day. I recall in the early days of my ministry asking at Chapter what the members did about the Offices when on holiday. The Rural Dean loftily replied 'There is no holiday from the round of prayer'. I knew that, of course, but I wondered what adjustments my fellow clergy might make. This was before Alternative Service Book, and Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer Psalms set for certain days of the month could be quite lengthy.

The Rural Dean's comments are equally true of worship in its many forms. The word worship means giving God his worth, worth-ship. In lockdown we can adapt and develop this theme. In my case I find that the Daily Offices can in a sense be more leisurely – there's no meeting or service to rush off to. More time and thought can be spent on intercessions for example, and being still in God's presence.

We may be offering our worship in a solitary state but it is important to recognise that we are not offering our

worship alone but as part of the 'whole state of Christ's Church militant here on Earth'.

Many of us miss joining together on Sundays for the Eucharist and fellowship and rightly so. My solution in part is to join the service at my younger daughter's church in Hertfordshire – not physically, of course, but via YouTube where are streamed BCP and CW Holy Communion. It's all very well done and provides an opportunity for a spiritual communion.

So how am I coping with lockdown? Satisfactorily I think. Obviously things are not as they were and we adapt. Several kind people make a weekly phone call to make sure I'm still here, which is much appreciated. I'm fortunate in having a very good young lady who does my weekly shop, collects any prescriptions, attends to some cleaning and so on, and generally puts up with my incessant chatter. It's all good for my mental health – or so I claim.

Like the song says, 'Fings ain't what they used to be' and indeed they are not. But above and beyond these uncertain times we must remind ourselves of the unchanging God – Emmanuel 'God is with us'.

**Brian Dorrington**  
**St Peter & St Paul (remotely)**

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# The food bank in a pandemic



2020 was an exceptional year. It was not the year that any of us expected. Being 'locked down' and 'staying safe' were not phrases that were in common parlance before 2020. We watched the evening news bulletins with dread as the virus spread relentlessly, and we thanked our NHS staff for putting their lives on the line and doing a fantastic job to try to keep us all alive. The Coronavirus affected everyone, in all walks of life.

Many people were forced to work from home as offices and businesses closed their premises. Self-employed people found work, and pay, drying up as people became more cautious about interacting with others. Casual workers suddenly found they were out of a job as bars and restaurants were forced to close. Others were told they were on 'furlough' (another word we didn't know) and were receiving less money than they were expecting. Life suddenly became tough.

bank. But in today's society it doesn't take much for things to unravel and 2020 was certainly one of those times.

Firstly, when lockdown started in the middle of March last year, we were told that places of worship would be closed down too. As the food bank operated out of a church, did this mean that we would lose access to the food bank? No, apparently if we had a food bank in a church, we were allowed to open the church for food bank purposes only.

Secondly, the government advice was that the over-70s were in the most vulnerable category and shouldn't be allowed to put themselves at risk by mixing with other people. As the majority of food bank volunteers were over 70, this would mean that we would have to find a whole new crew of food bank volunteers. So, the volunteers over 70 were thanked sincerely for their service and stood down. As you would expect, the good people of Tring responded very quickly, and we soon had a newly trained set of volunteers and we were able to open for business as usual during lockdown.

To set the scene, we usually issue about sixty food boxes a year to people in crisis who need emergency supplies of food until they are picked up by the relevant social services. It must be recognised that this can take days, if not weeks. This isn't a huge demand, just over one food parcel a week, but it does mean that we were able to help one person, or family, who would otherwise have had no food to eat. During March 2020, when lockdown started, we issued nine food parcels. That was double our usual amount. In April 2020 we issued twenty food parcels, about five times the normal number of food parcels issued in a month! Luckily, by May 2020, things were settling down and we only issued twelve food parcels.



food to people in need, it also collects donated food and toiletries. These items are then taken to DENS and made into food boxes which can be issued at a later date. During the same time that our demand for food parcels exploded, the amount of donated food also increased exponentially. This was largely due to public awareness of just how important food banks were at that particular time. In addition, many people who were 'shielding' at home were receiving food from the government. Where items were not required, these were also gratefully received at the food bank. For a while, taking donated food to DENS in Hemel Hempstead, and collecting food parcels to replenish the Tring food bank stock, felt like a full time job.

I'm glad to say that, at the time of writing, demand on the food bank has quietened down again, perhaps a sign that things are slowly returning to 'normal', or whatever the new 'normal' is. The vaccination programme is being rolled out across the country and, hopefully, happier times are ahead.

If you would like to support DENS and the Dacorum Food Bank, please visit [www.dens.org.uk](http://www.dens.org.uk).



We've been running a food bank distribution point in Tring now for over eight years. We are a Distribution Point for the Dacorum Food Bank, run by the charity DENS in Hemel Hempstead, under the auspices of the Trussell Trust. It is run from St Peter & St Paul's Church from 10.00am to 12 noon, Monday to Friday. We hold a stock of six packs of food ready to issue to customers, three for single people and three for families. Most people consider Tring to be a well-off town and are surprised when people from Tring need the services of the food

But the food bank does not just issue

**Chris Hoare, St Peter & St Paul**

Dacorum food bank - statistics 2020 vs 2019					
Year	Vouchers	Adults Fed	Children Fed	Total Fed	
2020	Dacorum	2,694	3,766	2,555	6,321
	Tring	132	198	102	300
2019	Dacorum	2,375	3,269	2,207	5,476
	Tring	61	82	23	105

	Dacorum	St Peter & St Paul Church
Weight distributed 2020	76,389 kgs	1,779 kgs
Weight distributed 2019	63,034 kgs	584 kgs



## My favourite prayer



Prayers come in all shapes and sizes and styles. Some are small-scale, personal and intimate – others may be grander, corporate texts, where we are worshipping together as part of a community. Some of the collects are little gems, focusing on just one thought at a time.

Some prayers are wonderfully revealing about the character of the individual doing the praying:

Jacob Astley was a Royalist commander preparing to fight the battle of Edgehill in the Civil War in 1642:

'O Lord, thou knowest how busy I must be this day. If I forget Thee, do not thou forget me.'

When Jesus was brought to the temple to be circumcised, dear Simeon, aged and faithful, feeling totally blessed, prayed 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace ... for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation ...'

And St Augustine, in his 'Confessions', admits that he cheekily used to pray 'Lord, make me chaste, but not yet'.

In a class of its own, of course, is the prayer Jesus himself has given us, which all Christians share and pray regularly: the Lord's Prayer.

But to hear what I think is my favourite prayer you need to have your radio on

at 3.00pm on Christmas Eve. This is the Bidding Prayer at the beginning of the Service of 9 Lessons and Carols from King's College, Cambridge. It's quite a long, big-hearted prayer, and what touches me most of all comes near the end, 'Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are one for evermore...'

The transcendent vision it captures is just so wonderful!

What is your favourite prayer?

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

## John's Gospel

**S**eparate can be used to describe the distinctive Fourth Gospel: the other three are called synoptic ('seeing together') as they follow the same outline and additions and share (in part) the same sources.

**A**lone can be used of the Gospel of St John – it stands alone and scholars are not sure if he even knew the other three, although his is the last to be written.

**I**nitially the Fourth Gospel starts at an earlier point – a beginning before time; Jesus is the Word made flesh who was with the Father from eternity.

**N**o birth stories are present but after the Prologue, John, like the others, tells of the Baptism of Jesus. His account of Jesus's words and works are presented in long discourses rather than short parables.

**T**wo halves – after the Prologue this is a Gospel of two halves: part 1 – a Book of Signs (John's word for miracles) and part 2 the Book of Glory (John's word for what Christ achieves and shows in his Passion and Resurrection).

**J**ohn, the Apostle, the son of Zebedee is not thought to be the author: mention is made of a 'beloved disciple' and 'testimony by an eye witness' and one who 'has written these things' – but no name is given.

**O**missions from the other Gospels are not what John supplies: he prefers long passages of teaching, including the distinctive 'I am' sayings.

**H**oly Week takes up much of the second half including the Entry into Jerusalem in chapter 12 leading to much teaching given at the Last Supper, albeit without mentioning the actual Institution of the Eucharist.

**N**otable in the Fourth Gospel is the grand and distinctive way of presenting the Gospel of 'the Word made flesh'; and that the name 'John' is attached to three Epistles and the Book of Revelation (or Apocalypse) even though this latter is clearly by a different author.

Epilogue: Following this series of varied points about the four Gospel writers it is worth remembering the final words of the Fourth Gospel: 'there are many other things Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written'. Nevertheless, vast number of books and articles on the Gospels, and indeed the whole Bible, continue to be published.

**Martin Banister**  
**St Albans Cathedral**

## A novel to read before you die...



Nine members of the Tring Team Parish Book Group, led by Dorothy Townshend, met via Zoom in January to discuss 'To Kill a Mockingbird' by Harper Lee.

Although written in 1960, it is set in the mid-1930s in the small town of Maycomb, Alabama. It is narrated by Scout Finch, 6 years old at the start of the novel, who lives with her lawyer father Atticus and her brother Jem, four years her senior. During the novel Scout, Jem and their friend Dill try to make their reclusive neighbour Boo Radley, who has not been seen outside since he was a teenager, leave his house. Atticus is asked to defend Tom Robinson, a black man wrongly accused of raping a white woman, and as the book develops, we see the journey to the trial, the trial itself and its aftermath, develop through Scout's eyes, as gradually both she and her brother learn some valuable life lessons from their father about tolerance, empathy and understanding.

The plot and characters are loosely autobiographical, based on Lee's own childhood, and the character of Dill, the boy who spends each summer

staying with his aunt in the house next door, is based on Lee's own friend from childhood, Truman Capote.

Although it deals with the serious and relevant issues of rape and racial inequality, the novel is also very warm, and humorous in parts too. The Book Group is often divided in its opinions about the books we discuss, but this time we were unanimous that it was a great book.

Comments that were made included that each chapter of the first part of the book is like a perfect picture and could almost stand as a short story on its own (the second half of the book gathers its own momentum towards the trial and its aftermath); and that the book is like a piece of music, with Scout thinking back to the beginning at the conclusion but from a changed viewpoint, having grown and developed.

Certainly, I think we all agreed that the book stirred up powerful emotions – Dorothy commented that an O level class she had taught the book to as a set text were angry, saying 'It's not fair'. So much in the novel is not fair, and yet there is a feeling that things are changing, moving on, even if slowly. Atticus, named after a Roman general who did not take sides in the Roman Civil War, says 'Everybody is created equal', and that's how he brings up his

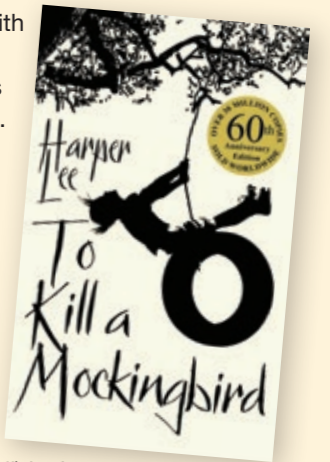
children, with kindness, and always reasonable.

A lesson that both Scout and Jem learn (and that we, the readers, might well take away from the book as well) is that it is courageous to start something when you know you may well not succeed but because it is the right thing to do. We also see Scout and Jem's growing realisation that life is not 'as simple as a matter of black or white'.

In 2006, British librarians ranked 'To Kill a Mockingbird' as a book that 'every adult should read before they die'. I had never read it before, and I found it life-changing. I have discovered so many wonderful books and authors through the Book Group.

We are next meeting on Sunday 25 April to discuss Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables', our Lenten classic. All are welcome.

**Anna Le Hair**  
**St Peter & St Paul**



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## Quote - unquote



This is a favourite Radio 4 programme of mine, Nigel Rees in the chair asking a panel of three or four people to tell him where a quote comes from. The programme has

been broadcast for many, many years and I am astounded that quotes are still being found. They are often from books, Shakespeare plays or something that has been said by well-known people from all walks of life, and have come into everyday speech.

'Shut that door', 'It's Goodnight from him and goodnight from me', 'Tiddlypom' to give a few. At the end of the programme, the panellists are asked to give a sample of something they have heard often from their parents, especially their childhood. They are often very funny, and no one knows how they started.

I have a few myself.

My father never swore, and would say to anyone who swore when 'us kiddies' were in ear shot, to please consider their language. However, he had his own phrases.

'Love a duck': this was to express his disgust at something, or just surprise. Now why a duck, he did not know, and we kiddies often laughed. It sort of rhymes, and Dad was born in the sound of Bow Bells, but there was nothing Cockney about him.

'Stone a crow' was another, really meaning the same thing, but a bit stronger. I don't think he had anything against birds: he really liked them.

If we were naughty, and we really weren't, but I was late home sometimes, and I really do mean by only five minutes, he would say 'I will give you a clump'. Now I can say with all my heart our father would never, never hit us. I had to knock on the front door to be let in, and there were those words 'I will give you a clump' as he stood in the doorway. There was nothing for it, but to walk between him and the doorpost, as quickly as possible, thinking 'Will he?' As I said, he never did, and never would, but I didn't know that then.

The last one to tell you is 'half a mo' which of course was to just wait a minute, before he could give the attention asked for. There is a little further story to that.

In 1949, Dad wanted to take Mum, my little sister and me on holiday. There was still some rationing, and our parents needed to 'watch the pennies' (ooh, there is another quote). Dad had seen an advert for a beach hut in Walton-on-the-Naze. It did have a two-ring stove, no toilet, and sleeping there at night was forbidden. However, off we went on the train with two cases. We got out of the station at the seaside, walked a few yards and in the window of a terraced house was a notice, saying 'vacant room for four.' So there we were, only a room with beds, no breakfast due to rationing. Within a couple of days, the lady who owned the house said my mother could cook a breakfast for us in her kitchen using, of course, food she had bought in the local shops.

We spent the week on the beach or walking, loving the hut, making friends, and a tiny bag of chips in the evening. It was a lovely holiday, and the name of that Beach hut was: 'Half A Mo'.

**Pam Russell**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

## Struggles of a woke Christian



During lockdown 3 I have taken to reading, or at least skimming, both 'The Guardian' and 'The Daily Telegraph' each day. I have an App from the library

so that I can see them on a tablet, to avoid a mountain of paper (and the cost!). I was prompted to start doing this by last December's Advent course. One of the homework exercises was to engage with points of view that differ from one's own. In general, the homework was quite challenging and it was good that our kind group leader did not press us too much on whether we had done it all. However, several of the ideas have stuck with me, including the one of reading a paper whose viewpoint I don't naturally share. It certainly makes me think a bit harder about my own thoughts and feelings.

It was in doing this that I have come across the frequent use of the term

'woke', always apparently in a derogatory fashion. Looking the word up I find that it comes from the US, is derived from 'awake', and means 'aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial



and social justice)'. The term seems to be applied frequently to the BBC (as a criticism), which seems odd as being attentive to facts sounds like a positive attribute for a news organisation. The phrase is also applied to the church (you can even find websites that will lay out checklists for finding out whether your church is 'woke'). Such attacks on the

Beeb and on the Anglican Church make me feel quite threatened and cross.

But, is it possible to be too 'woke'? Maybe not literally, but can the enthusiasm for correcting one set of injustices lead to oppression in the opposite direction? Also, it is tempting to be smug, indeed superior in one's attitude to the (apparently) benighted letter writers and pundits. Maybe I need to understand that the people criticising the BBC might themselves feel threatened and angered by the viewpoints that it allows, and by its judgement of what is balanced. I still have some way to go in being able to like the people who write to decry the 'wokeness' of the BBC, but I begin to see that I should try. I'll keep on reading two newspapers, at least while lockdown lasts, and look forward to the challenge that the Lent course brings.

**John Whiteman**  
**St Peter & St Paul**  
(Image is from *The Critic*: <https://thecritic.co.uk/a-conservative-chairman-wont-save-the-bbc/>)

## Two very different families

I was a child of a mixed marriage – my mum was Church of England and my dad was a Methodist/Baptist (he only ever defined his religion as 'Chapel'). My spiritual upbringing centred around St Cross, Wilstone, and Wilstone Baptist Chapel (which I think is now a rather nice house). Though I moved to London halfway through my life (thirty-one years ago now), I have still been in St Cross on Christmas Eve ever year of my life except two (2020 being one of them, and it just didn't feel right).

This rather mixed Christian background has meant I feel reasonably happy whether my worship is at the classical organ and everything sung (sometimes in Latin) end, or at the guitars and clapping end (though I draw the line at tambourines, and groan if anyone starts on 'Kumbaya'). But the theatrical in me means my heart does tend to light up more with a swelling organ, Priest in full colourful robes, and even a bit of incense if someone can manage it. Consequently, I am now much blessed to be a member of two entirely different congregations – both of which have been such a source of joy and comfort during an otherwise ghastly and grim year.

They are as follows:

St John's, Leytonstone, is a beautiful Victorian church in Leytonstone High Road, very much at the centre of a Parish that could not be much more diverse if it tried. It has a lovely Vicar

who looks about 14 (but probably isn't, since he has four children) and has a permanent utterly charming smile on his face. He has time for everyone, but is particularly conscious of the needs of children, and the very elderly or infirm, and has managed to make St John's quite trendy whilst also ensuring they cater for the old traditionalists. Indeed, when he says the Lord's Prayer in the modern version, he always says people should 'talk to God in the words which feel most comfortable' (meaning half of us stick firmly to our 'arts and thys'.)

He has a fluid but regular congregation whose backgrounds cover eighteen different homelands, so when we pass 'the peace' (in Covid-free times) you never know whether you will get a polite nod of the head from a Korean man or be clasped to the ample bosom of a friendly Jamaican lady.

The music does indeed feature guitars and recorders, but also piano, organ and – my particular favourite – saxophone.

St George's, Hanover Square, is a beautiful Georgian church just off Regents Street and of no small fame. It is the church mentioned in 'My fair lady' when Eliza's father gets married; it is also the church in which Handel was organist when living in London and where he tried out bits of the Messiah. It is as 'high' a church as you can get without actually joining the Jesuits. It has a gorgeous vicar with a splendidly

fruity voice, whose sermons are never less than thought-provoking – not a man who shies away from pithy questions. It has a professional choir and organist and some of the most marvellous music you will hear in any church in London (though other instruments definitely do not feature...).

It too has a fluid congregation, but is heavily made up of people who live in Mayfair... which is why I never read the lesson there without full make up and decent jewellery. On the other hand, it does incredible work for the homeless of central London, and you quite often find an array of ladies and gentlemen of the street dotted amongst those present. In Covid-free times, they seem to use the excuse of virtually any Saints day for a quick glass of fizz after the service – very much my sort of church.

In lockdown, both have done online services, so I have been able to do both in one day, and really enjoy the contrasts and feel part of two different, but deeply supportive, families at once. But on Christmas Day, St George's was open, so I drove into town and was carried away on a haze of marvellous music, and great ceremony. The choir were up in the gallery, and it truly felt like music from heaven coming down on us.

It still didn't make up for not being in St Cross, Wilstone, on Christmas Eve though... Maybe this year?!

**Teresa Greener (nee Edwards)**  
**sometime member of St Cross, Wilstone**

## Can you mow?

It will soon be that time when the grass around St Peter & St Paul's Church will start growing. In the past there have been a number of people willing to cut the grass on a rota basis. There are three areas and one area per week is cut.

Unfortunately last year a number of our members retired after many loyal years. We therefore need more support in order to keep the churchyard looking tidy.

If anyone feels that they could help, please contact me on 01442 828325.

**Barry Anscombe**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

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### Answers: Two truths and a lie

1. *Barbara Anscombe (3 is false)*
2. *Vivianne Child (2 is false: Looking back, I did 72 on-line Zoom meetings in May 2020 alone... so it's more like 66 a month. That is a shocking thing to discover about myself.)*
3. *Annette Reynolds (1 is false: You must be joking! I don't think I could even do that for matched sponsorship!)*
4. *John Allan (2 is false)*
5. *Barry Anscombe (2 is false: I only made Green Belt)*

## Cooling off down under



As you might remember from our last article, things have been rather stressful and turbulent over the last few months.

Luckily, the fact that the Christmas

break in Australia also coincided with the peak of summer meant that we had an unexpectedly long period of downtime from work. So we decided to make the most of it and went on a ten-day trip around Tasmania.



Covid-19 restrictions had eased in November, so we were finally able to travel inter-state, although it felt rather strange to be on an aeroplane again. Launceston in the northern part of Tasmania is about ninety minutes flight time from Sydney, but both the climate and the landscape are a world away. Tasmania is one of our favourite places in Australia, although we had previously had only one (or two in John's case) brief trips there. Many Australians have never been, and Tasmanians are often annoyed at their island being 'left off the map'. One thing we love about 'Tassie' is that – at about half the size of England – it is, by Australian standards, on a fairly manageable scale. In summer, its climate is closer to that of the UK than to the baked heat of Sydney. (We have just been through several consecutive days of 38-40C.)

Tasmania also has an astonishing variety to offer: stunning and empty beaches with sand as fine as flour; convict history at Port Arthur; plenty of vineyards; rainforests and untamed wilderness (more on that shortly); a bustling capital city, Hobart; and even lavender fields. There was also plenty of wildlife to spot. At one of our first stops – Bicheno on the east coast – we had the privilege of watching Little Penguins coming to shore each night. Later on our trip, we encountered plenty of echidnas



(a most curious animal), wallabies, wombats and even got a glimpse of the elusive platypus when we were staying overnight at beautiful Lake St Clair, the deepest freshwater lake in Australia. That stop was also the start of our venture into the so-called Western Wilds, consisting of temperate rainforests and alpine plains, mountains and glacial valleys, wild rivers and windswept coasts. It is part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, which covers about 20% of the island and is one of the last remaining areas of unspoilt wilderness in the world.



In order to gain UNESCO world heritage status, a site has to meet at least one of the ten selection criteria. The Tasmanian Wilderness meets seven distinct criteria: no place in the world has more! This includes the 'most important and significant natural habitats', 'exceptional natural beauty', and 'a unique testimony to a cultural tradition'. From the small harbour town of Strahan on the Western coast, we were able to take an eco-friendly cruise into this area of unspoilt beauty. To see the untouched rainforest with century- and millennia-old trees reflecting on the calm waters of the Gordon River was a sublime and humbling experience: all the more remarkable when one is aware that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, all this might have been destroyed by the planned building of a dam for hydroelectric power further down the river. A widespread campaign and protest movement led to a referendum, government action and even a legal battle between the state of Tasmania and the Australian federal government.

From Strahan we went back inland to our final stop in Cradle Mountain National Park, where it rains on average 266 days a year! But it's a beautiful place and full of wildlife: we had never even heard of pademelons – a small forest-dwelling wallaby – before our first trip here. On our return, we also had a chance to revisit Devils@Cradle, a conservation centre set up thirteen years ago to save the Tasmanian devil, whose numbers have been dramatically declining. When we last visited in 2013, the situation looked dire and it was feared that these fascinating creatures could be extinct within a decade. The devils were threatened by a cruel disease, a facial tumour that is passed on when they fight with each other – a common ritual. Much research and effort has gone into their plight since then, and we were delighted to hear that, although not out of the woods yet, their numbers have stabilised and extinction may be prevented. We have 'adopted' a young devil called Wilbur, one of the control population that is part of this project.



As wonderful as the adventure was, it was made even more special by the fact that about four days into our trip, state borders suddenly closed again, due to a small Covid-19 outbreak in Sydney. Had we gone just a week later (as originally planned) the whole trip would have been cancelled! Fortunately, we got lucky and were able to complete our holiday and return to Sydney on the evening of 23 December, just in time for a quiet and relaxed Christmas with 'summery' Christmas food (think roast potato salad, smoked salmon, gingerbread ice cream...), catching up with friends and family via Skype or Zoom, and recharging our batteries for what will no doubt be another turbulent year ahead. While the threat to our jobs seems less imminent, we are still in the middle of the 'restructure', and so uncertainty looks likely to be with us for quite some time.  
**Sylvie Magerstaedt**  
*formerly St Peter & St Paul*

## Brazil – a virtual holiday



Having explored ancient civilisations during the first half of our holiday, we moved on to more developed countries. After leaving La Paz we put our

watches forward an hour and landed in Rio about 9.00pm. We were staying at the Meridian Hotel, Copacabana, right on the beach. The temperature was 26° and, being at sea level, we could breathe normally! Rio has a population of five and a half million and there's a mountain range right in the middle of the city, with 1700 tunnels going through it!



The Portuguese usually called places they discovered after saints, but they arrived at Rio on 1 January – not a Saint's day – and chose its name, January River, because they thought the narrow entrance of the bay was a river mouth. It was the capital until 1960, when the capital moved to Brasilia 1,000 km inland, as the President wanted to open up the country.

After breakfast the next morning we set off to drive to El Corcovad, the 'hunchback rock' with the statue of Christ the Redeemer at the top. Don Pedro II had built the railway up the mountain in 1832 but in 1889 Brazil became a republic and he was exiled to Portugal. It was felt there should be a statue on the top, and after considering Atlas and Colombo, Christ was chosen.

We had to queue for the funicular railway and it was a twenty-minute ride up the mountain, with Busy Lizzie growing wild alongside the track. At the top we climbed the 200 steps to the foot of the statue. There were fantastic views and we spent about an hour up there taking photos before rejoining our coach to drive through some of the tunnels, one going straight underneath an apartment building and leading to an expensive residential area that also housed the

largest favela, or shanty town, in the country. We stopped at the beach, where our guide treated us each to a young coconut and we drank the water through a straw. (Water is the natural juice inside it; coconut milk has to be processed.)

Later we visited the Sunday Hippy Market in Ipanema, which was quite an experience, before returning to the hotel for lunch. In the afternoon we walked along the promenade where there were stalls selling various delicious foods, but obeying instructions, we hadn't taken any money with us.

The next morning we drove to Sugar Loaf Mountain. The cable car ride took only three minutes, but unfortunately it was shrouded in cloud and we couldn't see a thing! The mountain got its name because the Portuguese used to make brown sugar in cone-shaped buckets which, when dry, were turned upside down, resembling the shape of the hill.

At each hotel we stayed at throughout the holiday we'd been presented with a 'free gift' from 'H Stern', that usually took the form of a small silver stick-pin or brooch, and we visited their jewellery workshop in Ipanema. (Oddly enough, I was watching the Antiques Road Show the other evening and some exquisite jewellery was identified as being by H Stern, who apparently is much more famous than I'd realised!)

That evening we drove for 45 minutes to Bana and the Rialto Grill, apparently a typical Brazilian restaurant, where we were seated at a long table. We served ourselves starters from the salad buffet which had a vast selection including shushi and palm hearts. Then the waiters came round the tables with enormous hunks of meat on skewers – beef, lamb, spare ribs, chicken, chicken sausages and chorizo sausages. We chose what we wanted and they carved thin slices directly on to our plates with very sharp knives. There was also rice, broccoli and chips. The waiters kept returning throughout the meal offering us more meat.

The comprehensive choice of dessert was self-service, and coffee was served at our tables. Unless you specify coffee with milk, you're served tiny cups of very strong, very sweet coffee like Turkish coffee.

We were then driven to the venue for the Carnival Show, allegedly the most popular night out in Rio. It was certainly spectacular, with scantily clad girls and

male acrobats, all black. The costumes were brightly coloured and specially made for the Carnival and consisted of ostrich feathers, vast headdresses and sequined and embroidered robes. Appearance was everything, though, and the dancing very mediocre! The show finished just before midnight.



After a quiet day looking around the shopping mall – very disappointing – and walking along Copacabana Beach, we left for a two-night stay at the Iguacu Falls. These are on the borders of three nations, Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, and are completely breathtaking – much more spectacular than either Victoria or Niagra. They stretch for over 2½ miles (4km) with 275 separate falls, and fifteen rivers empty into them. Iguacu is an Indian word meaning The End of the Great Waters. 80% of the Falls are in Argentina and only 20% in Brazil. We walked alongside them, and saw funny little racoon-like creatures called coati mundi that are about the size of a cat and have long snouts and ringed tails.

The following day as we left to see the Falls from the Argentinian side there were toucans flying in the hotel garden, and at the Falls themselves swallows and parakeets were flying overhead and orchids and bromeliads were growing everywhere. All very exotic! We stopped at the Place of the Three Frontiers, where each of them has a tall painted cone – blue and white for Argentina, red and white for Paraguay and blue and yellow for Brazil. The three flags were also flying. That afternoon we went on a jungle safari – no animals, just a tour of exotic trees and plants, several of which were poisonous. This was followed by a white-knuckle boat ride under the Falls, where we had to wear life-jackets and got absolutely drenched!

The following afternoon we flew from Iguacu back to Sao Paulo, where we changed planes for the flight to Buenos Aires.

**Anthea Fraser**  
*St Peter & St Paul*

# Best-known English teacher in the world?

Jill Tracy Jacobs was born on 3 June 1951, in Hammonton, New Jersey. As a child, she lived in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, before moving to Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, a northern suburb of Philadelphia. She is the eldest of five sisters.



career. She attended Upper Moreland High School, where, by her own later description, she was somewhat rebellious and enjoyed her social life and being a prankster. However, she has recalled that she always had a love of English classes, and her classmates have said she was a good student. She graduated in 1969.

Jill married Joe Biden in 1977, becoming stepmother to Beau and Hunter, his two sons from his first marriage. She and her husband also have a daughter together, Ashley, born in 1981.

She has a bachelor's degree and a doctoral degree from the University of Delaware, as well as master's degrees from West Chester University and Villanova University. She taught English and reading in high schools for thirteen years and instructed adolescents with emotional disabilities at a psychiatric hospital.

From 1993 to 2008, Jill was an English and writing instructor at Delaware Technical & Community College. Since 2009, she has been a professor of English at Northern Virginia Community College and is thought to be the first wife of a Vice President to hold a paying job during her husband's tenure.

She is the founder of the Biden Breast

Health Initiative non-profit organization, co-founder of the Book Buddies program, co-founder of the Biden Foundation, is active in Delaware Boots on the Ground, and is co-founder of Joining Forces with Michelle Obama.

Jill Biden is the current First Lady of the United States. She was also previously the Second Lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017, when her husband Joe was Vice President.

It will be very interesting to follow her progress over the next four years. I am sure she will set many new precedents. I wonder also whether she will outshine Eleanor Roosevelt, an activist whose husband was the US president back in the 1930s and 40s.

Though widely respected in her later years, Eleanor Roosevelt was a controversial First Lady at the time for her outspokenness, particularly on civil rights for African-Americans. She was the first presidential spouse to hold regular press conferences, write a daily newspaper column, write a monthly magazine column, host a weekly radio show, and speak at a national party convention. On a few occasions, she publicly disagreed with her husband's policies.

**Bill Bradford, St Peter & St Paul**

Her father, Donald Carl Jacobs, was a bank teller and US Navy signalman during World War II, who afterwards attended business school and became head of a savings and loan institution in Philadelphia. His family name had originally been Giacoppo before his Sicilian father changed it. Her mother, Bonny Jean (Godfrey) Jacobs was of English and Scottish descent.

Jill often attended Sunday services at a Presbyterian church with her grandmother. Later, she independently took membership classes at nearby Abington Presbyterian Church and at age 16, was confirmed.

She always intended to have a

**Stephen Hearn**  
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# Lockdown learning



**20:10** 'Tomorrow!!!'

**20:11** 'Did I hear right? Until February half term?'

**20:12** 'Yes, the 15<sup>th</sup> I had to rewind to check that bit!'

**20:13** 'What about Keyworker

children? How can we organise that at this late notice?'

**20:14** 'Well I shall have to creep into school under cover of darkness to collect resources.'

**20:15** 'It's going to be a scramble to sort everything for tomorrow for them to engage!'

**20:16** 'I was expecting something but not that long. Sad times.'

**20:17** 'And he didn't know any of this until just now?'

So read some of the messages on our school staff group chat on Monday 4 January, following the government's sudden announcement that all schools would be closed from the following day.

The announcement followed days of uncertainty, during which Boris Johnson had proclaimed that keeping schools open was the government's priority. We had had an INSET training day that day, so no children were in school.

As we left, the latest news was that an announcement would be made at 8.00pm but keeping school open was a priority. I had done all my photocopying for the first day of term, and even put the children's Maths books in their new places, ready for the morning. There was a feeling that schools might close, but maybe in about a week.

As you know, suddenly we were obliged to revert back to remote teaching and learning. (It is not 'Home schooling' – teachers are doing the teaching, supported by parents supervising the activities.) As a school, we had discussed this possibility and so had been increasing our use of Google Classroom with the children during the

previous term when we were doing face-to-face teaching, so most of us had become familiar with it.

By 9:30am on the following day, all classes had set work for the children to access remotely. Some families chose to take the day as an extra day of the Christmas holidays, whilst others engaged immediately and got on with it straightaway.

I had gone into school to collect resources so I could teach from my dining room. This involved quite a few text books, a flip chart and white board with marker pens, and most importantly for me, my visualiser. This is a bit like a modern overhead projector, enabling me to show a book or a picture on a screen, which can then be included into a video. Most of our children have devices and internet access, but we are aware that not all have access to a printer. On the same morning, we made up home learning packs for each child, comprising their school pencil case, an exercise book, mini whiteboard and pen, and comprehension or workbooks for the older children. Parents were offered a slot to come and collect their packs, and any laptops that were needed to be borrowed, which meant we knew that all our pupils had access to the same basic resources.

Our pupils had worked hard during the Autumn term and we were anxious that they did not 'lose' the progress they had made, by this second school closure, so our expectations this time round are higher. Everyday a Maths and an English lesson are uploaded onto the Google classroom, to be submitted for 1.00pm. There is also a selection of afternoon lessons, such as Geography and Art, for pupils to choose from and complete one a day. I am teaching the sequence of lessons that I would have been teaching had we been in school – it takes a little longer to get through, but progress is being made – and all children are engaging and producing quality work. One of the oddest things

to get used to was recording myself teaching, as I am talking aloud to nobody, although occasionally the dog shows an interest, but, like all things, I have got used to it and it won't last for ever. The pupils watch the video, which shows them how to do the task, then they complete the work and submit it electronically for marking.

Initially, there were a few hiccups as we all adjusted to a Google doc being different from Word, learning how to create new documents and share them, and finding out that inserting an image or a photo is very simple. I teach children who are 9, 10 and 11, so most of them embrace new technology and are remarkably good at trying new things out and cascading tips to the rest of us.

We have a daily Google Meet (a bit like a zoom call) which gives everyone in the class an opportunity to see each other, ask questions and keep in touch. I am continuing to read our class novel to them, and we go through answers to some of the lessons, and have a weekly quiz. Reverend Michelle continues to provide a weekly Collective Worship for us, so we watch that together and have a discussion afterwards.

Sometimes we have issues with the internet – especially those of us living in villages. There is not much we can do about that, but it is frustrating. At the end of January it was Healthy Minds week, so we were focusing on Mental Health awareness and incorporating mindfulness activities into our meets. We even promoted Screen Free Friday, which will be hard for some of the children, but will give all of us a break from using a screen all day.

There was great excitement about the snow which fell towards the end of January, but one child wistfully commented: 'I don't suppose we'll ever have a snow day off school now that we can access everything remotely.' I dare say he is right – there are some advantages to remote learning.

**Gill Kinsey, St Peter & St Paul**

# Parish registers

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

**Peter Frederick Marson 90**  
**Winifred (Winnie) Davies 101**  
**William (Bill) Hall**

**Jean Bolton 83**  
**Hughie Garrad 61**

# Hairpiece



In 1940 I began to sprout from the head of a baby girl born in the Scottish Borders and for a few years all was well as I grew into a short bob, just requiring a trim.



A few years later My Owner (henceforth to be known as MO) moved with her family to Lancashire and I was plaited and tied with navy ribbons. In due course a visit to Mr Large, a very short hairdresser who knew how to treat split ends whether they existed or not, was deemed necessary.



Undoing my plaits and twirling my hair into numerous spirals, he ran a lighted taper up and down each one. This first abuse had the unpleasant side-effect of filling the cubicle with a powerful smell of burning, and while MO seemed entranced by the process, I wasn't.

1949 found me in the Lake District as MO continued her education at a boarding school. Here hair-washing with

green soft soap was infrequent, as were baths.

The nit-comb having been employed by Matron, I was dried in winter in a common room before the red bars of an electric fire or the flames of a coal fire, and in summer I could dry naturally which I much preferred. Sundays meant very tight plaits and no scratching me by MO at Church.

MO became a nurse in 1958 and my real trials began. MO had to look neat at work which conflicted with her desire to look fashionable off-duty. Hence I was subjected to being tightly wrapped round huge prickly hair-rollers and dried by the searing heat of a Pifco hair dryer before her Days or Nights Off.

This process facilitated the building of a Beehive and involved savage back-combing, cans of noxious hair spray, and dozens of metal hair grips. Occasionally to my alarm, a Rat, a clump of fake hair, would be hidden in me to increase the volume. In a lesser degree the same process was repeated for building a Chignon. How I envied those heads of hair belonging to stay-at-home girls.



Often in the small hours MO would return, attempt to dismantle me, fail, and have to try again before she began work.

Next in my litany of torments came powerful heated rollers and curlers (Mr Large, where were you when I really needed you?) but the true horror for me was the extreme heat and noise within the hairdryer at the Hairdressers. I was lucky when MO complained her head was beginning to burn and I had a brief break before it started again.



Fortunately two things happened after a few years of this torture. The fashion changed, MO got married, and all was calm for a couple of decades, apart from the loss of some of me each time MO had a baby. But I grew back. However, one day MO spotted some grey hairs and the Home Dye years began.

I resented the process by which I became variously vibrant in hue, feeling I looked completely un-natural. The last straw was the application of henna which dyed what I grew out of as well as me; I was very grateful when MO decided to give up and become natural.

My most recent challenge was my unexpected and complete disappearance, with a nylon, mesh-lined interloper taking my place for some months. I lay in wait, biding my time, and one day MO ran her hand over her scalp and found...me! We are happily re-united and at last MO treats me with deference and proper respect.

She and I have been companions for eight decades, and I have enjoyed sharing my story.

**Veronica Allan, Tring in Transition and Friend of the Memorial Garden**

# Be the light in the darkness



Holocaust Memorial Day took place at the end of January and 'Be the light in the darkness' is the rallying cry of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. It is a day especially carved out

to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur.

During World War II, 6 million Jewish women, men and children were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. It was an attempt at totally annihilating every Jew in Europe and shook the foundations of the civilised world. The persecution and segregation of people because of their race, religious beliefs, sexuality, abilities or gender is a deep shame that humanity has carried since the beginning of time and is sadly not a thing of the past. It exists with us every day, even in the most liberated of countries, just possibly a little better covered up. If we're not careful these atrocities will be treated as events only belonging to history.

In Malachi 3:1-5 we see that these issues were just as rife back then. The exact author of Malachi is unknown, with the name being a translation of a Hebrew word, meaning 'my messenger', and it is thought to be written around 500BC. The prophet makes it very clear that God will judge those who oppress their fellow human: those who pay unfair wages, those who oppress the widow, and the orphan, those who thrust aside those outside their communities and do not fear or understand the magnitude of God, all these being familiar to us today.

Jesus was Jewish and at Candlemas, celebrated at the beginning of February, we celebrate the day that he was taken to the temple by his parents to give thanks for his birth, an ancient Jewish tradition which occurs 33 days after a boy's circumcision.

It was also the Jewish tradition for the mother to attend so she could be purified after the birth. But something incredible happened during the presentation of Jesus. This was no ordinary baby: he was recognised by two experienced members of the temple, Simeon and Anna, as the

Saviour of the world, the total game changer, God, here on earth. What joy and hope there is! They could not believe their eyes.

The analogy of light is used often to describe Jesus: as an adult he would later refer to himself as 'the light of the world', guiding people along life's paths. It's a particularly useful image, especially in times of hardship and turmoil.

Jesus was indeed Jewish, and it is important not to forget his heritage, to remember that if he and his family were around during the WWII, they too would have been at risk of being thrown into concentration camps. It is abhorrent when some suggest that the Holocaust was some kind of Godlike revenge for the death of Jesus at the hands of the Jewish leaders of the day. This kind of notion is of course the opposite of Jesus' teachings. His arrival saw a change in the world, not the spark to ignite further divisions.

Jesus was sent not to forget the traditions of the past, but to build on them. His arrival denoted the fulfilment of the prophesy, along with a new order of things; to provide a new understanding, a new covenant that would be offered to everyone, not only a select few.

On Holocaust Memorial Day I attended a Zoom lecture via St Edmundsbury Cathedral, and the subject was the music of the Holocaust, made within the concentration camps at Auschwitz, where over 1 million people were killed. The emphasis, however, was not the music that was made under duress, for the purposes of propaganda, but rather more, on the music created out of hope and love, in spite of the atrocities that were happening.

It was an incredibly moving and profound evening. These people were in great pain, yet their faith in God and one another gave them hope and courage. Paul Tillich, a German-American theologian who lived during both World Wars, defined their courage as 'the self-affirmation of one's being in spite of a threat of nonbeing'. He relates courage to anxiety, anxiety being the threat of non-being and the courage to be what we are, to combat that threat.

Since the beginning of humankind, millions have lost their dignity and humanity due to the hatred of others,

lives being snuffed out like the flame of a candle. Some people justified their actions by saying it was in the name of religion but as we all know, religion does not invoke hatred: people do. God is love and Jesus is the light who shines in our lives. I pray that when injustices arise, when we witness hatred, when we are called upon, we will not be silent.

The words in the panel were found on a cell wall in a concentration camp – and speak into our current situation today, giving us some perspective on the hardships others have endured for their faith.

*I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining  
And I believe in love, even when there's no one there.  
And I believe in God, even when He is silent.*

*I believe through any trial, there is always a way  
But sometimes in this suffering and hopeless despair  
My heart cries for shelter, to know someone's there  
But a voice rises within me, saying hold on my child, I'll give you strength,  
I'll give you hope. Just stay a little while.*

*I believe in the sun even when it is not shining  
And I believe in love even when there's no one there  
But I believe in God even when he is silent  
I believe through any trial there is always a way.*

*May there someday be sunshine  
May there someday be happiness  
May there someday be love  
May there someday be peace....*

**Sarah Marshall  
Tring Team**

## An introduction to John Betjeman



John Betjeman was born in Lissenden Gardens, North London in 1906, the son of a housewife and 'lady who lunches' and the owner of a business

making high quality silverware and high-end homeware (their bestseller was a decanter set which enabled the owner to lock up his/her port, brandy, whisky, etc so that the servants could not have a sly slip).

John Betjeman was the most popular English poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scorned by some in the literary establishment for being too popular (he outsold many novelists), but not by Dylan Thomas or Philip Larkin; his key themes include love, lust, class, snobbery, nostalgia, suburban life plus faith and doubt. He was a great lover of Victorian architecture, the railways and the Church of England. He understood children and adolescents.

His father's family were of Dutch extraction and were previously called Betjemann but during World War I they dropped the second 'n' as it looked too Germanic (at one prep school he was taunted with 'Betjeman's a German spy. Shoot him down and watch him die').

From the Dragon School in Oxford he went to Marlborough College, the public school in Wiltshire, where he was not good at sport (a bad start) so he was bullied and witnessed more and worse bullying; not unsurprisingly, he hated his

time there though he found the chapel services a refuge.

He went to Magdalen College, Oxford, which he loved (apart from C S Lewis, one of his tutors) especially the rich variety of churches in the city but he was sent down after failing his Divinity paper, then part of the English course.

After Oxford he worked briefly as a private secretary, school teacher and film critic for the 'Evening Standard' where he also wrote for their high-society gossip column, the Londoner's Diary. He then got a more permanent job at 'The Architectural Review'.

In 1939, Betjeman was rejected for military service in World War II but found war work with the films division of the Ministry of Information, becoming in 1941 British press attaché in Dublin. Betjeman is rumoured to been involved with the gathering of intelligence and was supposedly selected for murder by the IRA. The order was rescinded after a meeting with an IRA man who was impressed by his works.

He was a regular broadcaster on radio and television where he affected a bumbling persona which endeared him to thousands (he was sharper than he appeared). When the 'gangster interviewer', Michael Parkinson, asked him if his poetry was really relevant, quick as a flash he responded, 'Oh, I hope not' and then charmed Parkinson into submission.

He was a lifelong Anglo-Catholic whose poems touched on both faith and doubt. His poem 'Felixstowe, or

The Last of her Order', has moved many a Protestant such as me to tears and admiration. His poem 'The conversion of St Paul' is likewise well worth reading.

There is a wonderful statue of him by the sculptor Martin Jennings near the Champagne Bar close to the Eurostar Platforms in St Pancras Station, a wonderful piece of Victorian architecture which he played a major role in saving.

He died at his home in Trebetherick, Cornwall, on 19 May 1984, aged 77, and is buried nearby at St Enodoc's Church.

**Jon Reynolds, Tring Team**

### What is conversion?

Not at all

For me the experience of St Paul,  
No blinding light, a fitful glow  
Is all the light of faith I know  
Which sometimes goes completely out  
And leaves me plunging into doubt  
Until I will myself to go  
And worship in God's house below —  
My parish church — and even there  
I find distractions everywhere.

What is Conversion? Turning round  
To gaze upon a love profound.  
For some of us see Jesus plain  
And never once look back again,  
And some of us have seen and known  
And turned and gone away alone,  
But most of us turn slow to see  
The figure hanging on a tree  
And stumble on and blindly grope  
Upheld by intermittent hope.  
God grant before we die we all  
May see the light as did St Paul.

## Letter from Orkney



We're one year into the pandemic and still counting. Who knows when life will return to be as it was. Will it ever be as it was?

I'm trying to think of the positives that have evolved from this situation – not easy – but I'm giving it a go if only to make life a little more cheery. Orkney has a low population density compared to most other places in the UK and so keeping socially distanced is not such a challenge as elsewhere, especially in the winter in lockdown when we're all huddled indoors at home. Therefore every interaction is valued and treasured as never before. We are fortunate that cafes are open and so an occasional meet up with 'one other household', as permitted, is a real treat.

Spring is springing! The smallest signs are always welcome in any year, but this year they are even more precious. After

the longest winter ever and so much dreadful news, snowdrops are appearing, daffodil shoots are cautiously peering above the ground, there

are longer days (it's light at 4.00pm, hooray!), and crisp sunny mornings are truly wondrous. I notice, really notice, the season starting to change; and with it comes hope: hope that as infection rates drop, we can venture out freely and travel south, and friends from the south can travel to see us, especially as Staycations appear to be the way forward this year. I try not to have high expectations



for anything much – I'm fed up with cancelled plans – so for me the key is to see, hear, feel and immerse myself in the beauty around me here. From the comments I have seen from folk in Tring, that is something that is being enjoyed and treasured there. I can't wait to visit and see it again for myself!

**Carrie Dodge  
St Mary's, Stromness**

## Blame the Vicar

When things go wrong it's rather tame  
To find we are ourselves to blame,  
It gets the trouble over quicker  
To go and blame things on the Vicar.  
The Vicar, after all, is paid  
To keep us bright and undismayed.  
The Vicar is more virtuous too  
Than lay folks such as me and you.  
He never swears, he never drinks,  
He never should say what he thinks.  
His collar is the wrong way round,  
And that is simply why he's bound  
To be the sort of person who  
Has nothing very much to do  
But take the blame for what goes wrong  
And sing in tune at Evensong.

For what's a Vicar really for  
Except to cheer us up? What's more,  
He shouldn't ever, ever tell  
If there is such a place as Hell,  
For if there is it's certain he  
Will go to it as well as we.  
The Vicar should be all pretence  
And never, ever give offence.  
To preach on Sunday is his task  
And lend his mower when we ask  
And organise our village fêtes  
And sing at Christmas with the waits  
And in his car to give us lifts  
And when we quarrel, heal the rifts.

To keep his family alive  
He should industriously strive  
In that enormous house he gets,  
And he should always pay his debts,  
For he has quite six pounds a week,  
And when we're rude he should be meek  
And always turn the other cheek.  
He should be neat and nicely dressed  
With polished shoes and trousers  
pressed,  
For we look up to him as higher  
Than anyone, except the Squire.  
Dear People, who have read so far,  
I know how really kind you are,  
I hope that you are always seeing  
Your Vicar as a human being,  
Making allowances when he  
Does things with which you don't agree.  
But there are lots of people who  
Are not so kind to him as you.  
So in conclusion you shall hear  
About a parish somewhere near,  
Perhaps your own or maybe not,  
And of the Vicars that it got.

One parson came and people said,  
'Alas! Our former Vicar's dead!  
And this new man is far more "Low"  
Than dear old Reverend So-and-So,  
And far too earnest in his preaching,  
We do not really like his teaching,

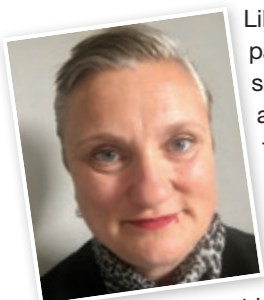


He seems to think we're simply fools  
Who've never been to Sunday Schools.'  
That Vicar left, and by and by  
A new one came. 'He's much too  
"High",'  
The people said, 'too like a saint;  
His incense makes our Mavis faint.'  
So now he's left and they're alone  
Without a Vicar of their own.  
The living's been amalgamated  
With one next door they've always hated.

Dear readers, from this rhyme take  
warning,  
And if you heard the bell this morning  
Your Vicar went to pray for you,  
A task the Prayer Book bids him do.  
'Highness' and 'Lowness' do not matter,  
You are the Church and must not scatter.  
Cling to the Sacraments and pray  
And God be with you every day.

**John Betjeman  
Poem included at the request of  
Teresa Greener**

## Back to school



Like many other parents, I have school-age children at home. I had a funny moment the other day which took me right back to my own schooldays – and not in a good way.

Excuse the terrible photo of me when I was back at school: it was taken a very long time ago!

I have been working alongside my youngest son who is currently Year 7 and autistic and requires a fair amount of support and motivation. He has no problems academically but he can lose focus quite easily. I can't say I am



surprised, and I have a lot of sympathy, but his school is quite strict and the work has to be done.

I start every morning checking his timetable and last week I had a real flashback moment when I heard myself groan: 'Urgh – double Geography!' Yep people. I'm back to the days of rating my days according to the subjects I have – oops – my son has. And Geography was not my favourite. Oddly most of my children seem to have a love and a talent for the subject so actually it's not so bad now I'm not being graded.

Worst days? Just as when I was a teenager – double Maths. Urgh!  
**Afra Willmore,  
St John the Baptist, Aldbury**

# Tweet of the month

Humans have been introducing plants and animals into new areas for thousands of years. Sometimes this has been done deliberately for a variety of reasons: a reminder of home, a food source or because they are considered to be aesthetically pleasing. Also it has also been done accidentally either by things 'hitching a lift' as people travel about or by being taken to a new area as a pet or to be planted in a garden and then escaping and breeding in the wild.

It is fair to say that most of these introductions have been detrimental. The introduction of mammals to New Zealand and small islands has been devastating to some of the native species, bringing some species close to the brink of extinction and tipping others over that brink. In some cases removing introduced species from the area, again typically small islands, has led to species increasing in numbers to the point they are no longer threatened with extinction. So sometimes it is possible to repair the damage we have done – but only in a minority of cases.

The Mandarin Duck is a species that was inadvertently introduced to Britain

when they escaped from captivity, although some may have been released deliberately. It is easy to understand why these beautiful birds were brought to this country from their native China – although I do have friends who think they are gaudy and over the top. What is perhaps surprising is that they are naturally this beautiful and haven't been selectively bred to look like this.

The name Mandarin originally comes from Portugal rather than China. This name was given to the duck along with officials in the Chinese Civil Service and other things like the type of orange; and indeed it is fair to say that the duck does have prominent orange 'sails' and facial feathers. The scientific name for Mandarin Duck is *Aix galericulata*. *Aix* is a Greek word thought to mean a bird that dives in water (which Mandarin doesn't do so this is curious). However, *galericulata* means hooded or capped, and no doubt refers to the male's ornate head feathers that make it look like it has



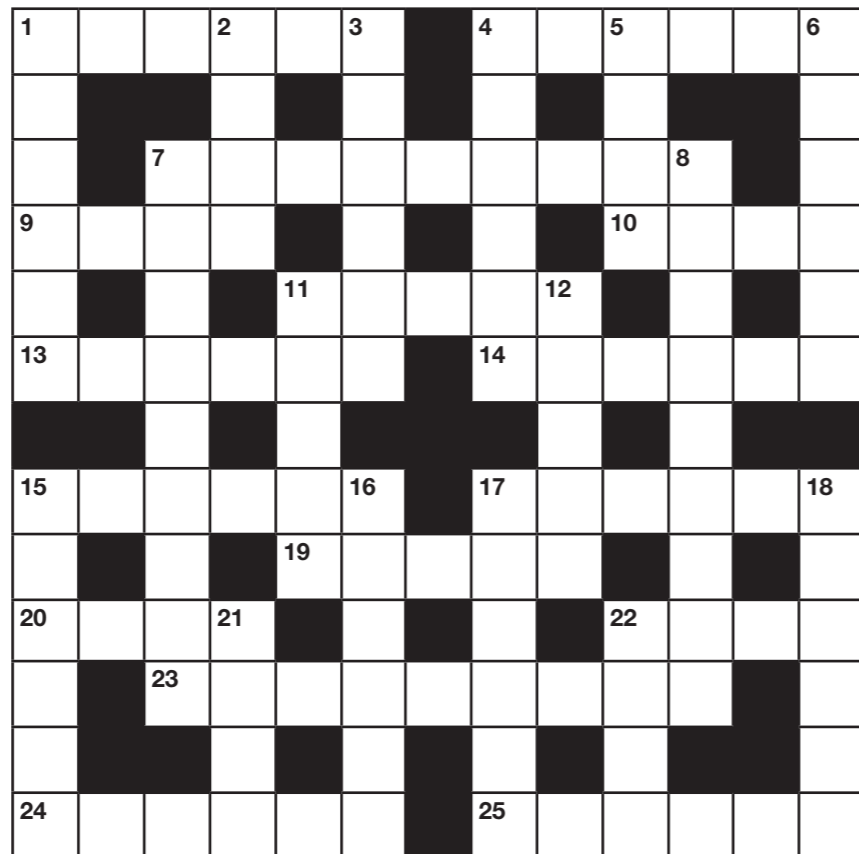
a hood – so that at least makes sense. Another curious fact about Mandarins is that they typically nest in holes in trees and are frequently found perched in trees.

As introductions go, Mandarin in Britain seem to be relatively harmless, although competition for nest holes with Goldeneye could become an issue in parts of Scotland should Mandarin become established there. However, with the Asian population declining, it may well be that the European population becomes more important for Mandarin's survival. For anyone wanting to see this beautiful bird, Virginia Water is one of the easiest places to see them, but they do also turn up at Tring Reservoirs. It only goes to show that what sometimes looks like a mistake can turn out to be a good thing; and even be something that God looks at and thinks that it is good.

**Roy Hargreaves  
St Peter & St Paul**

# Crossword

- |                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>                       | <b>DOWN</b>                   |
| 1. Focus of worship (6)             | 1. Queen's favourite dogs (6) |
| 4. Morning service (6)              | 2. eg: '.... of Capri' (4)    |
| 7. Priest (9)                       | 3. Despot (6)                 |
| 9. Delight (4)                      | 4. Chaos (6)                  |
| 10. Procedure in a service (4)      | 5. Rip (4)                    |
| 11. Grimace (5)                     | 6. Son of Jacob (6)           |
| 13. Set out (3) (3)                 | 7. Roman army officer (9)     |
| 14. One of the bronze age (6)       | 8. Jewish elder (9)           |
| 15. Church caretaker (6)            | 11. Excellent (5)             |
| 17. Came to the same conclusion (6) | 12. Sounds of bells (5)       |
| 19. Large quantities (5)            | 15. Several of 7 across (6)   |
| 20. Piece of meat (4)               | 16. Save (6)                  |
| 22. Gasp (4)                        | 17. Well pleased (6)          |
| 23. Spring bulb (9)                 | 18. Stores (6)                |
| 24. Monument (6)                    | 21. Treaty (4)                |
| 25. An ancient Celtic religion (6)  | 22. Hindu priest (4)          |



Answers on page 34

# Living with evolving certainty



Vaccination against Covid-19 prevents illness in the majority of people subsequently exposed to the virus; they would otherwise have become poorly.

The UK vaccines have been extensively tested for their efficacy (and safety) in achieving this wonderful result, and serious illness has essentially been eradicated in vaccinees, with about 95% protected by vaccination against milder illness.

However, after being vaccinated against Covid-19, you are asked to continue to comply with the prevailing lockdown measures, because of important differences between illness prevention and 'sterile immunity', in which the infectious virus may be eliminated from the body.

If everyone developed sterile immunity, the disease would disappear from the population and Covid-19 would be eliminated without the need for distancing etc. However, we do not know which vaccinated individuals remain infectious, so restricting everyday activities remains essential.

In the previous article on immunity, the complexities of the immune system were described. Whether or not a person develops sterile immunity depends at least partly on where an immune response is triggered by the vaccination. Naturally generated immunity of gut origin infections such as polio arises initially within the digestive tract, and immunity to Covid-19 probably arises from the linings of the nose mouth and respiratory tract.

In the 1950s, the Salk vaccine containing inactivated polio virus was given by injection, by-passing the gut; although it produced protective immunity, it allowed live 'wild' virus to breed and be shed from the gut. The oral vaccines containing weakened virus on sugar-lumps initiated immunity within the gut, so that wild virus was unlikely to gain a foothold and be passed on by immunized people. The benefit to the community is obvious.

The injected Covid-19 vaccines by-pass the respiratory lining and may leave viable virus in these sites whilst immunizing the individual against serious illness. A substantial proportion of

people who are spared illness by being vaccinated continue to harbor live virus which can spread.

At present, we do not know (without testing) which individuals become sterile to Covid-19 and which remain contagious. Nor do we know if the different vaccines will evoke more or less sterile immunity than their fellows.

From the standpoint of preventing illness in individuals, the current situation is good, but from the standpoint of eliminating the virus from the community, we remain dependent on the distancing restrictions, adjusted by collecting data on changes in the pandemic. The data include the 'R' statistic, rate of new cases occurring, and the rate of hospitalisation.

Analyses of what might happen during the pandemic are routinely produced to illuminate decision making, mainly using computer models. The outcomes are imprecise owing to the necessary inclusion of estimates and technical assumptions. One might feel overwhelmed by the ifs and buts of calculations; they are reasonably simple in principle, but, as mentioned, they are dependent on assumptions.

Pressure on the NHS, mainly bed occupancy, has been a clear endpoint for gauging control measures. Other endpoints vary in wooliness, for example, financial detriment to sectors in the economy, and it will be interesting to see if they supplant the current NHS-based objective.

Living with evolving certainty is the new normal. In a partially vaccinated population, the outcome of restricting activities on the spread of virus has to be worked out as an ongoing exercise. The containment of the pandemic and resumption of normal life are what we all want. With Covid-19 this is new territory, and to people keen to get on with their lives, frequent changes of advice may be tiresome, but proceeding with caution is sensible.

At the time of writing, none of the mutations in Covid-19 has resulted in virus which evades immunity engendered by the first wave of vaccines. In contrast with an ineffective initial 2020 programme of 'test, trace and isolate', strenuous attempts are now being made to identify and eliminate new cases caused by mutated virus. The strategy is targeted on any new variant case and their ring of contacts; it stands a good chance of being a useful adjunct to the immunisation programme and should delay the need to tweak the vaccines.

Experts advising the government are feeling their way as data accumulate, and in journalistic terms this is not the type of material that excites the media. David Spiegelhalter, the eminent statistician, said recently on the radio that he was tearing his hair out at the misrepresentation of data by the media. Clearly the nuances of science are testing many of the media beyond their limits. The narratives are mainly neither simple nor necessarily exciting, so not only must we exert patience, but we need to be ready to take a pinch of salt to some of what we hear or read – it's knowing which bits are reliable that is the problem!

**Dr Michael Sherratt, Corpus Christi**

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*Beethoven: Appassionata sonata*  
and music by Liszt, Brahms, Bizet & Lloyd Webber

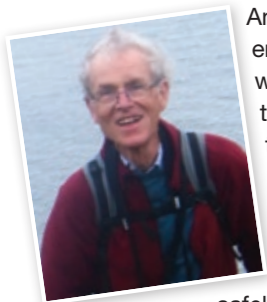
**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March**  
at 3pm



We are hopeful this can be, at the least, live-streamed from church, but for the latest details, visit:

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

# Officially retired...



An earthquake engineer is someone whose job it is to try to ensure that buildings, bridges and other structures can withstand earthquakes

safely. It was my main occupation for nearly forty years and formed the main basis for a wonderful career, providing plenty of travel to interesting and remote places, where I met many memorable, and mostly friendly, individuals.

It also appealed to my nerdish, technical side, because the technology for achieving earthquake resistance was developing very rapidly throughout my career (it still is), so the possibilities for helping to make buildings safe kept on becoming more diverse as my career developed. The downside was that to keep abreast of my field, I had to spend a significant amount of time reading research papers, many of which were long, quite boring and difficult to understand. Now I'm retired, I'm spared



that, and it's rather nice to be able to spend more time with my violin... not to mention my wife, family and friends, of course!

The first half of my career was spent working for big organisations – the engineering consultancy firm Arup in London and Nigeria, Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) in Sierra Leone and a road contractor in a beautiful but muddy corner of Suffolk. If you travel on the A14 from Bury St Edmunds to Ipswich, you will pass over some of the bridges I helped build, which I believe haven't fallen down yet.

The last quarter century of my career was spent as a sole trader, advising other consultancies, some big companies, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British Council and Ahmed from Walthamstow (among others) on matters I claimed some expertise in. To succeed as a sole trader, you do need quite a lot of luck, and I was lucky. One big break was that I started off on my own at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Margaret Thatcher's decision to set up an embassy in each of the countries created by the Soviet collapse meant there were lots of new British embassies in seismic areas of the world for me to inspect and advise on.

I can confidently claim to name the capitals of the five Central Asian republics, all of which I visited at the expense of you, the tax payer, courtesy of the FCO. This was hugely enjoyable, most of the time, but it sometimes led to rather anxious experiences. However, I learnt not to panic, even when almost running out of fuel miles from anywhere and it wasn't clear if the nearest filling station would have any petrol.

Perhaps my closest brush with death was in Dushanbe (which, as of course you know, is the capital of Tajikistan – or will do when it next comes

up as a pub quiz question). With some FCO colleagues, I had gone to eat at a local restaurant. In Andrew Marr's words – big mistake! For the next two days, I could retain nothing – liquid or solid – for more than about 30 seconds, and I faced the terrible prospect (to be avoided at all costs) of ending up in a Dushanbe hospital being dehydrated. Luckily, one of my FCO friends suggested that drinking Sprite might help. Amazingly, it proved easy to get some; my corridor of the drab Soviet-style hotel where we were staying had a soft-drinks cabinet, controlled by a full time and rather terrifying corridor-monitor lady and (thank goodness!) it contained the Russian equivalent of Sprite. Money changed hands, I drank the bottle – and lived to tell the tale!

My career meant I met many interesting people in a huge variety of circumstances; I've had enjoyable chats to various ambassadors in a number of different situations, both picturesque and banal: queuing up behind them while waiting my turn for the photocopier, strolling through the local market and chatting about the absurdities of the dictator currently in charge of the country I was visiting, getting friendly advice on the best Nepalese temples to visit. And not just ambassadors: I've had conversations with taxi drivers, local colleagues and others on my trips abroad which touched on deeper personal issues after quarter of an hour than I've only achieved here, if ever, after many years of friendship. But a warning: I had to be prepared to be treated (very occasionally) as a lesser citizen because I was merely an engineer. That meant there was no meeting for me with Her Majesty's High Commissioner to Pakistan, either at the photocopier or in a grand office; the highest diplomatic official I met (very briefly) was three ranks down, and the 'dips' (diplomats) messed separately from us lower classes.



I have been gradually ramping down my paid work over the last five years or so and Covid-19 has meant almost no requests for my (paid) services have come my way recently (although I am still expected to assist my professional institutions unpaid in various ways!). So at the end of last year, I announced that I was officially retired. Do I miss the work and the excitement? To some extent, yes

I do, but it is much better to stop while you're still enjoying it and have something to offer. My carbon footprint will, I hope, benefit from the reduction in long international jet flights, and it is good to have a bit more time for loved ones, the garden, music and so on – though 'spare time' still seems in short supply.

Would I recommend becoming an earthquake engineer to a younger

generation? Definitely – but it is just one of the many careers in engineering that I would love to persuade school leavers to take up. Engineers help to shape, preserve and develop our world (I would argue) as much as do doctors, politicians and artists and (I can assure you) our job is often just as crucially centred on people.

**Edmund Booth, St Peter & St Paul**



## Let us dream...



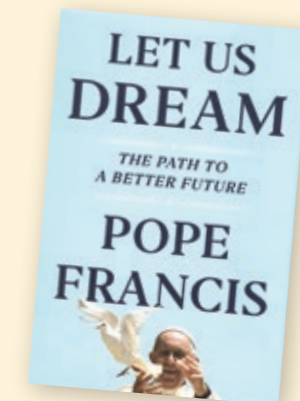
These are difficult times for the world. As US President Joe Biden said in his inaugural speech on 20 January, 'A cry for survival comes from the planet itself. A cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear.'

Pope Francis has expressed his hopes for a better future in the recently published book 'Let Us Dream - The Path to a Better Future', written in collaboration with Dr Austen Ivereigh, Fellow in Contemporary Church History, University of Oxford. As the Pope says in the Prologue 'This is a moment to dream big, to rethink our priorities – what we value, what we want, what we seek – and to commit to act in our daily life on what we have dreamed.'

In Part one of the book, 'A Time to See', the Pope reflects on what has been happening in the world. 'How did we become blind to the preciousness of creation and the fragility of humanity?... I believe that what has persuaded us is the myth of self-sufficiency, that whispering in our ears that the earth exists to be plundered; that others exist to meet our needs...' He remarks, for example, how many of those in

the world do not have housing where social distancing is possible, nor clean water to wash. On the other hand, social distancing, he observes, 'has made some more vulnerable to online grooming and other kinds of abuse'. The world he says 'is God's gift to us... The damage to our planet stems from the loss of this awareness of gratitude'.

Part two of the book is entitled 'A Time to Choose'. The Pope observes here that 'A time of trial is always a time of distinguishing the paths of the good that lead to the future from other paths that lead nowhere or backward'. He stresses that '...we need always to keep in mind how any decision we make might impact the poor'. This, the Pope stresses, is a time for discernment. 'Discerning the sign of the times allows us to make sense of change...' The disruption of Covid-19 has given us 'a space in which to reflect, question and dialogue... The discernment step allows us to ask: What is the Spirit telling us?' During his papacy the Pope has reinvigorated the ancient practice of synodality. 'In the dynamic of a synod, differences are expressed and polished until you reach, if not consensus, a harmony that holds on to the sharp notes of its differences... In the Church, the one who brings about the harmony is the Holy Spirit'. In the rushed life



that many of us were leading before the pandemic we were often forced to make decisions before giving proper time to thought and prayer for guidance. The synodal process, the Pope says 'is something our world now needs badly'.

Part three is 'A Time to Act'. 'If we are to come out of this crisis better, we have to recover the knowledge that as a people we have a shared destination. The pandemic has reminded us that no one is saved alone. As a nation', he says, 'we must commit to meet the United Nation's sustainable goals by 2030'. The Pope says a lot more too.

This is a book which is very readable and is recommended, and I believe that the Pope will have been guided by the Holy Spirit in the thoughts and reflections to be found there. 'Let us dream' is published by Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, ISBN: 978-1-3985-0220-8.

**Michael Demidecki, Corpus Christi**



# Order out of chaos

For an ex-Rover apprentice who gave up an engineering career to become a priest, starting work in the Chaplaincy at Woodhill Prison in Milton Keynes felt like returning to the shop floor. The Revd Alan Hodgetts was at Woodhill nine years, looking after the needs of prisoners. His story begins when he was baptised as a child, but his parents were not churchgoers. He had no church experience until his wife Sue decided she wanted to be confirmed so they would not be hypocritical when they got married in church.

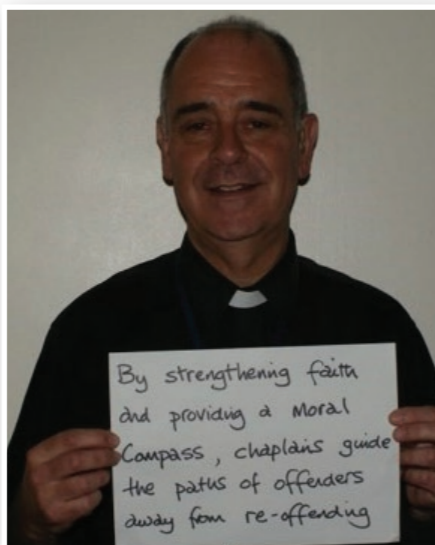
'She was confirmed on St Valentine's Day and we were married the Saturday after,' says Alan, who had a conversion experience over that period of time. 'It was a Damascus Road experience. I was confirmed the same year and began to have a sense of vocation around that time. It was a mystical experience. It was an odd image in a church with a Gothic arch, I can still see it now. I was in a darkened building and light was shining through the doors. I knelt in front of this amazing light. I then began to try and work out what that could possibly mean. I shared with the Rector of the parish that God might be calling me to ordained ministry.'

That calling was confirmed and Alan, who by then had a young family, studied at St Stephen's House in Oxford. 'My parents thought I was giving everything up in industry. I had an engineering degree and I was going off to study theology at St Stephen's,' says Alan, who completed two curacies, one in Birmingham and one in Hereford, before becoming the incumbent at Effingham with Little Bookham in Guildford and later St John's, Merrow. There he trained other ministers, including Lay Readers and two curates.

But he eventually got what he describes as itchy feet spiritually. 'I went through a process of discernment, this time nothing to do with visions and mystical gothic arches. I trained as a spiritual director and that was a ministry I really enjoyed. I was trained in the Ignatian tradition,' says Alan, who remembers a spirituality training day on praying not to be deaf to the "call of the king". 'That was my prayer,' says Alan, who was pushing various doors to see which would open. 'I had these successful incumbencies but also a sense of where else God might be calling me,' he says.

Alan's first experience with offenders was when prisoners from HM Prison Send were doing day-release work in his churchyard. The rehabilitation officer from Send, which had later become a women's prison, invited him in, looking for work experience opportunities for prisoners. Around that time, shortly before the Feast of Christ the King, Alan was inspired by the Gospel of the Day: 'I was in prison and you came to see me.'

This was closely followed by picking up the Church Times and spotting an advert for a prison chaplain while on a parish retreat. He knew he must apply and when he was accepted, he was eventually placed at HMP Woodhill. He was there from 2006 to his retirement.



'As you work in the prison it changes around you. Symbolically the chapel is in the centre of the campus and the changes feel as though they are taking place around you,' says Alan, who is also a Benedictine oblate, a calling which involves vows of stability, obedience and conversion of life.

'Although Ignatian spirituality is very important to me those three promises of stability are key to what makes me tick and why I am still at Woodhill. The prison changes, the population changes but prisoners need a place of stability and the chaplaincy can offer that.'

And how does a small chaplaincy even begin to meet the needs of over 800 prisoners, some of them convicted of offences related to extreme violence. 'Our role as a prison is to protect the public. The inmates normally progress through the categories towards release.'

'Some of the men in here are the most dangerous prisoners. A white van with a police escort usually indicates

the presence of someone who presents the most danger to the public,' he says. 'It's about discerning what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. It's about encouraging independent living. I met with an ex-offender last week. He'd served an 18 year sentence and what he said echoed what one of the early desert fathers said, that his cell taught him everything. This offender said that his cell nurtured his relationship with God and it was a sustaining relationship that gave him purpose and life.' Alan quotes James 1:2-4 as a verse that is central to the work of a prison chaplain:

'My brothers, you will always have your trials but, when they come, try to treat them as a happy privilege; you understand that your faith is only put to the test to make you patient, but patience too is to have its practical results so that you will become fully-developed, complete, with nothing missing.'

He also cites the Parable of the Talents which was the Gospel for Prisons Sunday. It is a story in which Jesus encourages listeners to do the best with the gifts they have been given.

'The guys here don't appreciate the potential they have for good. Helping them to realise that potential is what I'm about,' he says. Alan's work includes liaising with organisations that help inmates to strengthen bonds with their families (50 per cent of male offenders have a dependant under 18) and the New Leaf mentoring scheme, that helps newly released ex-offenders rebuild their lives on the outside.

'The biggest challenge is to encourage people to be more dependent on God than on his servants. We try and help the community see that ex-offenders don't have horns and forked tails. They are guys who suffer, whose partners get cancer, have miscarriages and who send presents to their own children while they are in here,' says Alan, who adds that many sons of offenders often go on to commit crimes themselves.

'If people can see offenders as human beings, as someone's son, brother, or father that might start to change their perceptions. It's a case of "there but by the grace of God go I" and in some of their lives God's grace has an awful lot to do to change them. Chaplaincy is about creating order out of chaos.'

*Alan Hodgetts was priest in Merrow when Huw Bellis was curate.*

# In memory of Frank Dalton

Frank Dalton was born in Manchester in 1937 but his work led him to travel widely, from East Africa to Cyprus, High Wycombe to West Wales before settling in Tring towards the end of his life.

Frank was a scientist, and more specifically a meteorologist. If you Google him you will find his book 'The Weather' published in 1977. For most of his working life Frank worked for the Met Office. In practice this meant that he was a civilian seconded to the MOD and the family have fond memories of the Officers Mess when living abroad.



Frank would have four month tours of duty on a weather ship which would quite literally drift in the mid Atlantic. For a period Frank was the voice of the weather on Radio 2 and Radio 4. You may well remember hearing "And now over to Frank Dalton for weather". Frank was offered the chance of presenting the weather on television or having a promotion. He took the promotion and his good friend Bill Giles became the TV weatherman.

Frank was introduced to his wife Letitia on a blind date in 1957 and they married in 1960. Frank took on her strong Catholic faith and was confirmed in the 1980s. They had four children Karen, Stephen, Andrew and Peter. The children remember how



when they would call him he would automatically say 'Here's your mother'. Frank was devastated when Letitia died. He made St Peter & St Paul's his church. He helped on the coffee rota and for the distribution of this magazine. Frank died at home on 11 December aged 83. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

**Huw Bellis, Tring Team**

## Luke's Gospel

**S**tylish is the way Luke starts his Gospel – in a long sentence in literary Greek, he tells us his purpose is to write, after careful investigation, an orderly account so that his reader may know the truth in which he has been instructed.

**A**ll four Gospel writers start and end their accounts of Jesus differently and Luke does so by starting with the birth of John the Baptist and ending with the Ascension of Jesus, although it is not really an end as his second book (Acts) takes the story on from Jerusalem to Rome.

**I**nfancy narratives start this book, namely the births of John and Jesus, followed by the only other information we have about Christ before his ministry starts, namely the finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple.

**N**unc Dimittis, Benedictus and the Magnificat are the Latin titles of the three songs or canticles which Luke includes in his infancy narration and which are used daily at Morning and Evening Prayer in both Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer.

**T**he sources used by Luke are Mark's Gospel, the collection teachings, used also by Matthew and called 'Q' by scholars (from the German word for source – Quelle) plus his own source which includes, among other things, the parables of the Good Samaritan, Lazarus and the Rich Man and the Prodigal Son.

**L**uke was a physician and a colleague of Paul on some of his journeys, which he describes in Acts. Here he sometimes writes 'we' instead of 'they', though this companionship does not show an awareness of the theology shown in Paul's Epistles.

**U**nlike Matthew who writes for Jewish Christians, Luke's audience is Gentile Christians. So he teaches the inclusiveness of Jesus's mission and the welcome given to outsiders with an additional emphasis on the prominent role of women.

**K**indness follows from the above as a characteristic virtue in examples like Christ's words to the Women of Jerusalem, his concern for outsiders, his words to the Penitent thief as well as many women who figure only in his Gospel.

**E**nding in Rome at the conclusion to Acts, Luke makes clear the Gospel is taken through the guidance of the Holy Spirit (it is in Luke alone we have the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost) from the Holy City to the Capital of the then world, the Eternal City of Rome.

Epilogue: at the beginning of the Gospel and Acts, Luke says he is writing for Theophilus, 'the most excellent Theophilus', that he may know the truth. We do not know who Theophilus is – is he an actual person or the reader? The name means 'Beloved of God' or 'Friend of God' which could and should apply to each and every one of us who reads Luke's books.

**Martin Banister, St Albans Cathedral**

# Useful contacts

## TRING TEAM PARISH

**Team Rector**  
(Tring & Puttenham)  
Rev Huw Bellis  
2 The Limes, Station Road  
01442 822170 or  
07411 483229  
huw@tringteamparish.org.uk  
(Day off Thursday)

## School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

(Aldbury, Tring School)  
Rev Michelle Grace  
Aldbury Vicarage  
01442 851200  
michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk  
mgrace@tringschool.org  
(Day off Friday)

## School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

(Tring School, Long Marston, Wilstone)  
Rev Jane Banister  
01442 822170  
jane@tringteamparish.org.uk  
jbanister@tringschool.org

## Curate

Rev Sarah Marshall  
St George's House  
3 New Mill Place  
Tringford Road  
07538 888502  
sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk

## Diocesan Lay Minister

Mike Watkin  
01442 890407

## Parish Co-ordinators

Roy Hargreaves  
01442 823624  
roy.hargreaves@btinternet.com

John Whiteman  
01442 826314  
john@tringteamparish.org.uk

## Church Wardens

Chris Hoare (Tring)  
01442 822915

Ian Matthews (Tring)  
01442 823327

Jane Brown (Aldbury)  
01442 851396

Christine Rutter (Puttenham)  
01296 668337

Ken Martin (Wilstone)  
01442 822894

Rev Jane Banister  
(Long Marston)  
01442 822170

**Tring Team Administration**  
Administrator  
Trish Dowden  
admin@tringteamparish.org.uk

Janet Goodyer  
pewsheets@tringteamparish.org.uk

**Hall Bookings**  
Janet Goodyer  
01442 824929  
jjgoody@ntlworld.com  
tringparishhall@hotmail.com

**Hall Secretary**  
Barbara Anscombe  
01442 828325  
Bandb33@talktalk.net

**Safeguarding**  
Jon Reynolds  
07712 134370  
safeguarding@tringteamparish.org.uk

**ST MARTHA'S  
METHODIST CHURCH**  
**Minister**

Rev Rachael Hawkins  
01442 866324  
rachael.hawkins@methodist.org.uk

**Senior Steward**  
Rosemary Berdinner  
01442 822305

**AKEMAN STREET  
BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**Minister**

Rev David Williams  
01442 827881

**Administrator**  
Emma Nash  
01442 827881

**CORPUS CHRISTI  
ROMAN CATHOLIC  
CHURCH**  
**Parish Priest**

Father David Burke  
01442 863845  
davidburke@rcdow.org.uk  
www.berkotring.org.uk

**HIGH STREET  
BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**Ministers**

Joe Egan 07521 513493  
joe@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
Ruth Egan 07521 513494  
ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

**Assistant Minister**  
Kevin Rogers  
km\_rogers@outlook.com

**Administration/facilities hire**  
admin@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
01442 824054


**NEW MILL  
BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**Minister**  
Vacancy

**JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP**  
affiliated to  
Churches Together in Tring

**Secretary**  
Michael Demidecki  
07887 980004  
michaeldemidecki@gmail.com  
www.justiceandpeacetring.org

**OUR CHURCHES ONLINE**  
www.tringteamparish.org.uk  
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www.akemanstreet.org  
www.berkotring.org.uk

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

 Tring Parish

 @revhuw

## COMMENT

**Editor**  
Annette Reynolds  
0845 8681333  
07968 312161  
comment.magazine@gmail.com

**Distribution**  
Barbara Anscombe  
01442 828325  
bandb33@talktalk.net

**Treasurer**  
Chris Hoare  
01442 822915

**Advertising**  
Sue Mayhew  
0845 8681333

**Design**  
Kev Holt, Ginger Promo

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

## COMMENT DEADLINES

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

## Crossword puzzle answers From page 28

ACROSS	DOWN
1. CHRIST	1. CORGIS
4. MATINS	2. ISLE
7. CLERGYMAN	3. TYRANT
9. GLEE	4. MAYHEM
10. RITE	5. TEAR
11. SNEER	6. SIMEON
13. SET OUT	7. CENTURION
14. MINOAN	8. NICODEMUS
15. VERGER	11. SUPER
17. AGREED	12. RINGS
19. REAMS	15. VICARS
20. CHOP	16. RESCUE
22. GULP	17. AMUSED
23. NARCISSUS	18. DEPOTS
24. STATUE	21. PACT
25. DRUIDS	22. GURU

## PALM SUNDAY - HOLY WEEK - EASTER

### IN TRING TEAM PARISH



Palm Sunday - We remember Jesus' arrival on a donkey into Jerusalem.



Maundy Thursday - We remember the last supper that Jesus celebrated with his friends



Good Friday - We remember Jesus' death; his betrayal, trial and crucifixion on a cross.



Easter Day - Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Come with us on the way to the cross

Tring - Aldbury - Long Marston - Wilstone - Puttenham

Services in our five churches, many of them live streamed on our website and YouTube channel, some by zoom

[www.tringteamparish.org.uk](http://www.tringteamparish.org.uk)





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## GARDEN SAFARI DAY



# WE'LL BE BACK!

THE  
CHANDOS  
ENSEMBLE



## BARN DANCE



## BRILLIANT BRAINS



THESE ARE SOME OF THE EVENTS WE SHOULD HAVE HAD IN 2020...  
AS SOON AS WE CAN WE'LL PLAN THEM BIGGER AND BETTER SO  
WE CAN ALL ENJOY THEM TOGETHER – WATCH THIS SPACE!