

DECEMBER 2023 / JANUARY 2024 £1.50

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



Christmas Services in Tring Church

Carols

Sunday 17th December

4.00pm Candlelit Carol Service in Tring Church
with Tring School Choir and Musicians, and Tring Church Choir

We hear the Christmas story in readings and songs.

After the service mulled wine, Tring Brewery beer, coffee and mince pies will be served.

Wednesday 20th December

6.00pm Carol Service (outside) Tring Churchyard
with Tring Brewery Bar

Come and sing your favourite carols in the churchyard and enjoy a glass or two of Tring's finest beer or mulled wine! Dress up warmly.

Crib Services - Christmas Eve

2.00pm and 4.00pm Crib Services

An all age service telling the Christmas story.

All ages are welcome, the 2pm service is generally quieter.

Midnight Mass - Christmas Eve

11.30pm Communion

Come and experience the wonder and mystery of Christmas.

Christmas Morning

8.00am Traditional Language Communion

10.00am A communion service on Christmas Day for all ages.

Everyone is welcome. Come and greet the Christ Child.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk



What Christmas traditions do you have in your family?



There are traditions that many of us share – having a turkey dinner and Christmas pudding, putting up a Christmas tree, giving and receiving presents. There are also, however, ways that we have adapted those traditions or perhaps there are new traditions that are part of your own family's day. What time do you open presents, for instance? Do you eat your main meal at lunchtime, in the evening or even mid-afternoon? Does it include Brussel sprouts?! When does your tree go up, and when does it come down? Do you visit a particular relative or friend on Boxing Day?

For some, traditions can feel old fashioned and restricting, especially if you're not a fan of turkey for example, but many of us are fond of our traditions, they help us to make the day special, to mark it out as different.

The Methodist Church this year have produced some resources for Christmas called 'Out of the Ordinary'. It's a phrase that we often use to describe something that is different. Our Christmas traditions would be one example. At Christmas

time, we step 'out of the ordinary', away from our usual routine, to celebrate a special day, a special birth.

In the resources, however, they also point out that the phrase 'out of the ordinary' can be used to describe how God was at work that first Christmas; because it was out of a very ordinary situation, the birth of a baby to a young couple, that something amazing happened. It is a story that we know well, and because we know that it was a special moment, it can be easy to forget that in many ways it was quite an ordinary moment: a child is born in a town in the Middle East. I'm sure that other babies were born in that town, other couples had children, maybe they weren't all visited by shepherds and wise men, but the occasion wasn't that unusual: but it was out of that relatively ordinary moment that God did something that was very much out of the ordinary – coming into the world as one of us, revealing the wonder of his love for us.

We can easily forget that God continues to use the ordinary to speak to us of his love. Evening prayer can be an opportunity to look back on a day and think about where God has been during the day, where we have had glimpses of his glory. Often for me, those occasions have been very simple moments, a

hug, a kind word, a sun ray breaking through a dark cloud, a particular verse or word in a Bible reading which has said something to me. We have an amazing God who continues to make the ordinary extraordinary.

For some people in our society Christmas can feel very much like an ordinary day; those without relatives to visit, or who are housebound and find it difficult to join in with any festivities, for example, or those who may struggle to afford any gifts or special food. As we remember, however, how God made that ordinary birth into something out of the ordinary, revealing to us the wonder of his love, so we remember that his extraordinary love is there for each one of us, not just at Christmas time, but each and every 'ordinary' day.

Perhaps we can also have a role in revealing that love to those who need to know it this Christmas. In our conversations, in our giving, in our actions, can we make this Christmas time one that is 'out of the ordinary' for someone who needs to hear about God's extraordinary love?

Happy Christmas!

Rachael Hawkins
St Martha's Methodist Church

Another year of Comment

I don't need to tell you about the rising cost of living, of the increasing costs of materials and labour. But as we start a new year, it seems right to ensure we can still afford to pay the *Comment* print bills. Sadly the £1.50 cover price only contributes towards that cost. This magazine is still subsidized to make it affordable, as fewer people advertise than many years ago. So, it is proposed that we raise the price to £2.00 from February 2024.

Of course, the excellent content continues to be available thanks to you, all those who contribute articles, and the professional appearance is thanks to Kev Holt who patiently fits in everything we send him.

Here's to another year of *Comment* magazine bringing you the latest news from the various churches in Tring and the villages.

The Editor

Christmas Day Lunch

At High Street Baptist Church, Tring, HP23 4AB

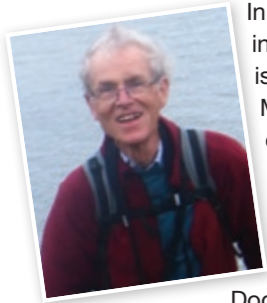
A lunch for anyone and everyone, come and enjoy Christmas day lunch with others.

12.30pm	Arrive
1pm	Lunch served
3pm	King's speech with tea/coffee

Suggested donation of £5 to £10. Limited capacity so book your place with Ruth at ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk / 07521 513494

Photo by Tim Douglas-Fennell

Feedback



In his Feedback in the October issue of *Comment*, Mac Dodge talks of it being 'an absolutely first-rate magazine'. Indeed it is, including, of course, the

Dodges' always eagerly-awaited 'postcards from Orkney'. The October issue was no exception: in addition to an Orkney postcard, it included Huw Bellis' thoughts on the south entrance to St Peter & St Paul (not what it seems, apparently, but I have always loved it), Roy Hargreaves on glis-glis and Kate Banister on one of the most moving poems ever written in English, George Herbert's 'Prayer'. However, the piece that prompted me to write this was another of Jon Reynolds' thought-provoking articles on science and religion, this one discussing a book by Max Jammer called 'Einstein and religion'.

Jon's piece had links with a book that I have been reading recently: 'Helgoland' by Carlo Ravelli. It's about quantum mechanics and got me closer to understanding the theory than ever before, although this only amounted to the very occasional glimmer coming through the fog of my incomprehension; and yes, along with Jon in his *Comment* article, Ravelli quotes Einstein's famous saying about quantum mechanics: 'God does not play dice'. But that doesn't mean Einstein rejected the theory; indeed, he nominated its authors for the Nobel Prize for physics – a nomination the selection panel might have found rather difficult to ignore (and they didn't!).

Einstein had numerous discussions about his reservations and objections to quantum theory with Neils Bohr, one of its principal architects. To Einstein's dice comment, Bohr responded 'Stop telling God what to do'; and actually, this is very much in tune with something about the nature of God which Jon also quotes in his *Comment* article: 'The anti-religious view... looks upon the world as a clearly understood machine, in which every 'riddle' is either solved or on the way to solution. To Einstein, the universe is essentially mysterious. He confronts it with awe and reverence'. God is not flippant or capricious, and so cannot be a dice player, but his ways are mysterious, unfathomable.

Jon goes on to give another Einstein quote: 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind'. In fact, my own thoughts on the challenges that science poses for religion don't centre around quantum theory, beyond observing that it shares incomprehensibility and mysteriousness with God. I do think that science does have its difficult challenges for believers, though – and two challenges in particular.

The first is that for so many, the wonder, beauty and awesomeness of the natural world is proof in itself that there must have been an all-powerful Creator God to bring it into existence; and maybe this is sufficient. But I have to observe that over at least the last 2,000 years, and particularly post-Isaac Newton, humans have uncovered in more and more detail the mechanisms which brought our wonderful world to be the way it is. The response that none of these discoveries contradict the idea of God as being the first cause of everything is all very well, but for me seems a bit lame. For one thing, it doesn't address issues

associated with the less wonderful bits, like the horrors which are currently being enacted in Gaza City and which have such strong religious connections.

The second challenge is specifically one for Christians, and I find it a lot more unsettling. Before Darwin, humans were naturally regarded as the crowning and ultimate glory of creation, granted a special place by God in his

creation. Darwin's theory of evolution and so much science since then, necessitates at least a radical rethink of this view; humans, we now understand, are just one step in an evolutionary chain, a step that might indeed be terminated, perhaps soon, because of our foolish actions. There are other chains, though, which will more than likely survive and continue to evolve. The more we find out about the non-human life around us, the more extraordinary we are finding it to be. We may be special, but perhaps not as special as we think.

If humans are not the ultimate pinnacle of creation, but just one very recent kind of natural species, unlikely to last for ever, what does this imply about Jesus and the nature of his humanity? I don't have a definite answer, but would love to hear Jon's thoughts on the matter – and Mac's too.

Edmund Booth
St Peter & St Paul

Please see page 19 for Jon Reynolds' answer. Ed.

TRING CHORAL SOCIETY AND ORCHESTRA
CONDUCTOR COLIN STEVENS

BACH MAGNIFICAT
CHARPENTIER MESSE DE MINUIT
VIVALDI DIXIT DOMINUS

SATURDAY 16TH DECEMBER 2023
ST PETER & ST PAUL CHURCH, TRING
7.30PM

TICKETS: £17.50
UNDER 18S FREE
www.tringchoral.org.uk/tickets

Tring Choral Society Reg Charity No. 276980

Your neighbour needs you



The 'tick tock... tick tock... tick tock' of the clock in an otherwise quiet empty room is a familiar soundtrack that for some permeates their experience of life in their homes. Hidden behind closed doors and forgotten in the hustle and bustle of the world around them, the friendly warmth of another person's presence remains absent; and despite the many people who live nearby, the sound of remote silence is deafening.

At this time of year, the dark nights can feel particularly long for those who are isolated for one reason or another, and even daylight hours can begin to feel relentless when you have little or no contact with people from one day to the next. We all need human connection and without it, loneliness can significantly affect our quality of life.

The feeling of sadness or anxiety that occurs when someone is wanting company can occur at any age, but is often more common for the elderly, partly because over half of those over 85 live alone. Isolation and loneliness have a very real impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals.

'It's good to talk!' is a phrase that we have heard for many years, and points to the importance of being listened to and having someone to share with. Linking Lives Tring is a Christian organisation that aims to do just that,

and quietly works with people towards reducing the impact of loneliness in our community through our befriending service.

Our volunteer befrienders can meet face-to-face or offer telephone contact with individuals who have limited contact with others, and in time may act as a stepping stone back to community activity for those who have lost confidence and long to reconnect. Sometimes circumstances dictate that this is not possible, but regardless, our Linking Lives team is committed to regularly spending time with those who need it most, and care deeply for those they are connecting with.

The Bible tells us to 'Love our neighbour as ourselves' but the challenge to do this goes beyond simply the person who lives next door to us. Linking Lives aims

to reflect the love of Jesus through our care and connection with people; actively listening to the real stories of those who are living with the reality of loneliness in their everyday lives as we genuinely seek to be there for them.

If you are interested in joining our volunteer team of befrienders or would like more details, then please contact me on 07956 186899 or email me at: alielinkinglives@gmail.com.

Alie Wainwright
High Street Baptist Church

Improving quality of life through friendship

BEFRIENDING CHANGES LIVES

"If it wasn't for my befriender, I'd be stranded without any hope."

Contact us to find out how you can help others

LINKING LIVES UK

News from Tring Tower

Tring Tower is actively seeking new learners! Come on, come in, give it a try and enhance your life with Christmas bells; we will have you ringing by Christmas! The unmissable message all our town and country bells ring out is JOY!

'Joy to the world the Lord has come! Anyone who hears them is invited to join in the great celebration; Christmas is for everyone!

Many of us will have sung in school, 'Hark how all the heaven rings / Glory to the King of Kings. / Peace on earth and mercy mild, / God and sinners reconciled.' The Christmas bells speak of a time when heaven and earth are united

in a special way by the birth of Jesus.

Just a note from history: thousands of years back, the first mention of bells were the ones that were attached to the high priest's robe so that people could hear him walking in the Temple. The benediction of Christmas bells and all they represent is not exclusive; it's universal. Who has not heard that joyful sound, like no other, of church bells lifting their rousing majestic voice in loud mellifluous peals sounding out over the town of Tring in tones of exultation?

Are you in the prime of life? Come and explore, be a part of our community and its timeless musical bonds. We're welcoming new members to our bell-

ringing group in the bell tower of St Peter & St Paul, the parish church of Tring.

Have you ever been curious about the art and experience of bell ringing? It's not only a way into a world of rich melodies but also a way to keep fit and enhance your physical vitality. Come and give it a try on any Tuesday evening at 7 o'clock at the door by the bell tower. We will be there to greet and show you the way up the spiral stairs to the bells.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ONE AND ALL!

Johanna Morgan
Tring bell tower

The real meaning of Christmas creation



I want to start with a confession: I don't like Christmas. In fact, I might go as far as saying that I hate Christmas. I have some happy childhood memories of the anticipation and

'looking forward to it' but I also remember the flatness after the excitement of the day. Today, I find the excess, greed and overindulgence uncomfortable at least; at worst repulsive. But this doesn't mean I don't like what it stands for. As a Christian, of course, I know what the real meaning of Christmas is (and it's not the Christmas jumper, despite what the retailers would want you to believe). The world has become disconnected from the real meaning – of Jesus coming to the world as Saviour for us all.

I think something similar has happened to creation care. Early Christianity and many hymns are full of references to creation. The symbolism and imagery in our churches is often nature-inspired. But our world has changed enormously in the last 100 years. We have seen so many advances in technology – many wonderful innovations which have made our lives more comfortable, easier and with time saved from chores and household tasks: central heating, cars, internet, dishwashers, convenience food. As a society, as church, and as individuals we've been swept up in this. We've become disconnected from the essence of being created by God.

When we open our Bibles, the first line tells us about the Creator God who made not only the earth, but the heavens beyond: stars, planets, the universe. Creator God is a term used in Old and New Testament alike, not just once or twice, but frequently. Have you ever created something? An item of clothing, new curtains, a pot on a wheel, a flowerbed? Have you enjoyed admiring the final product, taken some time after finishing to pause – not rushing on to the next task – but stopped and looked and thought, 'Yes, that's good'.

The creation story in Genesis 1 is a stunning image of the phases of creation, and after each element, of the Creator taking deep satisfaction in what has been made. God stands back, as it were, and takes stock of his creation. Each time

the text says, 'And God saw that it was good' (Genesis 1:4, 12, 18, 21, 25). He was pleased with what he had made.

Kingship, stewardship or kinship

Some people read the creation story and make the case for us being put in charge. When we look later on in Genesis, we can see where this comes from: 'Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food..."' (Genesis 1:29). Sadly,

humans have taken this very literally, exploiting every tree, crop, animal and resource available. We have plundered the earth, destroyed habitats and brought about the extinction of thousands of species – we crowned ourselves king



The Canticle of the Creatures By St Francis of Assisi

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord, yours are the praises, the glory and the honour and every blessing.

To you alone, Most High, do they belong, and no one is worthy to speak your name.

Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day through whom you bring us light.

And he is lovely, shining with great splendour, for he heralds you, Most High.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars. In heaven you have formed them, lightsome and precious and fair.

And praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind, through air and cloud, through calm and every weather by which you sustain your creatures.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water, so very useful and humble, precious and chaste.

Praised be you, my Lord through Brother Fire, by whom you light up the night, and he is handsome and merry, robust and strong.

Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains us and directs us bringing forth all kinds of fruits and coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be you, my Lord through those who forgive for your love and who bear sickness and trial.

Blessed are those who endure in peace, for by you, Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death from whom no living being can escape.

How dreadful for those who die in mortal sin! How blessed are those she finds in your most holy will for the second death can do them no harm.

O praise and bless my Lord, thank him and serve him humbly but grandly!

over creation.

Perhaps a more familiar interpretation of these verses is stewardship. Within this view we are invited to see ourselves



as God's gardeners tending his garden of earthly delights. This is more or less the consensus opinion at the moment. The difficulty with stewardship is that it poses a relationship disconnection between the stewards and the rest of creation.

I prefer to think about our role in creation as kinship. Humans are not in charge of creation, they are part of creation themselves. Remember, we weren't created on our own day, we were created on day six along with the animals on the land. This involves a fraternal vision of creation in which all parts of creation are loved and accepted for what they are. Creation thrives in a condition of mutual relationship and inter-dependence. We are to live within the world and not above it or against it. We are to live alongside it, respectfully. This is what I mean when I say we have become disconnected from our environment – just as we have become disconnected from Christmas.

The real meaning of Christmas

So, let's remind ourselves that Christmas is about our Creator sending his son in human form to live among us: 'For God so loved the world... (not people, not just the humans... but the world) ... that he sent his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16). Jesus trod on the earth, ate food, told stories and built relationships. He had fellowship with his disciples and the most marginalised; he used illustrations with things that people connect with: stories about vines, sheep, stars, grains of sand.

Just as the church seeks to remind people of the reason for the season, let's also reconnect with our Creator and his creation, not because David Attenborough or Greta Thunberg tell us to, but because our Creator God made us to live on this earth with integrity and relationships with him and one another.

Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church

News from DENS

Our Social Enterprises offer DENS clients a valuable opportunity to gain employability skills and build confidence within a friendly, supportive environment. Clients develop and flourish while taking a big step towards an independent future.

Kevin's story

When Kevin's parents became unwell, he found it difficult to juggle his job in IT with caring for them. Sadly, they both passed away within a short space of time. This had a considerable impact on Kevin's mental health, which started to affect him at work. His employer decided it was time to part ways, leaving Kevin out of a job for the first time in his life – which caused his wellbeing to decline even further.

Kevin withdrew from everyone and everything around him. Without the knowledge of what he could claim by way of financial support, and with his motivation at an all-time low, his rent and other bills went unpaid. After about twelve months, he was evicted from his private rented flat and found himself homeless.

After contacting Dacorum Borough Council for support, Kevin was directed to the Day Centre, who then referred him to The Elms hostel. There, he accessed the Crash Pad's emergency overnight accommodation, before being

offered a room at the hostel.

Kevin's dedicated Key Worker helped him to apply for benefits and set up a repayment plan for his council tax arrears. He attended The Elms' Life Skills course, where he learned about cooking, budgeting and looking after a home. He also started counselling with the hostel's clinical psychotherapist.

One morning, Kevin noticed a group of residents learning about coffee from a Barista Trainer. A lifelong coffee lover, he was intrigued and asked his Key Worker about it, and so began his journey with the Coffee Project. He signed up to start the next course, and attended every Friday morning for twelve weeks. He learned about the different types of coffee beans, how the equipment worked, and how to steam and froth milk.

Kevin enjoyed his first experience of serving the public when he helped to run the coffee van at DENS' Sleepout fundraising event. Shortly after, he

heard that DENS were planning to open a café in partnership with Sunnyside Rural Trust and

volunteered to help out two hours a week. He then assisted with running the coffee van at another fundraising event, the Hillbuster.

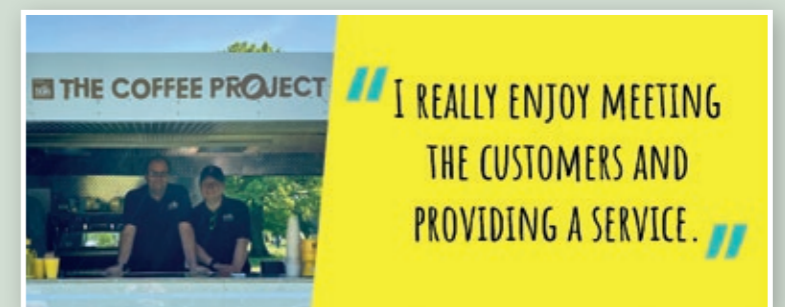
Being involved with the Coffee Project has improved Kevin's mental health significantly, because it has kept him busy and not dwelling on things. It's also helped build his confidence, as he feels he is contributing to DENS and has found something he's good at.

Kevin said: 'I've been able to control my mental health issues when working with the Coffee Project. I really enjoy meeting the customers and providing a service.'

Kevin is now thinking about returning to paid work in the coffee industry, something he wasn't considering before.

DENS will continue to support and empower Kevin to return to a happy, healthy and independent life.

Jocelyn Garner
DENS



Grandad's Bible



I have a file on my computer – at least I think it is a file and not a folder – labelled 'Family History Boxes in the Loft'. There are six boxes up in the roof, three from my mother's

side of the family, and three from my father's. They contain most of the family memorabilia, other than photographs, but there is a marked contrast between the two sides. The maternal inheritance contains a number of religious books, etc; the paternal side has none. What makes some of the books so interesting is that they are inscribed. But I have often wondered if the recipients appreciated these 'gifts' and how many were actually read.

According to my mother, her father (my maternal grandfather) had no faith at all – religion was 'a red rag to a bull', which may explain why my grandmother did not continue attending church after their marriage. Yet several of the books are his, from when he was a young child.

His mother's maiden name was Alice Batchelor and she was one of eight children. The family originated from Hastoe, moving to Tring in about 1860, where Alice married Alfred Sanders in 1890. My grandfather was their youngest child, born in 1900. Sanders and Sons owned a Fruit and Florists shop in Tring High Street, on the site which is now the entrance to Dolphin Square. Batchelor was a very common name locally and the extended family had strong connections to Akeman Street Baptist Church. Like many of their fellow traders, they were not comfortable in the main parish church, citing the oft-quoted phrase that it was only for the 'great and the good' of the town.

Among my grandfather's books is 'Psalms and Hymns for use of the Baptist Denomination'. Inside the front cover, in child's writing, he has written 'C.D. Sanders, 34 High Street, Tring'. There is also a New Testament with his name inside, but the outer brown paper wrapping is covered in children's scribble, apparently done by his brother Harold, who has proudly signed his name in the corner. A combined 'Book of Common Prayer & Hymns Ancient and Modern' (of which we have five!) includes his name but with the date 9/43. But perhaps the most intriguing is a Holy Bible inscribed

'Charles Douglas Sanders. A present from his parents on his seventh birthday, August 10th 1907.' They have then added, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and he will cleanse your sins and wrongs'. I have often wondered if that

was my grandfather's only gift from his parents on that particular birthday. I hope not. It can't have been much fun for a 7-year-old, and if he could understand the sentiment of the inscription, it must have seemed a daunting present from his parents.

Although my grandparents are buried in Tring Cemetery, many of my grandfather's forebears are recorded on the Akeman Street Baptist Church records. He had a large number of relatives, including fifty first cousins, but the families were not close and my mother can only recall ever knowing two of these cousins. However, I have found some memorials in ASBC burial ground, members of the extended family, including one of my grandfather's uncles, a gentleman of dubious morals.

Frederick Batchelor 'married' three times, but on the third occasion he was neither divorced nor widowed. He was initially widowed in 1884 but remarried the following year. The family are listed on the 1891 census but by 1901 Frederick appears to be on his own, lodging with his brother. On the 1911 census there is no record of Frederick at all, but his wife is listed as a widow, living in Kent, where she died in 1937. However, Frederick appears to have been very much alive and well, because in 1921 he had married for a third time, albeit safely over the other side of the country in Leominster. He remained in Leominster for the rest of his life, living to the age of 90, and is remembered on his parents' headstone in ASBC burial ground.

I am relieved to say that this immorality did not apply to the rest of the family, except perhaps with a little deviation by my grandfather's eldest brother, of whom he was sternly censorious. But maybe their parents were aware of Uncle Frederick's behaviour, hence the warning inscription in his 1907 Bible. We will never know.

Religious or not, Charles Douglas Sanders was a lovely grandfather and I have very happy memories of my time with him and my grandmother. They lived



in the adjacent road and I could, and did, visit frequently. From quite a young age I was allowed to walk between the two houses, because my grandparent's bathroom window was visible from our bedroom window. Thus, when I arrived, I would go straight upstairs and flick the bathroom light on and off, and my mum, watching from the bedroom window, would know I had arrived safely and would respond in similar fashion. The whole process worked in reverse when I walked home.

When my grandfather gave up running his own business, he had several jobs before finally joining Norman Webb Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Merchants, who were based in Longfield Road, virtually opposite where he lived. But his entrepreneurial spirit was ever present: every December he would organise the family in making holly wreaths – not just one or two, but hundreds. I can vividly recall the back garden being full of holly, prickly green leaves and bright red berries. There were piles of teasels and fir cones, moss, and wire ring hoops. The berries were cut off the holly and wired in separate sprigs; likewise, the teasels and fir cones, which were then 'tipped', ie the top was dipped in silver or gold paint. Indoors my parents and grandmother would pack the rings with moss and then wire individual holly sprigs, berries, teasels and cones onto the wreaths. This went on evening after evening. I assume the wreaths were then sold through Norman Webb's business, to local florists around the area.

As a legacy of this, my mum would not have anything other than a 'proper' holly wreath on the door at Christmas, and we always placed a 'proper' holly wreath on my grandparents' grave. Today it is not easy to find a wreath made of holly, and they certainly don't have tipped teasels or fir cones, but so far I have managed to continue the tradition. My grandfather may not have given me any spiritual guidance, but I certainly know a good holly wreath when I see one.

Alison Cockerill, St Cross, Wilstone

Poem of the month



In the box opposite are the last three stanzas of a longer poem about preparations for Christmas. The rhyme is clear and the structure simple and the images range from

a village church to the London sky-line. Ordinary, everyday details are brought to life in a humorous, slightly satirical way, helped by alliteration and an excited pace. The question which opens the first two verses is surely not one of doubt but rather wonder at how the ordinary can co-exist with the divine.

John Betjeman (1906-1984), prolific poet, writer and broadcaster, is known for his poetry and passion for Victorian architecture. He was born in London, the only child of a family of furniture and

silverware makers of Dutch descent. He studied at Oxford but failed to gain a degree, though in 1974 he was awarded an honorary degree. He became a journalist and assistant editor of the Architectural Review, combining this post with writing poetry and prose works in praise of historical buildings of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. He was a practising Anglican, but, like many others, was often nagged by doubts about the certainty of Christianity. He regarded poetry as 'the oil of life', and his warm heart and keen eye made him immensely popular. In 1960 he was awarded the CBE; in 1969 he was knighted and in 1972 he became Poet Laureate. He had a great love of Cornwall where he died in 1984.

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

*And is it true? And is it true?
The most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and seas
Became a Child on earth for me?*

*And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissued fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie, so kindly meant,*

*No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Not all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare –
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.*

**John Betjeman, published 1954
Copyright 'Church Poems'
by John Betjeman, John Murray, 1981**

New starts at New Mill



Life at New Mill Baptist Church is gradually changing with some more people coming along each Sunday and, particularly, as a new family joined us, we needed to start a small Sunday Club (school) for under 5s. As God brings other new people, we hope that we can grow this, but we just need to be in step with God's plans.

Also, due to challenges with our graveyard, we have had some lovely contacts grow with people in our community who volunteered to help us out. It's a work in progress as there is still much to do, but we are so grateful to all the non-church folk who enjoyed clearing the mass of overgrowth with

us. Some have said they will join us for Christmas services so we look forward to welcoming them and any others.

One particular service that is new for us is called a 'White Christmas'. It has in mind those who have lost a loved one over the last year or so and therefore find celebrating Christmas difficult. There will be opportunity within the service to put a named ornament on the tree, and be led to remember the main focus of Christmas but without any of the noise or glitz that can often be particularly challenging when you are going through the pain of loss. It's at 3.00pm on 10 December, a collaborative service with High Street Baptist Church and ourselves.

As with all our services, new people will always be made very welcome.

**Jackie Buie
New Mill Baptist Church**



Parish registers

Baptisms

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

**Ellie Muston
Olivia Muston**

Funerals

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

**Brenda Turner 77
David Sands 70
Eileen Lilian Rose Parcell**

Poured out on the ground



Writing something wise and balanced about Israel and Palestine was always difficult but now it seems impossible. Keeping in real touch with both narratives is crucial – and that is something I, and possibly most of us, find difficult and elusive. However, Musalaha is an organisation that has been building grassroots relationships across the divided

communities for over thirty-two years. On 24 October they issued a 'Statement of Lament'. This speaks for itself – it expresses reconciling attitudes and presents a godly perspective. It faces realities. It guides our thoughts and prayers whilst acknowledging the distress and trauma we see and feel. It seeks to birth hope.

I found Musalaha's Lament truly helpful in finding a way of receiving news that cannot be received. I commend it to you for a careful reading.

Colin Briant
High Street Baptist Church

My eyes fail from weeping,
I am in torment within;
my heart is poured out on the ground
because my people are destroyed,
because children and infants
faint in the streets of the city.
Jeremiah in Lamentations 2:11 (NIV)



© Ally Barrett (www.reverendally.org) used by permission.

Musalaha statement of lament

We at Musalaha lament the devastation and unfolding tragedies in Gaza and Southern Israel. We stand firmly against the embrace, use, and justification of violence against civilian populations in the name of justice, vengeance, and liberation. We are distressed and overwhelmed, never having seen this scale of inhumanity, anguish, rage and hatred before.

As the number of people killed continues to rise daily, we lament for all those who have lost loved ones and pray for comfort over their bereaved families. We mourn all the lives of civilians killed and the ones fleeing for their lives; we mourn for all homes destroyed and futures interrupted. We pray for the medical teams and

journalists facing chaos and adversity, healing for the injured, and for the release of all civilian (Israeli and foreign national) hostages in Gaza.

We lament these recent events as part of the larger context we have been writing and warning about for years. We grieve the normalised systemic policies and practices that have been oppressing and denying Palestinians their basic human rights and freedoms. We call for the immediate lift of the indiscriminate siege of Gaza where over 2 million people are currently enduring collective punishment, cut off from water, food, fuel, medicine, and electricity. We call for the deployment of humanitarian aid and vital resources to be fully restored.

We lament people who, in the

name of justice, have allowed rage to perpetuate the cycle of dehumanisation and excuse bloodshed; as seen with Hamas' attacks and the Israeli army's response. We lament the rhetoric fuelling exclusive and racist narratives that can only lead to further vengeance and violence. We lament the damaging and barren role international state actors have played, sabotaging the possibilities of a just reality.

Musalaha purposefully exists outside this ongoing cycle of violence, believing in challenging systemic violence as well as vengeful violence reacting to it. As we imagine a better world, we call our friends to practise empathy, express comfort, and support our vision of a just peace.

Living out a revolutionary creed



Back in Lent, Tring Team Parish reflected together on the Beatitudes, that wonderful opening statement of Christ's message to a suffering world, so beautifully presented in Matthew's Gospel: 'He opened his mouth and taught them, saying; "Blessed are... the meek... the merciful... the peacemakers..."'

Jesus' message to a suffering world is truly revolutionary. It turns the accepted human world upside down... It stands conventional wisdom on its head... It turns misfortune into good fortune... The Beatitudes... just when we think we are cursed – we are blessed! The Beatitudes comes from the Book of Books, The Bible – OUR Bible!

In 1945 Mahatma Gandhi said: 'You Christians have a document containing enough dynamite to blow all civilisation to pieces, turn the world upside down and bring peace to a battle-torn planet.'

Perhaps the current awful news makes it seem as if we could really do with such a document right now... a guide book for troubled times. Blessedly, we have it! A book to live by... but do we use it?

In 2013 Justin Welby said in his first sermon as Archbishop: 'Christianity is a revolutionary Creed'. Did we listen? Did we learn? Did he or any of us fully embrace that? It means making peace rather than waging war.

What's going on right now in Palestine and Israel is a horribly familiar example of the normal human knee-jerk response to a violent problem. In any dispute we tend to think 'Someone must be right and Someone must be wrong. But in reality, usually no one is entirely right and no one is entirely wrong. It's seldom simply black and white. Both points of view have merit and both have flaws. Perhaps we need to be less black and white, more flexible, less certain WE are in the right!

That certainty can be costly; very costly. The cost in blood, sweat and tears being wasted in the disputed land of the Bible stories today, right now, is an enormous waste of human lives.

Turning again to that guide book and taking a good long look at it, we see 'Blessed are the peacemakers...'. That's the message we still don't get. Perhaps that's the dynamite Gandhi was referring

to; perhaps that's the way to turn this frightening 'world upside down and bring peace to a battle-torn planet'. Making peace is much, much harder than taking revenge and making war... (and much less popular with the media and the mob). But sometimes it works if someone has the courage to try it.

In 1962, when the world was expecting him to declare a Holy War within the war-torn and divided Catholic church, a wise pope said these words: 'We will not seek to find out who was right... we will not seek to find out who was wrong... we will seek to be reconciled'.

Is anyone saying that in Palestine right now? Probably not. It's always the same old, stupid blame game, seemingly unstoppable; no matter how great the cost.

In the end we will have to find a way of peaceful co-existence.

How many more ordinary human lives have to be needlessly wasted before we turn to peace? How many more people have to die?

Out there in the big world it seems impossible to stop opponents slow-marching into disaster. Mob anger, tribalism, ancient feuds, all cry out for blood and revenge and there seems always a huge price to pay. The evil Empire marches on implacably – just as in Jesus' time. But the big world isn't the only world. Just perhaps, in the small world of our everyday lives, we could listen to the quiet voice of Jesus calming the crowd and showing a better way. Let's harness our anger, feel its power within us and turn it into love. The challenge is not other people: it's all of US – how we behave and react. We're all just US – and we can change how we react and respond. Let's turn our anger against the folly of humanity into the inspiration for forgiveness, reconciliation and love. You may know it already, but there is an Iona Community hymn that expresses this sentiment. It was sung at Sheila Whitehead's recent funeral as one of her favourites: 'Inspired by Love and Anger'.

In our small, everyday world, next time we are certain we are right, let's not be so sure! Let's just do our little bit to make our lives a blessing to all around us.

Grahame Senior
Tring Team

Inspired by love and anger

Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain, Informed of God's own bias, we ask him once again:

"How long must some folk suffer? How long can few folk mind? How long dare vain self-interest turn prayer and pity blind?"

From those forever victims of heartless human greed, Their cruel plight composes a litany of need:

"Where are the fruits of justice? Where are the signs of peace? When is the day when prisoners and dreams find their release?"

From those forever shackled to what their wealth can buy, The fear of lost advantage provokes the bitter cry:

"Don't query our position! Don't criticise our wealth! Don't mention those exploited by politics and stealth!"

To God, who through the prophets proclaimed a different age, We offer earth's indifference, its agony and rage:

"When will the wronged be righted? When will the kingdom come? When will the world be generous to all instead of some?"

God asks, "Who will go for me? Who will extend my reach? And who, when few will listen, will prophesy and preach? And who, when few bid welcome, will offer all they know? And who, when few dare follow, will walk the road I show?"

Amused in someone's kitchen, asleep in someone's boat, Attuned to what the ancients exposed, proclaimed and wrote, A saviour without safety, a tradesman without tools Has come to tip the balance with fishermen and fools.

John L Bell & Graham Maule

Curious about faith?

Join a series of group conversations that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith in an open, friendly environment.

Everyone's welcome. You're invited, no matter your background or beliefs. It's free and there's no pressure to come back.

Alpha course at High Street Baptist Church, Tring

Starting Sunday 14 January at 12.30pm for 6 weeks, lunch included.

Contact ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk / 07521 513494 for more information and to book.



Piano & more series
An hour of music on Sunday afternoons

A concert for Advent

Performed by local musicians - of all ages! - from families around the parish. Programme will include:

The Tring Advent Musicians playing
Corelli's Christmas Concerto

The Tring Music Partnership's
Phoenix Jazz Band playing - jazz!

Sunday 10th December
at 3pm

Tring Parish Church HP23 5A
followed by tea and refreshments

Free admission; donations welcomed

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




Ear Ache?
Blocked Ears?
Sore or Itchy Ears ?

Call Maria on
07398183247

Ear Care Practitioner
Domiciliary Wax Removal

Stephen Hearn
TringMarket Auctions
Antique and Fine Art Auctioneers and Valuers. Est. 1982

Our salesrooms continue to attract a wide range of customers from throughout the UK and across the world and we deal with almost everything that comes out of your home whether 17th century or 21st century.

Visit our website and view the sales catalogues with accompanying illustrations, you will find us at www.tringmarketauctions.co.uk

- Valuations for Sale, Probate & Insurance
- Total and Part House Clearance Specialists
- Fine Art and 20th Century Decorative Arts Sales
- Fortnightly Sales of Antique & Modern Furniture and collectables

We provide a full service to meet all your requirements



www.tringmarketauctions.co.uk
The Market Premises, Brook Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5ED
t: 01442 826446 e: sales@tringmarketauctions.co.uk



Piano & more series
An hour of music on Sunday afternoons

Robert Salter *Violin*
Vanessa McNaught *Viola*
Penny Bradshaw *Cello*

Bach Sonata in g minor for solo violin BWV1001
Beethoven String trio in g major Op 9.no1

Sunday 14th January
at 3pm

Tring Parish Church HP23 5AE
followed by tea and refreshments

Free admission, with retiring collection

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



Artistry with bones



On reading Jon Reynolds' allusion to David Jenkins' remarks about 'a conjuring trick with bones' in the November *Comment*, shortly followed by the article on funeral hymns, my thoughts went immediately to a city in the Czech Republic which I visited a few years ago. The city in question is Kutna Hora, which lies about fifty miles east of Prague. Once the ancient capital of the medieval kingdom of Bohemia, the city boasts a magnificently extravagant Gothic cathedral, St Barbara's. Its dedication to the patron saint of miners reflects the fact that Kutna Hora was once the centre of a thriving silver-mining industry, though the mines have now long been worked out.

However, my thoughts were not of the wonderful cathedral, but a rather more humble-looking edifice which lies at the edge of the city in a suburb called Sedlec (pronounced Sed-lets). Sedlec is the site of what appears to be a smallish church or chapel, of fairly unremarkable appearance. Yet this building is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the entire Czech Republic. The reason for this soon becomes evident on entering: after passing through a short passageway, the visitor enters a series of chambers which are all extravagantly decorated with a plethora of ecclesiastical artefacts – chalices, candlesticks, chandeliers, monstrances, etc, etc – all put together from human bones! Maybe not quite a conjuring trick with bones, but certainly incredible skill and artistry. Perhaps the most magnificent of these constructions is a huge chandelier, which is said to contain at least one example of every bone in the human body, including the



tiny ones from the ears.

Amazingly, all this is the work of one man. His work dates from the late 19th century, but the story of the bones themselves begins much earlier. Sedlec was at one time the site of a large cemetery, dating back to medieval times. It was the last resting place of choice for many miles around, since it had been sanctified by a handful of soil brought back from the Holy Land by an abbot of the nearby Cistercian monastery. Over the years, extensions to the monastery chapel, plus the need to create space for further burials, led to a large number of exhumations, resulting in a huge accumulation of bones. To house these, an ossuary was built, in which the bones were randomly stacked.

In 1870 the local patrician family, the Schwarzenbergs, instructed Frantisek Rint, a local woodcarver in their employ, to put the bones into some kind of order. This commission he abundantly fulfilled! After boiling and bleaching the bones, he proceeded to create the extravaganza we see today. Unused bones were carefully and tidily placed inside chambers. As a gesture of respect to his employers, Rint also created a bone-mural of the Schwarzenberg coat of arms! Nor did he neglect to sign and date his creation when he had finished – a dated tablet bearing his name,

all of course made from bones, can be found just inside the entrance. He was obviously proud of his work, and who can blame him?

Visiting the ossuary today, it would be easy to react with horror and revulsion, and dismiss it all as ghoulish



and macabre. But this, I think, is a big mistake; I found it strangely peaceful, even comforting after a while. Yes, it shocks initially, but to some extent it is meant to. For what Rint has given us is a large scale *memento mori*, a graphic reminder of the mortality that awaits all of us, and of the need to prepare ourselves to meet it. But it is not just about death. There is no denying the beauty and artistry of these creations, despite the material from which they are made. The apostle Paul reminds us that 'we eagerly await a Saviour [from heaven] ...who ... will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body'. (Philippians 3:21-22). In creating lasting beauty from the materials of mortality, maybe Rint was trying to express this truth for us as well.

Alan Linfield, High St Baptist Church



'The word became flesh'



Language always changes and evolves. Every year there are new words added to the dictionary: words like Selfie, LOL and so forth. For cricket fans

I believe 'Bazball' has now been added to Chambers Dictionary, much to the disdain of our Australian friends. Purists get snobbish and argue that words such as LOL aren't words at all, but more grunts; and even if it is a word, it is probably a lie (you might smile, or do that weird snort through your nose, but you are unlikely to laugh out loud). Purists don't like the way in which words get distorted: sick becomes something good; wicked something fun. Language, however, reflects our society. The way we use words says something about us.

'The word became flesh': what does the living word of God say to us as we move into a new year?

A few years ago, the word of the year for the Oxford English Dictionary was pictograph. The world has become visually dominated. It is the world of Instagram over word-based microblogging. The presents which the children brought to the 10.00am Christmas Day service included emoji cushions and, gloriously, one of them was indeed the 'face with tears of joy'.

More recently the word of the year was a little less frivolous – 'post truth', an adjective relating to circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than emotional appeals. Don't worry, this isn't going to be a political article (well, unless you want to interpret it as one...). It is an attempt to ask ourselves what it means to live in a post-truth society and what does it mean to proclaim 'the word made flesh' in such circumstances?

It seems that in trying to win elections politicians will look for 'dog whistle' policies. They go for emotive language and policies. Think of how the recent by-election used ULEZ as a dividing point. Whilst all might be agreed we want environmentally friendly policies and we are concerned about climate change, we are still emotionally

attached to our cars.

If we try to move away from the emotive stuff of politics into the even more emotive world of Facebook, we might see that many people have a love-hate relationship with 'Everything Tring'. It is a strange echo chamber where we shout into it our own perceptions and hear them bounced back even louder by those who share our views. Objectivity goes out of the window to be replaced by a cacophony of emotive self-fulfilling snapshots of modern life. You can see in this context what post truth means – discourse shaped by emotional appeals rather than objective fact.

At first glance this is incredibly scary. We need truth. 'The word made flesh' comes as light and is full of truth. We need both the spotlight of truth – a glaring bright light picking out that which is wrong; and also the beacon of truth, a guiding light showing us the way.

Truth cannot be something made up by the victors. We need the dictators of the world to feel the harsh glare of the spotlight of truth shining upon them. Putin cannot be allowed to sleep easily following the terrors of Mariupol – truth should seek him out. Likewise, we too cannot allow the stories that we tell about ourselves to be the defining aspect of our characters. We need to find ourselves in the same spotlight, to reflect upon what we really did, how we really behaved. The truth has come to save us from our sins. We cannot hide from them, either individually or on a global scale.

We need truth. We need 'the word made flesh' who leads us into all truth. It is also important to acknowledge that religion needs truth as well. Truth isn't just a spotlight, it is a beacon leading us forwards. It leads us on, sometimes into uncomfortable ground. Religions at their worst can claim to be the guardians of the truth whilst ignoring all the evidence around them. The religious zealots of ISIS, or anyone who holds onto dogma without accepting the new evidence of learning and development, distort the truth.

The light comes to lead us into change and not just hold onto outdated thinking. Truth is essential. This is why

post truth sounds so scary. BUT, just because one wants to emphasise the need for truth and evidence and fact, it isn't OK to deny a discourse shaped by human emotion. It is the worst kind of intellectual snobbery to dismiss the 'great unwashed' who do not know what they are doing in elections. We are not Spock! We are not meant to be entirely logical. Our decisions ARE emotional, from the most banal choices we make in our lives – what shall I have for breakfast (we don't base this on a cold analysis of the facts and what is best for us, we choose what we feel like having) to the biggest purchases we are ever likely to make – we decide to buy a particular house because it feels right. This is right and important.

We need a discourse which is shaped by our emotions rather than pure logic. The logic of survival of the fittest means that it is good to have strong men like Putin in charge, or for our politics to be dominated by a cabinet of billionaires: deal-makers, successful people. Logic would say let us be ruled by the markets, let consumerism and capitalism triumph. However, you know that you are much more than that. You know that you are a compassionate, loving, hopeful person. You know that justice is important. You know that it hurts you to see the suffering in Yemen, Ukraine, Israel and Gaza. It pains you that people come into the Parish Church in Tring, a rich town, to receive food parcels. That is why you give generously to DENS. You are defined by your relationship with 'the word made flesh', you are defined by Jesus, God-made-man, by the incarnation.

Yes, we need truth, but we also need love and compassion, justice and hope. We need 'the word made flesh' who is full of grace and truth. Empirical or scientific truth, post truth (emotion-based), Gospel truth – we need the 'word' who is full of truth, but is based on love: the two combined together. Give me them both; give me the Christ Child – and I can still be hopeful as we move into a new year.

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

Tweet of the month



and, as always, trying to find unusual birds ourselves.

Shetland gets amazing birds from all over the place but, due to its location and a paucity of trees, birds we commonly find in the Tring area are scarce or absent on Shetland. So, we were really pleased to see scarce visitors like Buzzard and Treecreeper among the birds from further afield such as River Warbler and White's Thrush. Some people regard White's Thrush almost as a mythical bird due to its skulking nature, but on Shetland they are practically annual these days and this was the fourth time I had seen this beautiful thrush and again it showed well at times. I wrote about this species in 2020 in case you think it is familiar.

However, the outstanding bird in October on Shetland was an American Yellow Warbler. In 1986, when I went on

my first holiday abroad, to Canada and the USA, I had already seen a few American birds in Britain and so was aware how bright the North American warblers can be. At the time most American Warblers were in the Dendroica genus, Dendroica being derived from two Greek words and meaning tree-dweller. At that time American Yellow Warbler's specific name was petechia, which is taken from New Latin and means red spots, and the males do have obvious red streaks on their underparts – females can have a duller version of these streaks. Since then, our knowledge and understanding of many birds has improved so their scientific names have changed to reflect this. These days the American Yellow Warbler's scientific name is now Setophaga aestiva. Setophaga is derived from two Greek words that basically mean moth-eater, which apparently is the case. Aestiva is derived from a Latin word meaning summer, or summery. I am guessing that it is because of its bright yellow, sun-like, plumage. It may also be because it is a summer visitor to



Canada and most of the USA – although most of the American warblers are summer visitors so that is not a unique character of the species. The moth-eater part of its name might well explain why so many American warblers

turned up in Britain this autumn as apparently it was a good year for certain moths in North America and this was reflected in a successful breeding season for a lot of the warblers.

Some of the American warblers are gaudy multi-coloured birds, but American Yellow Warbler has a simple beauty with its bright yellow underparts and bright green upperparts and in 1986 was the commonest warbler I saw on my trip. The bird I saw on Shetland was an immature so will be duller than an adult male, but is still beautiful nonetheless and to me it is a miracle for such a small bird to have made it across the Atlantic Ocean. In God's creation there are many such miracles if we choose to see them.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

Crossword

1		2		3		4		5		6		
											7	
8						9						
10					11							
				12								
13							14			15		
						16						
17		18							19			20
								21				
22								23				
		24										

ACROSS

- Carol (4) (7)
- Too much water (5)
- Tell a story (7)
- Exact place (4)
- Where Jesus was born (8)
- Nearly fell over (4)
- Dazzled (6)
- Triumphed (8)
- Sign of more
- Shudder (7)
- Give a sermon (5)
- Another carol (5) (6)

DOWN

- Presents (5)
- e.g. Matthew (7)
- Neat (4)
- Not so (6)
- As usual (8)
- Equal number (5)
- Way of doing it (6)
- Far away (6)
- Let go (7)
- Ledge (5)
- Metal (5)
- One voice (4)

Spain by train



We enjoy train travel, which is just as well as we avoid flying on environmental grounds. So, having watched an episode of 'The World's Most Scenic Railway Journeys' with a commentary by the wonderful Bill Nighy, we were hooked on an idea.

I had travelled with a university friend around Europe by train and a couple of ferries back in 1974, in the early days of Interrail. Our ambitious itinerary meant that having visited every Scandinavian country before heading east across Europe and taking in Greece and Italy we reached day 26 of 30 in Perpignan in the far southern corner of France and had to head north towards home without making it into Spain. Fast forward almost fifty years and I had still never made it to the Iberian Peninsula, so the idea of visiting some of the major cities of Andalucia was very appealing. Within a week of watching the programme we had booked trains and made plans to see a couple of other places as well.

In early October we set off from St Pancras via Paris and then onto a high-speed train from Gare de Lyon to Barcelona. We spent three nights and two full days in the city and had pre-booked two-day tickets for the hop-on, hop-off city bus tour. This included entry to the famous Sagrada Familia, the cathedral designed by Gaudi. Building began in 1882 but it is far from finished, although this year marked the completion of the four evangelists' spires. We were able



Cordoba Mosque-Cathedral

to go up by lift among the towers to see some of the extraordinary architecture at close quarters and the spectacular views over the city; the descent was by over 400 steps, but it was well worth it. Gaudi's inspiration was the natural world and in the cathedral the columns and vaulting are like trees, there are references to wildlife everywhere and the space – despite all the tourists – is peaceful and reflective. On our second full day in Barcelona, we visited La Pedrera, in the city centre, and Park Güell, both of which are UNESCO World Heritage sites and further stunning examples of Gaudi's architecture.

Leaving Barcelona, we boarded a train for Seville, where we enjoyed a one-night stay and a walking tour before going on to Jerez, where we spent two nights. On the day in between we went to Cadiz by road and did a guided walk there. On the following day we had a tour of the Gonzalez Byas bodega in Jerez, with a mid-morning sherry tasting, before going to a show at the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art, which was wonderful. From Jerez we journeyed to Ronda, an incredible city perched on a plateau and divided by a deep gorge. While there we visited the bullring, one of the oldest in Spain, which evoked some pretty mixed feelings. On the one hand, it houses an excellent museum and a tour of the various parts of the building was also very interesting. It was good to hear that, as well as being a popular tourist destination, the ring is used for horse-riding demonstrations, concerts and other events. Sadly, it is also still used, over one September weekend each year, for bullfights. Orson Welles and Ernest Hemingway both attended these in Ronda and they are commemorated in the nearby square. For well over a decade there have been debates in Spain about banning bullfighting, and in Barcelona this has been achieved, but unfortunately the practice still persists in many areas.

We then travelled on to Cordoba, where a visit to the incredible and vast Mosque-Cathedral highlighted the contrast between the Moorish architecture and the elaborate and highly decorative Catholic cathedral situated



Granada Alhambra

in the centre of the space. Over the next few days, visiting Granada with its incredible Alhambra and then Malaga and the Alcazaba, one of the messages that a number of tour guides conveyed seemed to be that prior to the Spanish Inquisition in the late 15th century there had been a very long period when Jews, Christians and Muslims had lived amicably alongside each other. I have since discovered that this came to be known as the *convivencia* ('living together'). However, at the end of our week in Andalucia, we took another train to Madrid for a couple of days and while there we visited the Prado Museum. Rather overwhelmed by its size we opted for a quick look in a long gallery and then visited the current special exhibition. Here we learned another side



Ronda Bullring

of the story about the faith communities in Spain. 'The Lost Mirror: Jews and Conversos in Medieval Spain' (<https://www.museodelprado.es/en/whats-on/exhibition/the-lost-mirror-jews-and-conversos-in-medieval/ac516c08-08d9-42fb-a7fd-1c8a121e9946> ; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/08/lost-mirror-jews-conversos-medieval-spain-prado-madrid>) used a range of exhibits – paintings, sculpture, book illustrations etc. – to show how Jews and Jewish converts to Christianity were portrayed by Catholic Christians in Spain between 1285 and 1492. There were depictions of the 'blindness' of Jews, stressing their inability to accept Jesus as the Messiah and so, despite the forced conversion of many Jews after the pogroms of 1391, these converts – the conversos – were still seen as 'other' and as having impure blood. They and their descendants were continually under suspicion of Judaising and it was the growing animosity towards

conversos that eventually led to the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition. (I was astonished to learn that the Inquisition was only actually abolished in 1834.)

So, the last two centuries in the more than 700 years between the Muslim conquest of Spain in the 8th century and the end of the 'reconquest' of Spain with the surrender of Muslim Granada in 1492 – the year that also saw the expulsion of all unconverted Jews (as well as Columbus 'sailing the ocean blue') – were rather more complex than we had heard about from the guides in Andalucia. The shocking and disturbing accounts of how Christians persecuted and expelled both Jews and Muslims from this part of Europe were a stark reminder about how images of all sorts can be used to demonise and to incite prejudice – something that is still all too obvious today.

We arrived back in Tring to a marked fall in temperatures, with a slightly better understanding of some Spanish history and with a great appreciation for the wonderfully clean, bright and welcoming



Sagrada Familia

cities. Barcelona, in Catalonia, and a number of the cities in Andalucia have main streets that are wide and give ample safe space for electric scooters and cyclists. It had also been good to see plenty of both solar and wind generation and to learn that the Spanish have reduced their energy generation from fossil fuels to 4.5% of the total. We would thoroughly recommend seeing Spain by train and we look forward to the possibility of seeing Portugal the same way in the future.

Nicky Bull, High Street Baptist Church

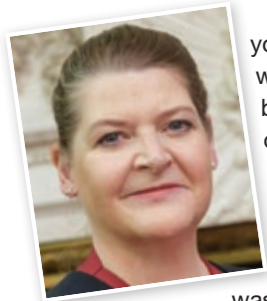


La Pedrera



Sagrada Familia

Francis Xavier, 3 December



By the time our younger brother was born, my elder brother and I were old enough to take an interest in what the new baby would be called. My older brother was very clear: the

baby must be named 'Joey Harper' (after the Aberdeen footballer of that name). Later I would be all too familiar with the drawbacks of having an unusual name, but at that stage, having spent hours poring through the name book, I opted for the rather exotic sounding Xavier.

The name comes from the Basque region of northern Spain, where in 1506, in the family castle, Francisco do Yasu y Xavier was born. At the age of 19 he travelled to Paris to study at the College of Sainte Barbe where he met another Basque called Ignatius Loyola (commemoration 3 July). Loyola had been badly wounded at the battle of Pamplona in 1521 and, during his convalescence, had become convinced that he should found a missionary society. In 1534 Francis Xavier, Loyola and five other men became the founders of the religious order called the 'Society of Jesus', members of which are known as Jesuits (and, colloquially, as 'God's Marines'). The seven offered themselves to the pope to be used in mission as he saw fit, and since that time the vocation of Jesuits has been in mission, often in hostile situations. The 1986 film 'The Mission' is based on 17th and 18th century Jesuit Missions in Paraguay (and is worth watching for its music as well as



the amazing story Ed). Pope Francis, the current pope, is the first to be a Jesuit.

Xavier was first sent to Goa, on the west coast of India and from there he travelled all over the East Indies, establishing the Church in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Japan. He had just reached China when he was taken ill and died, having preached, it is said, to more people, in more countries than anyone else since New Testament times.

After a week without a name, my baby brother was eventually called Owen, a name as exotic in the Highlands of Scotland as Xavier would have been!

Linzi James
St Peter & St Paul



1 Corinthians 13: a Christmas version

*If I decorate my house perfectly with
plaid bows,
strands of twinkling lights and shiny
balls,
but do not show love to my family,
I'm just another decorator.
If I slave away in the kitchen,
baking dozens of Christmas cookies,
preparing gourmet meals
and arranging a beautifully adorned
table at mealtimes
but do not show love to my family,
I'm just another cook.
If I work at the soup kitchen,
carol in the nursing home
and give all that I have to charity
but do not show love to my family,
it profits me nothing.
If I trim the spruce with shimmering
angels and crocheted snowflakes,
attend a myriad of holiday parties
and sing the choir's cantata
but do not focus on Christ,
I have missed the point.*

*Love stops the cooking and hugs the
child.
Love sets aside the decorating
and kisses the husband.
Love is kind though harried and tired.
Love does not envy another's home
that has coordinated Christmas china
and table linens.
Love does not yell at the kids to get
out of the way
but is thankful they are there to be in
the way.
Love doesn't give only to those
who are able to give in return
but rejoices in giving to those who
can't.
Love bears all things, believes all
things,
hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never fails.
Video games will break,
pearl necklaces will be lost,
golf clubs will rust.
But giving the gift of love will endure.*

Anon

Response to Feedback



Many thanks to Edmund Booth (see page 4) for his comments on my article on Max Jammer's book, 'Einstein and Religion'. It raises some very important issues,

two of which I address below. The initial question was on suffering. The next two linked-issues were on the place of humankind in the light of the science of Copernicus and the science of Darwin.

About eighteen months ago I gave a talk in a Bucks secondary school, along with a number of others, including oceanographers, climate scientists and the like. I was asked by a Year 9 pupil if being a Physics teacher in a secondary school caused me to doubt my faith. My honest answer was that I seldom had doubts based upon science, but frequently had doubts because of human and animal suffering. Even to attempt to discuss the question of suffering would require an awfully long answer, so perhaps not today.

Edmund in his article writes: 'Before Darwin, humans were naturally regarded as the crowning and ultimate glory of creation... humans, we now understand, are just one step in an evolutionary chain...'

Recently on Radio 4 I heard someone say, 'The Bible teaches that the earth is at the centre of the universe'. I then shouted at the radio, 'No, it doesn't!' in a tone I normally reserve for especially stupid politicians. That is just plain wrong. The Bible does not suggest this.

The ancient Greeks were the first to suggest a geocentric or earth-centred view of the universe. According to NASA, Eudoxus was the first to create a model of the geocentric universe around 380BCE. Aristotle, best known as a philosopher, then came up with a more detailed geocentric model, which was later refined by Ptolemy in his book 'Imagest', which was written in the 2nd century before Christ. NASA has stated that 'Ptolemy represents the best of the Greeks' knowledge of astronomy'. This is reflected in the fact that the geocentric model stood the test of time and was accepted for nearly 1,500 years.

Why? Imagine you get up very early one calm winter morning and go for a walk. All the world seems still. On that calm day there might be a bit of mist, the only sound is that of a Crow or a Red Kite looking for its breakfast. It seems obvious

that the earth is still. Then the sun rises and moves across the sky, it's obvious that it is moving. Except it isn't. It just appears that way. In the same way you can be confused sitting in a train at Tring Station heading for Euston when a train on the next platform heads off to Milton Keynes. It appears that you are moving, but you are still stationary.

The great medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas, described as 'the most influential thinker of the medieval period' and 'the greatest of the medieval philosopher-theologians' embraced several ideas put forward by Aristotle and attempted to join Aristotle's philosophy with the principles of Christianity. According to the English agnostic philosopher Anthony Kenny, Aquinas was 'one of the greatest philosophers of the Western world'. Aquinas took Aristotle's and Ptolemy's common-sense ideas of the earth being at the centre of the universe and wove it into his ideas of the creation. Lesser people, accepting his work, then looked to the Bible to find justification for this view and latched onto a few texts which could be interpreted that way.

The famous text from Genesis 1 is perhaps the text which perhaps most closely lent itself to the view of Ptolemy and Aristotle, but does not explicitly endorse it: 'God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.' One of the verses that was used against Canon Copernicus and Galileo, when they suggested the sun was at the centre of the universe, was Psalm 104 verse 5: 'You [God] set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken' which some saw as conclusive proof that the earth was stationary; but if you zoom out and look at more of Psalm 104 (one of my favourites) you see that it is a wonderful poem, full of glorious metaphors such as 'You stretch out the heavens like a tent' or 'you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the

wind'. This is poetic language; the earth does not literally have foundations any more than God rides upon the clouds like a chariot or that the heavens are a tent. The earth-centred view was, however, the dominant view in the church for the medieval period – in the early church the Bible was often interpreted as an allegory, a story or word-picture that can reveal a hidden meaning, to show the greatness of God, not to be taken literally.

The church believed, for much of the medieval period, that God had made the earth at the centre of the universe and therefore humankind was superior; an idea not found in the Bible. The man who changed this view was Nicholas Copernicus, a canon at Frombork Cathedral in what we now call Poland. He was a canon, but not a priest. Copernicus put this view forward in his book in 1543 'The Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres'. It was based on years of observation and calculation. It took a while for it to be accepted and did not receive full observational confirmation for centuries, although Galileo observed that Venus has phases just like the moon, which was a big step in the right direction and could not be explained by a model of the universe with the earth at the centre.

The idea that humankind is the crown of creation because the earth is at the centre of the universe is not in the Bible and was dismissed by the work of Copernicus, Galileo and others. Science has sometimes had the effect of turning the church back on its resources – the Bible, tradition and reason, forcing it to rethink its position.

Next time I will consider the case of Darwin, who did the same from the point of view of biology; but it is worth ending with a quotation from Galileo: 'The point of the Bible is to teach us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.'

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team

Join us in Corpus Christi Catholic Church for

CANDLELIGHT NATIVITY with CAROLS

Followed by tea in the
Church Hall
Sunday 17th December
at 3.30pm

EVERYONE WELCOME



Jane Ducklin
OSTEOPATH

Professional and effective relief of back pain, postural problems
and muscle and joint pain

18 Christchurch Road, Tring HP23 4EE

Tel: 01442 890073 Mob: 07973 188420

Highly qualified and registered with the General Osteopathic Council

Osteopathic Care for all the Family

Serving Tring since 1995

'I am the Good Shepherd'



'The Good Shepherd' is one of the most familiar titles given to Jesus in John's Gospel and, one might say, also one of the easiest to appreciate.

It is very easy to understand, not least, because of the familiarity of the title in Scripture and beyond. After all, the best known of the Psalms is probably Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my Shepherd' and its many metrical versions and the variety of hymns based on it. Familiar ones include 'The God of Love my Shepherd is' by George Herbert, 'The King of Love my Shepherd is' by Henry Baker, 'The Lord my pasture shall prepare' by Joseph Addison and 'Faithful Shepherd, feed me' by Thomas Pollock (less familiar to this writer!). The most well-known hymn is undoubtedly 'The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want', from The Scottish Psalter of 1650 and sung to the tune Crimond. This was introduced to England at the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip in 1947.

The title 'Good Shepherd' comes after 'the Gate' by which the shepherd approaches the sheepfold. It is also the Gate through which the sheep must pass to be saved. Jesus is the Good Shepherd because he is willing to protect his sheep even to the extent of dying for them. He is the one who knows his sheep and is known by them. He is usually called 'Good' in this context but the word in the original is not the ordinary word usually translated 'good' *agathos* but rather *kalos* which means 'fair', 'beautiful', 'excellent' and so on. In fact, both words were sometimes joined together meaning 'fine and beautiful'. Because this adjective has such a range of commendable meanings, one sometimes finds it rendered in other ways such as 'Model Shepherd'. So, in John 10 we progress from the title 'Gate' as the way to salvation to this title 'Good Shepherd' who is compared with a 'hired hand'. The main difference is that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep rather than running away at the sight of the wolf.

The imagery of shepherding is, not surprisingly, frequent in the Bible and there remained a nostalgia for the pastoral when agriculture became the norm in Israel. Further, it was common in the Ancient Near East to describe

rulers as shepherds. Even God was sometimes thought of in these terms. Moses and David were both shepherds, and David is described as the shepherd over the sheep. The prophet Ezekiel, too, has much to say about shepherds. He denounces wilful and neglectful rulers and says God will take his flock from such shepherds – but we must also be aware that there are dissimilarities in the comparison. Jesus is not a kingly or lordly shepherd, and the stress on the gate and thieves and bandits is not found in Old Testament symbolism. The unique feature in the New Testament is the willingness to die for the sheep. One could further complicate matters by remembering that Jesus is not only the Good Shepherd, but also the Lamb of God, and this leads us back to ideas of sacrifice and, in particular, to the Passover. John the Baptist early on pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God; but this is a separate issue from ideas of the Good Shepherd.

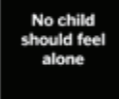
Many pictures portray Jesus as the shepherd in illustrated Bibles and Sunday School books. Actually, from the 5th century BC, there are depictions of a young man carrying a sheep, and this imagery was taken over by the church. So, Jesus is seen as a beardless youth with a lamb on his shoulders and some of the earliest depictions of Jesus in the early church in the time of the Roman Empire show Jesus as a young shepherd. In the Catacombs of Domatilla in Rome (dating from the 1st century) there is a fresco of the Good Shepherd, and, later, in the 5th century in Ravenna, there is the famous mosaic of the Good Shepherd in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. Here the imagery was taken over and 'glamorised' one might say, with Jesus shown wearing purple and gold like an emperor!

But in all this, we must remember that while it is a helpful

and inspiring idea to think of Jesus as a shepherd, he is different in that he lays down his life for the sheep. In the parable of the Lost Sheep, he shows his concern for the lost by leaving the ninety-nine and looking for the lost one. Would an ordinary shepherd risk ninety-nine for the sake of one? Maybe not good shepherding, but the image makes a point. I once heard a great biblical scholar point out how a parish would grumble if the parish priest neglected 99% of his parishioners! Yet we get the point of the shepherd who cares for each of his sheep, and we remember that the shepherd did also die for his flock. Jesus then goes on to refer to those who do not (yet) belong to the fold. We need to remember that, at first, Christ's ministry was to his own people but was later to be extended to the Gentiles. As St Paul wrote to the Romans: 'to the Jew first, and also to the Greek'. For, in the end, Jesus's commission was to make disciples of all nations.

So, as always, we have in Scripture a simple image, a good shepherd, which has much to tell us. We need to bring together all the 'I am' sayings to start to understand who Jesus is and what he does for us.

Martin Banister, St Albans Cathedral



All Welcome to our
Christingle Services for all ages

Sunday 3rd December
Tring Church at 3.00pm

Sunday 10th December
Aldbury Church at 10.00am



GHOSTLY LIGHT

Love knows no barriers: Brenda Hurley presents the concluding part to her fantasy romance trilogy.

Continuing on from *Ghostly Return*, we find Louis' journey might have been laid to rest had Doris not bought his magnificent carved bed, with its secret. Now reality and the netherworld exist side by side in the Eden room at the Royal Oak.

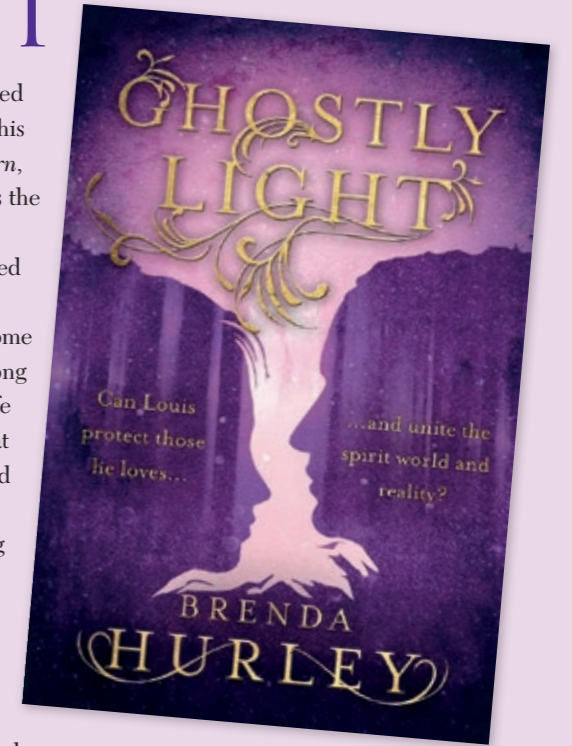
We are introduced to Debs, an old colleague, who visits North Yorkshire and falls in love with its people and the countryside. And when she joins the 'family', she is met with strange coincidences that bring jeopardy, romance, angels and demons to the inn.

Can Louis protect those he loves and resolve the threat between the spirit world and reality? *Ghostly Light* is the concluding story, Louis' final journey into light.

Brenda Hurley is a landscape artist, and in her late sixties, was inspired to write after seeing the work of a master carver. She now paints with words to tell her stories. *Ghostly Embrace*, published

in 2019, was the first to be conceived following Louis, a gentle ghost on his journey followed, by *Ghostly Return*, published in 2021. *Ghostly Light* is the final story in the series.

Brenda explains: "This all started when I visited the National Trust house of Kingston Lacy and saw some wonderful carved shutters at the long windows, a carved panel of wild life and a carved bed. I stood looking at the remarkable work and wondered who had had such a wonderful talent. I thought of a man now long dead, leaving this treasure behind him and wondered what life he might have had. Louis was born. I liked the thought that the barrier between the mortal and spiritual world is thin enough in parts for both worlds to connect, and love knows no such barriers. I've so enjoyed this journey, but this is the final story for Louis - will he find his happy ending?"



Release Date: 28/10/2023
ISBN: 9781805141723
Price: £9.99

TRING CHARITIES

(Registered Charity No 207805)

ALMSHOUSES IN TRING

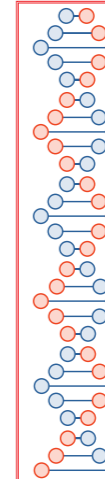
From time to time, one and two-bedroom bungalows become available to let, for people who currently live in Aldbury, Long Marston, Marsworth, Pitstone, Puttenham, Tring, Wigginton or Wilstone.

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

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

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

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



GCSE & A Level Tutoring
Biology, Chemistry, Physics

Zoey Child

Recent Cambridge Science graduate, available for face-to-face tutoring in Tring.

Email: imperialoctopus@gmail.com
Phone: 07462 551560

STOP PRESS!

John Payne Cook, rector of Tring from 1985-1999, died suddenly in the middle of November after a short illness. He was 80.

John's ministry in Tring followed that of Donald Howells and was followed by Frank Mercurio and then Huw Bellis.

John wrote the words to the Bishop Wood School hymn at the end of his ministry in Tring.



New Mill Scouts



Our youngest grandson has just become a Cub, the eighth in our family to do so. It prompted me to think about our boys' time with New Mill Scouts more than fifty years ago.

At that time, New Mill was, in effect, a village. There was the school, Social Centre next door, which had a small church one end, St George's, the Baptist Chapel in New Road, the Mill, where some of the parents worked, Mr Gregory's butcher's shop next to the school, Ayres Stores opposite, the Post Office in Wingrave Road and two pubs.

The School was bursting at the seams with four classes, two in the school, one in the Social Centre and the fourth one, in the school room at New Mill Baptist. At lunch time the children had to march down to the school, whatever the weather.

Our eldest two started there and they were all transferred to Dundale when it opened in 1967. When Ian became 8, he wanted to join Cubs with some of his friends from school, so we went along to put his name down at the Social Centre, which was used extensively for Youth club, Social club, Girls' Friendly Society, Women's Institute, Cubs and many other activities. There had been Cubs in the village since 1938 and they had wanted their own Hall since then, with room to store camping equipment and an outside space for camp fires and games.

Evelyn Barber (recently deceased) was Ian's first Akela, helped by Rosemary Duck. At Rosemary's marriage to Brian, our second son, Peter, was part of the Cubs' Guard of Honour at New Mill Baptist Church. Later leaders were Daphne McAllister, Brian and Barbara Flanders, Viv Copley, Janet Honey, Brian Carter, Mike Smith, Brian Coen, John McDonald, who took the boys sailing. Howard Collings was Group Chairman, and Phil Lawrence Treasurer.

In 1970, Mrs Joan Cole gave a piece of land next to the Police houses in Grove Road for a new Scout HQ to be built. Apparently her mother-in-law had given land in Longfield Road for Tring Scouts some years before and said she would do the same for New Mill one day.

Atlas Copco in Hemel Hempstead had some temporary office buildings, which

they kindly donated and Brian Flanders brought them back on his trailer, several loads. Pitstone Cement works supplied hardcore, which

came from the linings of old furnaces. Peter Harrowell, who was Assistant Commissioner for Scouts and a local builder, supplied trainee bricklayers. All the dads who had any relevant skill were coerced into joining in and some granddads too. Even the Scouts did some of the painting. It was a big team effort.

So, where did the money come from?

Well, a group of mums formed the New Mill Scouts Supporters Association and set forth to raise it. We had sponsored walks, book sales and other smaller events. We aimed to have one fundraiser every month and had paid for it all by Opening Day, when Joan Cole came to be presented with a bouquet and declare the New Mill Scout HQ open. We invited as many of the past leaders as we could trace, had tea and cakes for the adults and hot dogs for the boys. In the evening they had a campfire out the back, where there was now room to play games and put up tents.

We knew at the time that it was only a temporary solution and would not last for ever. At some stage it would need to be replaced; and so it was, but that is another story.

So, when our two youngest, Robert and Malcolm became Cubs, they were at the new HQ.

They enjoyed it as much as their brothers had, and were soon busy trying to get as many badges as possible.

Every year, it was the St George's Day Parade, held in either Tring, Northchurch or Berhamsted, which had the biggest churches. About 500 Cubs and Scouts would march down the High Street behind a band, carrying their flags, watched by many parents. It was a sight to behold. Each Pack wore differently coloured scarves. Ours were yellow,



Left to right: Mr. Flanders, Mr. King and Mr. Smith with members of New Mill scout troop and their new colours.

Tring's green and the villages each had a different colour – they all had packs too. They also paraded on Armistice Day at St Peter & St Paul's, again with flags. It was considered a great honour to carry the flags or be an escort.

Then there was 'Bob a Job' week, when the boys would do small jobs for grandparents or neighbours and be paid a 'bob', one shilling, which went to their pack. I don't think it would be allowed now!

Later, the older boys went up to Tring for their Scout meetings, until there were enough of them to form a Troup at New Mill, when Mike Smith and Brian Flanders took over. Then there were the Summer Camps, often to different parts of Wales, when Mr and Mrs Flanders took them, with the Round Table minibus. Later still, the older boys went off camping without adults to the Peak District or Brecon Beacons. They joined in with other things, too, like Pram Prix at Dundale School and litter collecting after the festivals, and the Rugby Club sevens, which they won one year. They used to set up the jumps for the Gymkhana at Gubblecote and camp there overnight.

Eventually they all grew up and the Oddy Venture Unit was started. We are very grateful that our boys were able to benefit from belonging to Cubs and Scouts. It was good training for when they left home. We have many thanks to offer to all the leaders, who made it possible. One grandson now runs a pack in Oxford and a son and grandson ran a pack in Scotland. We would like to hope that other parents would like to be involved. You make friends for life.

Erica Guy
St Peter & St Paul

Actions speak louder than words



Righteousness – doing the right thing – was always a challenge. In the parable of the two sons where one says, 'I don't want to do it' and then does the right thing while the other says, 'OK, Dad,' and then does his own thing, it's clear that actions speak louder than words.

It was like that in Jesus' day; I suspect it is like that now.

Do we always do the right thing or do we sometimes have a bit of a go and then fall by the wayside? The way of righteousness is hard. The apostle Paul was speaking like a father to his much-loved sons and daughters when he wrote to his followers in Philippi: 'Look not to your own interests but to the interests of others' and 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ'.

It's good advice. Don't just pay lip-service – DO the right thing. Jesus is the very model of a good son – a son who follows the way of righteousness as his father commands; a perfect son who shows US the way of righteousness.

But do we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the Christ-child we worship in this Christmas season, God made man? Or

do we just get lost ourselves and fall by the wayside? We can but try. Trying is all that we humans can expect to do and trying is usually enough. NOT trying isn't! It is we ordinary mortals, the weak and human people that we are, rather than the haughty hypocrites (like the Pharisees and chief Priests of Jesus' time who only pretended to follow the right way) who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is those who keep on trying, rather than those who just 'talk the talk' – who have found the right way.

The way of righteousness – doing the right thing – is not an easy road. It's not always easy to find and almost never easy to follow. It is steep and narrow and beset by all kinds of monstrous perils. But it is the one road we all have to follow. We are all pilgrims on the same road: 'Through the night of doubt and sorrow, onward goes the pilgrim band' as the hymn so lyrically puts it. Sometimes those nights of doubt and sorrow, those dark nights of the soul, can make us feel hopeless and unable to carry on, but carry on we must, because the way of righteousness is the only road that will get us to our destination, the one road that will help us find the peace of Christ. Deep inside we know that.

We always know when we are on the right road, when we are doing the right thing and the bonus is that we always feel better when we do. Helping others along the way is the best way of helping ourselves. We 'always know' because each one of us has the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us, quietly whispering in our ears when we wander onto the wilder shores of anger or folly.



We need to put our faith into action and live our lives generously, to make the right choices, make our actions speak louder than our words. There's a wonderful story of St Peter towards the end of his long life when he decided to flee from Rome because of Nero's persecution. Hurrying out of Rome along the Appian Way, he had a vision and met Christ going the other way and carrying his cross. There is a celebrated painting by Caracci which captures the moment perfectly. 'Quo Vadis Domine?' he said. 'Where are you going, Lord?' Christ stated that he was going again to be crucified. There was no hesitation from Peter this time: 'I'll go, Lord,' said Peter, 'You've done enough – it's my turn.' And he turned back to Rome to continue his ministry and walked forward on the way of righteousness – faithful to the end.

This is the way of the cross, the way that leads to eternal life. Inspired by that baby in the manger and the life he lived, we too can choose the right way, living thankfully, generously and doing the right thing.

Grahame Senior
Tring Team

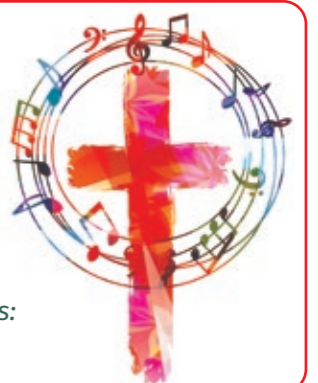


Epiphany Season

QUIET DAY AT PUTTENHAM

Theme: Exploring Christian Music

The next event will be in January, date to be announced.
Please look out for further information or contact Tim or Linzi James:
tjames@dhl.com or linzi.birnie@hotmail.co.uk



Light fighting darkness



You will probably know that I am a painter, and that I believe that this gift was God given. I want to give the viewer of my work at exhibitions sight of the joy of this world,

in full colour; to feel the emotions I feel when I paint at the wonderful history of the land that's all around us.

What you do not know is that, when I was in recovery after tonsil cancer in 2009, I couldn't paint colour at all. Each time I tried, I chose greys, browns and black. Recovery was needed for my mind as well as my body. But the need to create, my gift, was still alive and well.

Because of that illness, I picked up a pen and paper and, after a trip to Kingston Lacy in Dorset where I saw carving so beautiful I wondered who had

carved it, a name came into my mind, 'Louis'. Fanciful, I know, but artists are like that. The combination of carving and Louis developed, and I started the first book of my trilogy, 'Ghostly Embrace'.

It has been important to me to write about light fighting darkness, goodness against evil. We often hear the reading about Jesus from John's Gospel at Christmas: 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'

I believe my faith shines through my writing. I have enjoyed the journey I have had with Louis and Katie. Fantasy and romance are all tied up with angels and demons. The Christian faith is full



of supernatural acts and good and bad spirits. I hope that I reflect that in all my works whether in paint or in words. 'Ghostly Return' and 'Ghostly Light' sum up that love is the ultimate winner for all.

Brenda Hurley
St Peter & St Paul

Postcard from Orkney



We've been attending services at the Milestone Community Church for about a year now and it seemed like a good time to reflect on how we feel about being part

of the Church of Scotland and review whether it is right for us. Rather naively, I assumed the Church of Scotland was like the Church of England with tartan probably being involved in some way. It seems not. Therefore, I thought it a good time to 'compare and contrast' the two institutions. I apologise if my understanding of things is incorrect – the structure and hierarchy of churches doesn't hugely concern me. I go to church to connect with God, have a time of peace and hopefully afterwards, a cup of tea and home bakes with members of a friendly congregation.

One major difference between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland is the lack of bishops in the Church of Scotland. Is that a good thing? I couldn't possibly comment. There is no head of the church, as the Sovereign is in England. It is Presbyterian, where no one person or

group has more influence than another. No one is the head of faith as that role belongs to God: all very democratic, though I imagine final decisions must be made by someone or some group of people, no doubt helped by the power of prayer.

There are two ministers at Milestone, a married couple, Kerr and Moira who were appointed this year. They have brought energy and enthusiasm to the kirk which is being well received by the congregation which usually numbers around fifty. These range from Knit & Natter, Monday Prayer Gathering and Cafe Church once a month, when the service is more informal. The services follow a pattern not very dissimilar to the C of E: call to worship, hymns, readings and a reflection, which I equate to a sermon. Communion at Milestone is held twice a month, though I understand this is not always the case in the C of S. One shame is there is no live music or choir: all hymns are on Power point and we join in with videos which have soundtracks and captions. One upside is that it doesn't matter if one can't sing!



Essentially Milestone is similar to St Peter & St Paul – although a major difference is the church building is about 600 years younger than St Peter & St Paul, being built in 2012! Importantly though, they both have warm and friendly congregations, lots of activities in which to engage – if one wishes – and they provide an anchor to the week when one can reflect and just stop for a while. That, to me, is what churches are all about.

Carrie Dodge
Milestone Church, Dounby

Who is this Jesus?



At Carol Services and at Midnight Masses we tend to hear the majestic words from John's Gospel, 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' It is immense, it is ethereal, and we quickly realise that the fourth Gospel is going to be quite different from the preceding three Synoptic Gospels.

Mark's Gospel was the first to have been written; Luke and Matthew are heavily dependent on Mark's text, using it extensively and elaborating with their own material. John is notably different. Whilst it is possible that the author of John's Gospel had a copy of Mark's text, it seems more likely that they drew on oral Aramaic sources independently.

From early times, the church has seen John's Gospel as more theological and the Synoptics more historical, but I don't think that's fair. Although at times they seem to contradict each other, they are best thought of as being equally reliable historically (or equally fallible) and each is a work of theology, trying to work out a Christology – who then is this Jesus? The difference is that the Synoptic Gospels can be a bit more like lecture notes, a collection of stories and sayings of Jesus pulled together in a bitty way. You can almost see where Matthew has shoehorned his collection of sayings into Mark's account. John is more like a dissertation. He has distilled the notes into what the biblical scholar Stanton describes as a 'seamless' robe. No longer are there random sayings of Jesus; instead, he is involved in long discourses.

At first glance, this Gospel does not seem to breathe the language of 1st century Palestine. It feels more metaphysical and philosophical, and yet the discovery of the Nag Hammadi text shows us that these concepts were around at the time. Another, non-Palestinian, contemporary Jewish philosopher and writer, Philo, also uses the term 'logos' (word). Philo describes the logos as neither uncreated, like God, nor created – but in a real sense a mediator. The fourth Gospel is rooted in contemporary thought as much as the Synoptics are.

Stanton sees the Gospel of John

as being like one of the great medieval cathedrals. To expand his metaphor, after entering through a stunning door (those words we hear at Christmas) we find ourselves in the nave. This is the public ministry. The first twelve chapters contain seven 'signs' which reveal who Jesus is. The first of these signs is the wedding at Cana in Galilee and throughout this section the narrative unfolds with a variety of dialogues and discourses with individuals, groups and opponents. Then we retreat through the rood screen to the choir. Now the conversations are in private, with just the disciples. The discourse is more intense. John's Jesus is quite different from the Synoptics. There will be no agony at Gethsemane. Jesus is always in control. In John's trial scene, it is almost as if the captors are on trial, not Jesus. Whilst we are still inexorably moving towards his death and crucifixion at the high altar, our gaze is always fixed on the glory which is revealed in the stained glass of the east window.

A major theme of John's Gospel is the revelation of glory. This is only hinted at in the transfiguration in the Synoptics; in John, Jesus' glory is clear from the outset and the disciples believed in him. In the Synoptics there is much hope of a kingdom which is yet to come; in John, that glory is revealed here amongst us, now.

As we read John's Gospel, we will notice that we are introduced to some wonderful characters not mentioned elsewhere in the Gospels. There is Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, the Samaritan woman by the well at Sychar, the man who has been ill for thirty-eight years beside the pool and the man born blind, whose sight is restored and who gradually understands who Jesus is.

John's account also gives us some unique stories full of dramatic moments. At the wedding in Cana, Jesus tells us 'My hour has not yet come' and 'Jesus wept' at the death of Lazarus whom he loved. The raising of Lazarus is unique to John's Gospel. We also hear some of our best-loved phrases from the Bible, not least 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not

perish but have eternal life' in John 3:16; and 'Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"' in John 14:6. These are found only in John's account.

There are also discrepancies. There is no birth narrative in John's Gospel. Although we are introduced to John (in the fourth Gospel, he isn't called the Baptist) Jesus is never actually baptized. There are no exorcisms, there is no call to repentance, there are few parables and there is no account of the Last Supper. In the Synoptics, Jesus' ministry is for one short year; in John, there are three Passovers, and he spends more time in Judea and Jerusalem. For those who like to get to the historicity of what actually happened, we are challenged by Roman soldiers being present at the arrest, there being a different trial sequence, Jesus carrying his own cross and the words on the titulus are different. John's crucifixion happens before the Passover and at least one disciple does not flee.

John's Gospel also contains significantly more resurrection appearances than any of the other Gospels. If the seven 'signs' are meant to reveal Jesus' glory, it is in the resurrection that we see most clearly who Jesus was. It is the ultimate way we see Jesus' glory. John's Gospel tells the resurrection story five times to make sure we do not miss the point.

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

'White Christmas'

*A reflective service
for anyone experiencing the pain and loss of bereavement.*



10th December
3.00pm
New Mill Baptist Church

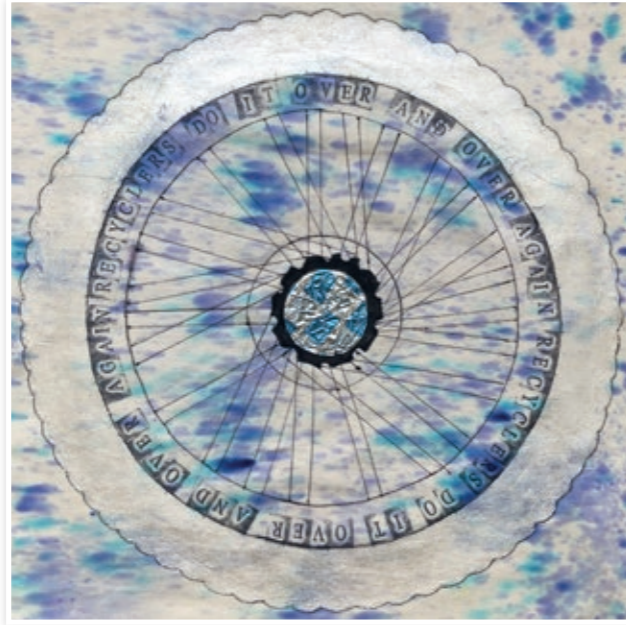
Recyclers do it over and over again



'The earth does not belong to us. We belong to the earth... We don't inherit the earth; we borrow it from our children.' Chief Seattle

What inspired this design?

Recycling is one way to value and show respect for our world's resources. One of my first attempts at recycling, many years ago, was the Blue Peter milk-bottle-top recycling scheme to raise money for charity! Later, when I owned



my own garden, I started to make compost which fascinates and delights me. It makes a perfect recycling 'wheel'. Waste vegetation is magically turned into soil by trillions of microscopic helpers, so that a new seed can turn into the food that feeds us: a perfect recycling 'wheel'. Reuse and recycle.

What am I doing now to continue to pursue this approach to the world's resources?

I've set up Tring Repair Café – come and visit us!

Jan Rook
High Street Baptist Church

Use it!



'This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap;

the being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it what I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.'

Discuss.

Sorry – this is not an A level question from the 1970s but the start of a *Comment* article! But I did read 'Man and Superman' by George Bernard Shaw for A Level and I probably hadn't thought of it for fifty years until Revd Janet Ridgway's funeral where it was read out because Janet was that kind of person – definitely a force of nature and definitely someone who used all that she was for the community around her. Now, Shaw came from a Protestant background and was a socialist committed to issues around women's rights, poverty and capitalism, but as far as I know, he

was not known for his affiliation to the Christian faith; but what his character says in this play resonates with me.

I haven't been married for forty-three years to a man who loves sport without picking up the odd bit of terminology. I still don't understand the off-side rule in football despite the patient attempts by one or other of my four sons to explain it. Cricket – well, I don't have the patience to sit all day to watch a game so, apart from knowing what LBW is because my father was also a fan, I am none the wiser. But it was hard not to see a bit of rugby in the last few months since it occupied 'downtime' in my house and my husband and one of my sons were keen to watch many (if not all) of the games in the Rugby World Cup. An expression I kept hearing was 'Use it!' Apparently you mustn't hold on to the ball or waste your opportunity with it when you have won a ruck but have five seconds to use the ball or it will be given away. If you read the quotation above, you will know how it might have struck a chord.

I am no longer as young as I was. I look in the mirror and I see my mother. I have just had a significant birthday – not because it has a 0 or 5 with it but because it was the age my mother was when she died. There is no comparison between her life and mine for so many reasons; yet it feels even more as if the clock is ticking. What will I do with what time is left to me?

At the recent funerals of Sheila Whitehead, Barry Child, Janet Ridgway and Ian Ogilvie, it was clear they were all people who had used their time in all

kinds of profitable ways, serving God and their communities right to the end. The number of volunteer years they had put into their lives, the ways they had helped others, was exemplary.

You could think of the parable of the talents, of not burying the gifts God has given you; or of the son who said he would go and help his father in the vineyard but didn't versus the son who says he won't but did – it comes to the same thing. There are so many opportunities to serve others, to love others as Jesus told us to in the summary of the law: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength and love your neighbour as yourself'. We can't all be missionaries or lead services, play the organ or run the youth group, but there is something each of us can do to make the most of the time we have. I was in awe of the article by Erica Guy reminding us of all the efforts people from the Tring community had gone to so that children could become Cubs or Scouts in the past and the one by Alie Wainwright about being a befriender to someone on their own. We all know people who are doing so much for others, perhaps behind the scenes. There are vacancies all over the place for volunteer jobs we can do and people who would be so encouraged if we offered to help, or pray, to listen or give time or money.

Maybe this could be our collective New Year's Resolution? Be a splendid torch. Use it.

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul

Recipe for a Happy New Year

Take twelve whole months.
Clean them all of bitterness, hate and jealousy.
Make them all as fresh and clean as possible.

Now cut each month into twenty-eight, thirty or thirty-one different parts but don't make up the whole batch at once.

Prepare it one day at a time out of these ingredients:

Mix well into each one part of faith, one part of patience, one part of courage and one part of work.
Add to each day one part of hope, faithfulness, generosity and kindness.
Blend with one part of prayer, one part meditation, and one good deed.
Season the whole with a dash of good spirits, a sprinkle of fun, a pinch of play, and a cup full of good humour.

Pour all this into a vessel of love.
Cook thoroughly over radiant joy, garnish with a smile, and serve with quietness, unselfishness and cheerfulness.

You're bound to have a HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Anon

Good News from the Angels

The Saviour is born!



Nativity
Every Sunday morning service in December will include a short Nativity scene involving young and old alike.

Christmas card 'crafternoon'
Sunday 3 December, 2-4pm
Give your Christmas cards the handmade touch this year! With coffee and cake to enjoy.

Carols by Candlelight Service
Sunday 17 December, 6pm

All Age Christmas Eve Service
Sunday 24 December, 10.30am

Midnight Communion Service
Sunday 24 December, 11.30pm

Christmas Day Celebration
Monday 25 December, 10am

Christmas Day Lunch
Monday 25 December, 12.30-3pm
A lunch for anyone and everyone, come and enjoy Christmas day lunch with others. Booking essential. Suggested donation £5 to £10.

Join us for our Christmas services and activities
High Street Baptist Church, Tring
Contact ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk / 07521 513494 for more information and to book Christmas Day Lunch.



NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH

Wish you all a Very Happy and Blessed Christmas Season. Please come and join us at any of our Christmas Services.

Sunday 10th December at 3.00pm
A WHITE CHRISTMAS SERVICE
A quieter service for any who have experienced bereavement.
In collaboration with High Street Baptist Church

Sunday 17th December at 5.00pm
CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Sunday 24th December at 10.30am
'ARE YOU READY TO MEET THE BABY JESUS?'
Christmas Day at 10.00am
A CHILD-FOCUSED SERVICE
Bring your favourite present

Sunday 31st December at 10.30am
'STEPPING INTO THE NEW YEAR'

More funeral hymns



Malcolm and I found it difficult to pinpoint particular hymns that we'd like sung at our funerals. We both feel that, as part of an occasion for people to remember a loved one and mark their passing, the songs used at our funerals should really be chosen by those who know us best, to help them say what they want said on that occasion. We are also aware that many people who might come to our funerals would come from different religious traditions – and, increasingly, with no formal religious views, not even a faith.

In addition, we could name any number of favourite hymns that we might feel encapsulate our views and values, or that we love to sing. Before long, there would be others that we would decide should be added. It could make for a very long list.

Because Annette asked the question, though, I did find myself reflecting on hymns that mattered to me and I kept returning to one remembered since Primary School. It expresses a deep sense of gratitude for being who I am, where I am. The language of it is simple, and of its time. I don't think it is used these days, maybe because of a suggestion of 'knowing your place' in a class system ('...be we low or high...') but I have never felt excluded or constrained by it. I find myself singing it out walking, while working, in times of quiet and even in times of trouble when I feel a need to re-centre myself.

The hymn is 'Glad that I live am I' and these are the words as I remember them from school:

<i>Glad that I live am I</i>	<i>All that we need to do,</i>
<i>That the sky is blue.</i>	<i>Be we low or high,</i>
<i>Glad for the country lanes</i>	<i>Is to live, as we grow,</i>
<i>And the fall of dew.</i>	<i>Underneath God's sky.</i>

*After the sun the rain,
After the rain the sun.
This is my way of life
Till the work be done.*

These differ slightly from the original. Maybe my memory is at fault, or perhaps the teacher who wrote the hymns out on big sheets for the whole school to read (we didn't have hymn books) decided to change them. But this is what I sing. I believe the tune we used was 'Water End'.

Anne Nobbs, St Peter & St Paul



The hymn at the top of the list for my funeral has to be 'Guide me oh thy great redeemer'. It has been one of those hymns I can't get enough of and enjoy singing it whenever there is an opportunity. When I was a teenager, it was played on the piano at assembly by my head teacher with such feeling and conviction that it has stayed with me ever since. The words are so personal as I feel

I am a pilgrim in this world, guided by God. It has followed me around everywhere, sung at St Albans Cathedral Easter Monday Pilgrimage which I have walked many a year, and always goes down well at Beer and Hymns, sung in harmony, led by our male voice group. Wonderful.

Janet Goodyer, St Peter & St Paul



Growing up in a Scottish fishing community in the days when it was still customary for those who went to sea to wear a wool gansey knitted to the same pattern as their kin, I knew there was something special about the foul-smelling, oily jumpers, which to this day make me itch to think of them. I wasn't very old when my aunt explained – the wool would take decades to disintegrate in salt water and, if ever remains were found, the decoration of the gansey would mean they could be returned to the family who mourned. I don't actually know of a case where it happened but the community recognised that the thread between life and death was much more easily broken than gansey wool. The pattern worn by someone lost at sea would never be knitted again.

During my childhood, whenever more than three people gathered, 'Eternal Father, strong to save' was sung, just as likely to be in the pub before closing time as in church. And at every funeral, while mourning the dead, there was always time to pray for those whose life's work put them in danger. So, this hymn will be sung at my funeral.

**Linzi James
St Peter & St Paul**



I was brought up a Methodist and so would like two Wesley hymns at my funeral: 'And can it be...' and 'Lo he comes with clouds descending' to the tune Helmsley.

**Ted Oram
St Peter & St Paul**



I would like 'Love divine' to the tune Blaenwern at my funeral which was sung at both my wedding and my mother's funeral.

**Bea Bingham
St Peter & St Paul**



Being sad and organised, I have my funeral service plan already, and update it regularly. The last hymn is 'You shall go out with joy and be led forth with piece'. I update the exit music, and have just changed to Josh Groban's version of 'You lift me up'. The chorus is:

*You raise me up so I can stand on mountains.
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas.
I am strong when I am on your shoulders,
You raise me up to more than I can be.*

The music is truly uplifting.
**John Whiteman
St Peter & St Paul**

In memory of Ian Ogilvie

Ian was educated at Rossall School on a scholarship. From there, he moved to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he read Classics and English and became president of the Debating and Dramatic societies. After graduating, he completed his vocational studies at Lincoln Theological College.

Between 1961-63, he worked as Curate at Clapham Parish Church, also running the 14-26 Open Youth Club, mainly for 'Rockers'. This innovation led to monthly Beat Services using a guitar group. He married Jenny in 1962 who helped him to run a pantomime on site. He continued as a curate at Great St Mary's in Cambridge, working under Hugh Montefiore, an inspirational leader who later became Bishop of Birmingham. Whilst there, Ian encouraged undergraduates to play and sing modern church music which resulted in a half hour programme on Anglia TV during which this group performed.

Apart from his marriage, two of the most important events occurred during this decade: the births of Mark in 1966 and Hugh in 1969. His ministry took an interesting turn between 1967-77, when he became the first full time Chaplain at Sevenoaks School in Kent. He worked under Kim Taylor, a true educational innovator. Ian introduced O Level Religious Studies, modern church music and organised large events for young people in the local Diocese at Rochester Cathedral. In 1972, an Open Air Eucharist took place in Trafalgar Square, with over 2000 in attendance and a broadcast on BBC1. Multi-faith approaches took a front seat when Ian converted a modern building into a Meeting House for holding services and allowing Muslim and Hindu boarding students to use it for prayer.

In 1974, Ian moved for a year to become a visiting Chaplain at St George's School in Newport, Rhode Island, during which time he preached at the White House Church in Lafayette Square; senators were present but not President Nixon himself! Upon returning to the UK, Ian initiated the project he is most proud of, namely setting up a Committee to build a Cheshire home, near Sevenoaks. The school boys organised an annual sponsored walk. After much opposition, the home was opened in 1977 by

Leonard Cheshire himself, the only man Ian ever met whom he would call a saint.

Ian's next move took him to Malvern College in Worcestershire where he acted as Chaplain between 1977 and 1983. Apart from teaching O and A level Religious Studies, Ian introduced Open Pulpit, when famous people shared their faith with students and engaged in a Q and A session afterwards. Speakers included Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Peter Walker and Enoch Powell [both MPs].



Ian was elected to the Diocesan Board of Education, then to the Governors of the local C of E comprehensive school, later becoming Chairman. He also introduced exchanges between students in a church comprehensive school in Coventry. Promotion arrived with a move to St George's School in Harpenden where he was appointed as Headteacher between 1983 and 1987. Ian appointed a Head of 6th form who actively encouraged Oxbridge entry and a number of students continue to successfully apply there. Ian raised money for the first Computer room in the school and started a programme of redecorating the school, involving over fifty of the parents.

Between 1987 and 89, Ian's career changed direction, becoming Chaplain to Bishop John Taylor of St Albans, as well as Vicar of Aldenham. He organised a visit for Archbishop Desmond Tutu, one of the greatest church figures of the 20th century. Becoming Chairman of the Church Urban Fund further developed Ian's talent for fundraising where the three-year target set was met within

eighteen months. This tenure led to another, refreshing change in direction, when Ian was appointed in 1989 as Director of Fundraising for MIND, a leading Mental Health charity, raising more money than ever before. He changed to the British Deaf Association between 1991 and 1993. Princess Diana was its patron and fundraising events sold out almost immediately. Ian raised even more money than before, but he found it challenging to work with profoundly deaf people.

His most successful post arrived with the Royal Mission for Deep Sea Fisherman between 1993 and 2004. Ian managed to transform a 6-figure deficit into a 6-figure surplus during his time at the Mission. Much public speaking ensued in churches and at Rotary Clubs, including a guest appearance from Betty Boothroyd as well as memorable Cowes Yacht Club lunches and a dinner on board the Orkney ferry. During this period, Ian and Jenny were invited to the Buckingham Palace Garden party, followed shortly by receiving an MBE from Prince Charles. Lord Kinnoul, who recommended him, described Ian as 'endowed with the remarkable ability to... very

effectively communicate at all levels... a compassionate man who has a great love and affinity for the British fisherman... a consummate professional...'

Retirement in 2005 did not lead to a slow-down in Ian's workload. He became a part-time parish priest, looking after churches with interregnums in the St Albans and Oxford Dioceses, in addition to a semi-detached role on the staff of the Tring Team. He joined the local U3A where he enjoyed American and European studies and the discussion groups. He also attended PROBUS, to which he was elected President between 2019 and 2021 and positions on the board of the city YMCA and the Simon Community, a homeless charity, both based in London.

Ian has always been proud of his wonderful wife Jenny and the unwavering support she has offered to him, as a caring mother and devoted granny; sons Mark and Hugh, daughter-in-law Fleur and grandson Ethan.

Hugh Ogilvie, son

Useful contacts

TRING TEAM PARISH

Team Rector (Tring & Puttenham)
Rev Huw Bellis
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)
On Sabbatical

School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

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

Diocesan Lay Ministers

Jon Reynolds
01296 662326
jonreynolds1386@gmail.com

Grahame Senior
01442 822770
gsenior@seniorpartners.co.uk

Mike Watkin
07715 553556
mike.watkin@btinternet.com

Parish Co-ordinators

Vivianne Child
01442 826092
vchild@childassociates.co.uk

Parish Advisor

John Whiteman
01442 826314
john@tringteamparish.org.uk

Church Wardens

Jane Brown (Aldbury)
01442 851396

Christine Rutter (Puttenham)
01296 668337

Canon Jane Banister (Wilstone)
01442 822170
(Day off Thursday)

Judith Weatherill (Long Marston)
jweath76@gmail.com

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
Vacancy

Administrator
Emma Nash
01442 827881

CORPUS CHRISTI ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
Parish Priest
Father Sean Thornton
seanthornton@rcdow.org.uk

Parish Administrator
Nicole Brandwood
tring@rcdow.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
Rev Jackie Buie
07549 432582
minister@newmillbaptist.org.uk

Church Secretary
Valerie Carr
07831 709793
secretary@newmillbaptist.org.uk



Hall Hire
Andrew Webber
07773 148706
treasurer@newmillbaptist.org.uk

JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP
affiliated to
Churches Together in Tring

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

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

SOCIAL NETWORKING

 Tring Parish
 @revhuw

COMMENT
Editor
Annette Reynolds
07968 312161
comment.magazine@gmail.com

Advertising, Distribution and Treasurer
Barbara Anscombe
01442 828325
bandb33@talktalk.net

Design
Kev Holt, Ginger Promo

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

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August

Crossword puzzle answers

From page 15

ACROSS	DOWN
1. GLAD TIDINGS	1. GIFTS
8. FLOOD	2. APOSTLE
9. NARRATE	3. TIDY
10. SITE	4. DENIAL
11. NAZARETH	5. NORMALLY
13. STAGGERED	6. SHARE
14. GLARED	7. METHOD
19. PLUS	13. REMOTE
18. RESURRECTION	15. RELEASE
22. TREMBLE	18. SHELF
23. ORATE	20. STEEL
24. FIRST NOWELL	21. SOLD

"Both children have had a fantastic time at Heirs & Graces Nursery and I have gone to work each day knowing they were safe in your hands."

Heirs & Graces Day Nursery

A place where CHILDREN SHINE...

Open from 7.30am until 6pm

Childcare vouchers accepted Free hours scheme accepted
Sited in a beautifully converted Victorian home conveniently located on Tring High Street.
High quality food prepared by our fabulous chef.

Find us on - www.heirsandgracestring.co.uk
Telephone: - 01442 891818
Heirs & Graces Day Nursery, Florence House,
2 Christchurch Road, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 4EE



WILSTONE STICKS

Handcrafted by John Evans



Member of The
British Stickmakers Guild

www.wilstonesticks.com

Telephone: 01442 822115

THE OLD PASTURES
LUXURY ACCOMMODATION FOR DOGS
Icknield Farm, Icknield Way, Tring, Herts HP23 4JX

Luxury heated accommodation for your dog
Only 8 large kennels giving your dog the extra care and attention they deserve. All dogs are walked twice a day.
Holiday homes for small animals.

DOG GROOMING
BATHING, CLIPPING, TRIMMING, NAILS AND EARS.
WEEKEND APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE. EASY WALK IN.
NON-SLIP SHOWER IDEAL FOR OLDER AND BIGGER DOGS.
WE CAN CATER FOR ANY SIZE DOG. EASY PARKING.

Mrs.  **littles**

PET SITTERS
WHILST YOU'RE AT WORK, ON HOLIDAY OR DURING ILLNESS, WE WILL COME & VISIT YOUR PET IN YOUR HOME.
ALL TYPES OF ANIMALS.
MEMBER OF N.A.R.P.
FULLY INSURED.

01442 824856


THE TYRE CHANGERS

OUR NEW TYRE CHANGER BASE IS OPEN

Unit 5C Airfield Industrial Estate,
Long Marston HP23 4QR

In addition to our popular **mobile service**, that can visit your home or work, we can now also offer a **drive-in facility** by appointment.

We offer a wide range of **Premium, Mid-range and Budget** tyres at competitive prices and can now accommodate the largest of alloy size and low profile run flats.

Do you need new tyres, or have a puncture?
Please let us know and we will be happy to quote and make an appointment.

Not sure of the condition of your tyres?
We can have a look for you, just get in touch.

Wheel swap needed?
Winter and summer wheel swap also available.

Please call or text on 07746 903 095 or email info@thetyrechangers.co.uk



Festive Choral Evensong for Candlemas

**Sunday, February 4th 2024 at 6.30pm,
St Peter and St Paul, Tring.**

**Canticles by Herbert Sumsion, a soothing introit
and a magnificent anthem by C.V. Stanford,
plus three well-known hymns.**



Retiring collection/donations for FOTCH and the Church.

Refreshments will be provided after the service.

Further information please contact Trish Dowden at
trish@tringteamparish.org.uk or on 07720 836930.