

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



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Growing in the message and challenge of God



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 Revd Ruth Egan 07521 513494 or ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

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tringbaptistchurch High Street Baptist Church

We LIVE Easter!



In Aldbury school assemblies we've been thinking about the fact that Easter isn't just one day, it goes on and on. And on. Every time we say our Easter season alleluias, we declare that Easter is now, and Easter is the future - Easter is stretchy.

And yet... it only takes a split second to bring to mind some situation around the world and in our own lives that needs

life and hope.

We are Easter people: a longing to see and recognise resurrection should be at the heart of our prayers for ourselves, for the world, and the church. This can be extremely difficult, and is rarely, if ever, a quick fix. But it is in the hard and painful places, in those situations that feel sharply Good Friday-like, that we can pray for resurrection.

I find comfort in the fact that Easter is not an event that happened and that's that. Easter is stretchy. The church believes that every Sunday is an Easter day. Sunday is the first day of the week,

the first day of a new creation, a new creation that is constantly renewed.

'We don't observe Easter, we LIVE Easter. Easter isn't an event in history. Easter is now. Easter is for ever. Easter is very, very stretchy! Alleluia!

'God of glory, by the raising of your Son, you have broken the chains of death and hell: fill your Church with life and hope; for a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.'

Michelle Grace
Tring Team

Editorial



I know my reading matter has recently reflected the age of the small person we are caring for, but it's hard not to see parallels with the church sometimes in the content of the stories.

Julia Donaldson has written a number of excellent children's picture books and some of them have been made into wonderful productions available on BBC iPlayer. You don't need to be a child to appreciate them. They are worth half an hour of your time if you have access to BBC iPlayer.

Take 'Room on the Broom'. Yes, it's about a witch, but she's a kind, generous-hearted witch who takes on a variety of creatures who come, just as they are with all their baggage, and ask if there is room on the broom for them. Although her cat isn't keen on sharing the broom, the witch accepts them all. They are much less accepting of each other, however, until the witch

is threatened by a dragon – then they all work together to save her.

Like all parables, the details should not be pushed too far. But given the subject of the Lent groups this year in the Tring Team, I found parallels in the story with how the Christian Church, probably of any denomination, can be full of individuals who have received God's undeserved love and mercy and yet can be critical of and unwelcoming to each other. To my understanding, God turns no one away.

When I started to attend St Peter & St Paul's Church, I didn't realise how diverse the opinions there were. I had not become a Christian till my middle teens and my first church was very evangelical – if anyone held different opinions, they did not pronounce them loudly! I attended a United Reformed Church and later a Free Independent Evangelical Church, returning to worship in an Anglican church in Bovingdon after I was married. One of the reasons why I belong to the Tring Team is not because everyone holds the same opinion as others – they most certainly do not –

but because, despite that, they work together to serve God, the church and the community around them, knowing that God loves them and accepts them as they are, and accepts others too. Part of that is learning to work together in love and faith with those who don't see eye to eye on everything.

You may not agree with everything in this edition of *Comment*, but I hope you find it interesting and will be openminded and willing not to judge others as you read their opinions. It has been nothing if not an emotional ride for many of us over the last few months and the journey continues. If you belong to another church, your views may be very different, either personally or as a church community. Perhaps you might write about your thoughts on the subject of same-sex marriage in church for *Comment*?

Finally, a reminder that the next edition of *Comment* covers July and August – so if you have anything you would like to contribute for the summer period, please send it by 1 June.

The Editor

Quiet Place

Need space to contemplate?

Pop in to
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Chapel Street, Park Road, Tring

Every 3rd Saturday of the month between 10.00am and 3.00pm
(circumstances may cause variations in times)



Hide and seek



Ever since we were babies, we have been fascinated with hiding and seeking. Right from that first game of peekaboo, I'm sure you can remember, that a simple game of hide and seek is very exciting as a child. My kids love it; I remember loving it too (and possibly still do!).

The seeker counts down from thirty seconds, shouting it out at the top of their voice, eyes closed (or maybe not in the case of my brother, who I know used to take a sly peep between his fingers).

Right: where are we going to hide? Not in the usual places, somewhere original that no one else has thought of. And depending on what location you're in, that could be challenging, especially if you live in a two-bedroom flat! But that doesn't dampen your spirits or optimism of finding that impenetrable spot. Then the wait. Remain as still as possible, trying not to breathe or make a sound.

The thirty seconds is done and the seeker is on the move. Eeekk! The excitement is unbearable.

Now, there is always one child for whom the excitement is too much to bear. Can you remember who that was in your house or group of friends? In our house, it was my younger sister: utterly hopeless at hide and seek! The game was so thrilling for her, that she couldn't resist giggling from her hiding place, constantly. On occasion, my brother and I, both older, would shout, 'I'm coming to find you!' knowing very well this would result in her calling back, 'OK!', immediately giving away her location. Head in hands. She would often pick things like duvets to hide under or curtains to hide behind, and proceed to

wriggle ridiculously underneath, thinking that she couldn't be seen. But to the seeker, it was very obvious where she was.

There is lots of hiding and seeking going on in the Easter story. Mary, Joanna and Mary, in Luke's Gospel, go to the tomb to seek Jesus, yet he was not there. They cannot locate him. We hear 'they were perplexed about this', I should think so!

Then suddenly they see two men in dazzling clothes standing beside them asking, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.' And if you were ever in doubt that Jesus also had female disciples as well as the regularly mentioned twelve males, then the Gospel from Luke clears this up. The dazzling clothed individuals say to the women, 'Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again?' The women were clearly among the disciples and no doubt many others when Jesus said these words.

(If you are a feminist, it's an even greater thrill to know that the first proclaimers of the gospel were women! Hurrah! It's obviously not the key part of the story, but given the amount of time it took the church to ordain women as priests, I can't deny it makes the story that extra bit exciting.)
Anyway... Mary, Joanna and Mary were reminded of Jesus's words, and went to seek the

hiding (now eleven) disciples, to tell them all about what they had witnessed! Jesus had risen from the tomb! Alleluia!

I wonder how many times in our own lives we have been seeking God, praying, asking for a sign, some form of comfort to know that God is there? How many times have we felt as if God is hiding from us? Where can he be?

How many times do we think we have hidden ourselves from God, hoping that he hasn't noticed what we're doing, like that child wriggling under the duvet or behind the curtains?

There is no hiding from God; and even though we think God is absent from us, we know, as Mary, Joanna and Mary experienced, he is always there – it's just whether we recognise that he is.

As we know, these women did go to tell the disciples, with great excitement, the Good News that Jesus had, indeed, conquered death, and he was there among them.

It is still true for us today, the Risen Christ is always there, is always here, with us, every day, hiding in plain sight. We just need to open our hearts, seek, and we shall find the risen Christ. Alleluia!

Sarah Marshall, Tring Team

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Parish registers

Baptisms

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

Florence Ann Margaret Eaton

Weddings

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

William Ian Morris &

Amber Josephine Olley

Rafael Fuentes & Tracey Boniface

Matthew Fulford &

Charlotte Mackinder

Funerals

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

Michael Joseph Bernstein 80

David Willmore 75

Greg Miller 66

Ted Tapson 96

Gordon Mew 86

Margaret Rose McKay 59

Eric Cook 93

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The problem with sex...



During Holy Week this year, we in the Tring Team decided that the daily sermons would follow the weekly themes of the 'Living in Love and Faith' course.

I was down to preach on Maundy Thursday (day 4) which meant that I drew the short straw. My topic for preaching would be sex. Oh joy! We don't often talk about sex in church. As Jon Reynolds said before the course began, only the Church of England can make sex sound boring.

I mused to myself that, for most of us, the people we are least likely to imagine having sex are our parents, yet these are the only people we can be reasonably confident have had sex. We certainly don't want to look around the congregation and imagine them having sex. We also rather struggle with the idea of Jesus being a sexual person. The film 'The Last Temptation of Christ' caused a furore because the devil tempts Jesus from the cross to imagine an alternative reality in which he settles down with Mary Magdalene. Whilst there are very obvious and good reasons why you would not want to imagine a reality where God incarnate has a physical relationship with a mortal human, there are equally strong reasons why an understanding of Jesus as fully human has to include him having sexual desires as is common with most of humanity. To say he didn't would surely be heresy, because any understanding of being fully human includes that we are sexual beings.

The church, however, doesn't talk about sex that much. The washing of feet on Maundy Thursday is about as intimate and sensual as we ever get. If you mention sex and the church in the same sentence, there is a good chance that in our minds we will jump to a negative image, such as the clergy sexual abuse scandals which have so damaged the church. The church also seems to have slipped into a dualist approach whereby sex is found on the fallen-world-debased side as opposed to chastity, which would be on the spiritual and pure side. Sex is the 'brute beast' aspect of humanity which spiritual discipline can control. Whether this is a good approach is anyone's guess. So, should the church be talking about it at all?

The mission of the Church is always to share in the nature of God. God is revealed as both creative and redemptive. So, in simple terms, the mission of the church is to affirm that which is good in the world (to join with God's creative nature) and to challenge that which is wrong in the world (to share in God's redemptive character). The key, as ever, is to be able to understand what is good and what needs changing. The Bible can help us with this, but equally, for many of us we recognise that the Bible is the word of God as seen through the prism of those (men) who compiled it, and also the cultural and historical settings when it is set down. To balance these, we need also to pay attention to what the Spirit might be saying in this modern age. We need to listen to the voice of the church and to the voice of different ages within the church. As a parish we are blessed with having some 2,000 young people in Church Schools. The church is much larger than those who worship on a Sunday.

In the previous edition of *Comment* I wrote about the experience of three of our 20-something members of the church community and how they were responding to issues of gender and sexuality. You will recall that the two main things which they talked about were consent and that if there was a problem with sex, the main problem was heterosexual men, especially drunk heterosexual men. Now, there is a part of me that wants to affirm what the young people said about consent as being vitally important; but there is another part which wants to challenge it. For some of our house groups, there was an aspect that consensual sex sounds too much like transactional sex, with little need for an emotional undertaking. Sex is separated from relationships and love and there was a sadness from many of our church members about this. However, the message that we did have to listen to was that drunk men are a problem. I mentioned this in my house group and someone replied, 'It's always been thus!' I asked in the sermon if anyone present had had problems from drunk men and women nodded and the men looked at the floor. What kind of progressive modern world do we live in when our daughters and granddaughters are not safe walking home at night, threatened not by 'deviant homosexuals' but by conventional straight men, those who are

the accepted norm in society?

The problem is, I look to my Bible and there is one story which jumps out at me: David and the rape of Bathsheba (and the murder of her husband). The story is shocking, and there is no hint of condemnation of this behaviour. Back to our young people and consent. We can 100% say there is no consent in this story. A powerful man sees a pretty woman and takes what he wants; and to add insult to injury, we celebrate that Jesus comes from David's line. I can't help but wonder, is there some line from the rape of Bathsheba to what we see throughout history and what we are now seeing on our television news in Ukraine. You can imagine Russian soldiers lining up those whom they will abuse and those whom they will discard as too ugly to rape.

A year ago, in this country, Sarah Everard's death sparked a debate about the widespread nature of violence against women. In response, several students approached members of staff about tackling the issues in Tring School. Now I need to make something very clear. Tring School is no worse than anywhere else in UK society; in fact, it is almost definitely better as it is addressing issues and is open to the problem. What we are talking about is misogynistic language and attitudes across almost every institution and at every level of society, and actual violence in some places. The problem at school isn't violence but it is unacceptable language. If you ask the students at school 'Is inappropriate language used?' they would say 'Yes, by all of the boys'. This is not just some small subsection, it is ubiquitous. I was being disingenuous about the Russian soldiers and their 'too ugly to rape' comment. It is this very comment which was identified at the school. And if this is going on in our nice middle-class town, how much worse is it elsewhere? And, all power to the students and staff who are challenging it.

We cannot pretend that this isn't going on. We need to open our eyes to the world in which we live. When we talk about sex, we have to recognise that there is something about male sexuality which is wrong. The mission of the church has to be to change this. I went into our Lent course thinking that maybe I could change the minds of some traditionalists and get them to change their attitudes on gay sex

and gay marriage. Little did I think that through listening and praying, God would challenge me directly.

The first conclusion that I came to was that before I try to change anyone else, I need to look to myself, a white privileged man who, without doubt, drank too much in a rugby-playing past and stands accused of unacceptable behaviour. Maybe others of you have never engaged in such unacceptable attitudes, but we know that our society as a whole does. What have we done

to challenge or change it? I know I need to look to myself first. I won't be presumptuous enough to tell you what you need to do in response (whether you are male or female). I can't help but think that if it is a society-wide issue, we all need to do something to change. What will we do to make society better?

The second conclusion I came to was that alongside those things where we need redemption are some wonderful creative aspects which need to be affirmed. Sex can be something which

cements relationships and allows them to flourish. It should be loving, faithful, accepting and trusting. It should be equal and consensual. It reflects that which is good in God's nature. I remain utterly convinced that if sex is loving and faithful, then God could not give too hoots if it is gay or straight. God calls the church to share in God's mission. It seems to be quite clear what the problem is, and it isn't gay marriage!

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

Welcoming our new friends from Kyiv



Back in mid-March the call went round from the Jane Banister for people to volunteer to help provide support for the people of Ukraine, including offers of accommodation. The

Diocese of St Albans were organising the co-ordination of church efforts in Beds and Herts as, by working together, we could be more effective than individually trying to make contact with refugees.

After volunteering, we were very quickly asked to help provide accommodation for a mother (Marina) and two children (Liza and Gosha) from Kyiv. Over two days and about nine hours of driving through various checkpoints, they managed to get to

the border with Romania and from there to relative safety while they waited for visas to be granted. Marina's husband unfortunately had to return, as legal restrictions meant he was unable to leave Ukraine.

We were in nearly daily contact with them for forty days whilst we helped them sort out visas for their travel to the UK, and eventually they were granted on 29 April. They flew in to Luton airport where we met them and took them to our house, and where, soon after arriving, we were greeted by a staff member from the council who was also on hand to welcome them to the UK.

Whilst things are new and strange for them, they seem to have begun to quickly settle in to the UK, visiting St Peter & St Paul's Church

for the Sunday morning service, and visiting the Aldbury May Fair during their first weekend here. Both children are beginning to attend local schools and we continue to help Marina fill out many more forms that are necessary to live in the UK.

Andrew Kinsey
St Peter & St Paul



Gosha meeting the local police at Aldbury May Fair



Marina, Gosha and Liza outside the Pitstone Windmill

60 not out!



It is Trinity Sunday 1962. The sun is shining and along with seventy other young men (yes, sadly no women priests then!), I was standing outside

Southwark Cathedral in what was to be the largest Ordination in forty years. The Bishop was Mervyn Stockwood, who would be well known to the older members of our churches as one of the most outstanding and controversial bishops of his generation. TV cameras were there, a number of us were interviewed by the Press and for me it was particularly inspiring. It was through his preaching of the gospel as Vicar of the University Church, Cambridge, and making it relevant to young people, which led me to want to be a priest. Like many others of my generation, we wanted to serve in his diocese.

After the excitement of the ordination, it was back to my first curacy at Clapham, near the famous Common, a large multi-racial, mainly working class parish. I was the junior of three curates. I remember riding my curate's bike around a corner in the first week, seeing three teenagers shouting at me 'Bloody old vicar'. It wasn't the 'bloody' I minded or the vicar, but the 'old' - I was 24!

I had a wonderful training vicar of the old school who gave me enough rope to do my own thing, but reined me in when needed! Of course, one did all the usual things curates do: house-to-house visiting, Confirmation classes, Housegroups, learning to preach and lead services, etc. But one of my jobs was running the 1426 Club. This was an

Open Youth Club for about 120 teenagers in the era of the Mods and Rockers. Our club attracted Rockers - boys and girls who dressed in black leather and rode motor bikes. I started what we called Rhythm services (the name sounds so old-fashioned now!). We used guitars, drums and sang modern hymns and songs. The amplifiers always seemed to be going wrong(!) but they did get quite a number of the young people involved in the church, which was otherwise an alien institution to them. I hope it may have led some to a deeper faith.

Jenny and I got married that same year and she was wonderful in helping me organise a Christmas panto and teaching the chorus girls the Madison, the latest dance of the era. Of course, it all coincided with the coldest winter in fifty years and a six-week freeze and smog in London. There was no coke for our old boiler. But the show went on - with the audience wrapped up in blankets from home in the Church Hall, and a great time was had by us all! Some of the cast went down with heavy colds afterwards!

I was then asked as a second curacy to go back to my old stamping ground, Great St Marys, the University Church in Cambridge. The Vicar then was Hugh Montefiore, a converted Jew and later Bishop of Birmingham. He was an outstanding man who had ten new ideas a day and was a very demanding boss! I have never worked for anyone as stimulating as him before or since. The



church doubled up as the City Church. I was in charge of the parish visiting programme and our Youth Club, but I also set up a more sophisticated version of the Rhythm services I had started in Clapham. We now called them Beat Services and I began a student singing group with a group to play. They drew about 300 from the town. Hugh was worried about how it all might go, and surprised three teenagers smoking in the gents loo on one occasion, but I said that was par for the course for youngsters who had no experience of the church. When things went off well, he left me to it. Later the student singing and group went on a tour around six English cathedrals and churches here and in Europe. Indeed, we did a 30-minute TV programme on Anglia TV with them in full swing while I was interviewed between the hymns and songs.

Three years later I was asked to do a pioneering job at a Direct Grant school, Sevenoaks School in Kent, as their first-ever chaplain. It had a very agnostic reputation with a Headmaster, Kim Taylor, one the great educational innovators of his day, believing a full-time chaplain was important. But I was not welcomed with open arms. But over the years, we set up a Religious Studies Dept, introduced O

Level and, on Sundays for the boarders, something we called 'Sunday at 8', when we had visiting speakers who could be questioned afterwards, interspersed with films, pop music services and a termly Eucharist. The idea was to introduce Christianity in a modern style without boring them! My hero, Desmond Tutu, spoke, though he was not such a great name at the time. When he died, I had a totally unexpected letter from a boy saying that, though the boys did not always look on the event as top of their pops(!), he remembered his visit and how impressive he had been. His own faith had been stimulated by Sunday at 8.

Alongside this we had weekly voluntary Eucharists, Confirmation Classes, etc and later we had a centre, made out of a redundant old boys' clubroom which we called the Meeting House. All the art work, cross, candle sticks and Communion vessels were made by the boys in Art classes, woodwork and Technology, as I wanted them to feel this was not just being imposed on them from outside but facilitated by them. It doubled up as a classroom for me. We had Muslim and Hindu boys in the boarding houses and I made sure it was open for their prayer times as well.



While there, I chaired a committee in the town to build a Cheshire Home for the disabled. Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, wartime pilot hero, with more decorations than you can imagine, was a constant inspiration; we had annual overnight sponsored walks by the boys and others locally and I made sure all the schools were involved in the town. We opened it in 1977 after seven long years of toil, sweat and tears with ten residents in a lovely modern building by a lake. I still look back at all the arguments, strong opposition from NIMBYs in the town as the achievement I am most proud of in my life, because it made such a difference to the lives of those residents and others who came after. Leonard Cheshire was a quietly charismatic individual and devout Christian. He is still the one person I have met in my life I would call a saint.

We were there for ten years. One year we did an exchange with an American chaplain and spent a year in a school in Newport, Rhode Island. We had a wonderful time there, and I had the privilege of preaching in the White House Church, St Johns, Lafayette Square in Washington and we made some good friends. Our two sons had a great time and picked up American accents at

school. When our younger son (age 5) stood in the kitchen replying to something Jenny had said 'No way, Mom' she felt it was time we went home! One last word about Sevenoaks: I have talked about my interest in modern church music. While there I got involved in an ecumenical group

organising a week-long celebration of new Christian music in London, involving luminaries such as Donald Swann (of the Flanders and Swann duo), Sydney Carter (Lord of the dance writer) and others. The culmination was an Open Air Eucharist on the Feast of Pentecost in Trafalgar Square. I was asked to organise it. Nearly 3000 came and it was televised on BBC1. The Offertory was danced to 'All good gifts around us' from 'Godspell' by girls from a London Ballet School. Communion was given in one kind in scampi baskets (remember them?) by high church priests in lace cottas and black Pentecostal minsters in suits and others. We ended up with everyone joining hands and singing and dancing 'Lord of the Dance'. It went on for thirty minutes after the service ended as no one wanted to leave. It was a real outpouring of God's spirit. The pigeons had never seen anything like it and the police said it was the best-behaved demo they had ever seen! AND YES, it was a demo of Christians showing their faith in a real act of open-air witness. Alleluia!

**Ian Ogilvie
Tring Team**

To be continued in the July/August edition of Comment

Celebrate with us!

Huw Bellis is kindly allowing me to preach on 19 June in St Peter & St Paul's Church at the 10.00am service and Jenny and I hope you will join us for a glass of wine and refreshments afterwards. We are not leaving, but celebrating this exciting moment. Do come and join us if you would like to do so.



Small steps along the road – with the Holy Spirit



During the season of Lent, you will know that the Tring Team has been studying and reflecting on 'Living in Love

and Faith' with a focus on issues of gender identity and inclusion. In my own house group, there was a clear feeling that there was much more to be explored if we were to fully embrace what 'living in love and faith' can really mean. Now seems a good time to do that.

The Easter Season, which stretches from Easter Sunday until Ascension, lasts forty days – like Lent. But rather than a time for reflection and repentance, this is a season of anticipation... looking forward in hope. It's hope of the promise fulfilled... the promise of the empowerment that comes with the renewed gift of the Holy Spirit... the gift that transformed the early followers of Jesus from tongue-tied and fearful into the confident and eloquent advocates that they became – the faithful believers who founded the early church.

The Book of Acts narrates the story of the foundation of the Christian church – a bridge between the Gospels, narrating Jesus' life and the religion on which it is based. It is the story of the transformation of 'The Way' – a movement of a few Jewish believers in their crucified leader – into the worldwide force that is the church we know – the church that has stood for more than 2000 years.

Twin pillars of the church
The Book of Acts is the story of the two pillars on which the parish church in Tring was founded – Peter, the rock, and Paul, the man of invincible steel. One solid as a rock and the other razor-sharp as Damascene steel... It is also the story of the power that transformed them – the Holy Spirit.

Twin pillars of the church

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The Easter Season is the season of the Holy Spirit – central to the lectionary readings throughout this period. In the Easter 2 readings, Peter, the denier of Jesus in the Temple Court, now stoutly affirms the pre-eminent power of the Holy Spirit – stronger than any human authority, 'The Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him'. In the second reading, from the very end of John's Gospel – Jesus foreshadows

the gift he will leave for his disciples to receive at Pentecost – the Holy Spirit – quite literally, the breath of God. 'Peace be with you – receive the Holy Spirit.' In Easter 3's reading from Acts, Jesus enlivens and empowers that second pillar of the church: Saul the persecutor is now become Paul the pillar of steel, and is commissioned by Ananias with the words 'regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit'.

The rock and the razor

The Book of Acts is, in a sense, the story of the 'rock and the razor': Peter and Paul, the twin pillars on which the parish church still stands, and the way the Holy Spirit transformed them, empowered them and sustained them to the very end. That is the same Holy Spirit that empowered the early church to stand firm against all persecution... and that same Holy Spirit who supports all of us today to do the right thing when challenged by temptation or fear or greed, and stand up to the 'World, the flesh and the devil'.

As we journey towards the Ascension and Pentecost, we journey towards the renewal of that Spirit within us, and boy, do we need it today in our broken, troubled world: war, pestilence, famine, death – it seems as if the four horsemen of the apocalypse are riding hell for leather all around us and there are times when it seems difficult to find anything that gives us hope. But hope is what the Holy Spirit is all about – and he is always there – ready just when we need him.

Plenty to be hopeful about...

The world may be broken and damaged but there are plenty of people who recognise that and are trying to fix it.

War may be being waged in all its cruel stupidity but there are plenty of people trying to help alleviate the suffering with sacrificial kindness.

Poverty and hunger and homelessness are all about us but there are plenty of people people trying to help and support the needy.

There are small acts of kindness in every community; large acts of support and rescue across nations.

The Holy Spirit is alive and well and ready to help – but we have to listen to his quiet voice and pay heed to the needs of others. As a nation, as a world, and as individuals, let us say – and keep on

saying what Jesus would say – and what the Holy Spirit surely prompts us to say today: 'What can we do to help?'

A manifesto for hope and helping

Sixty-one years ago the world was in a bit of a mess – just like today – and America elected a new President; he was the youngest ever: John F Kennedy. Instead of the usual chest-thumping and self-serving materialistic manifesto, his inaugural address offered a vision of hope for humanity – a selfless vision of putting others' needs before our own. 'Ask not what your country can do for you – but what you can do for your country.'

We could use those words today as we face up to all the perils that surround us – and give thanks for all the benefits we nonetheless enjoy. So let us face forward to the future and ask 'Not what others can do for us – but what we can do for others!' That is arguably the best way for the world. It's the best way for us as individuals and – it's the right thing to do. That's Christianity – that's the Holy Spirit – the breath of Jesus working within us.

Living in love and faith – the next chapter?

In our house group's discussions we felt a real urge to explore what living in love and faith could really mean for us and we decided to devote our next meetings to do exactly that. We are taking as a starting point the description of the community of the faithful that can be found in Acts 2: 43-47. 'All who believed were together and had all things in common... and day by day the Lord added to their number.'

An impossible, impractical dream? A visit to Taizé might suggest otherwise. There they really do seem to be 'living in love and faith', quite literally 'living the dream'. In any event, we as a group are exploring it – hopefully.

Another group I am involved with – the cohort of licensed Ministers I trained with some twelve years ago – have decided we are going to make that same exploration the subject of our next retreat in Pleshey in November. You never know where that might lead. Small steps – but hopefully along the right road!

Grahame Senior
Tring Team

Brenda Hurley and Amanda Curbishley

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‘A Mind of Their Own’ – being part of a Big Church Read



Recently a friend's post on Facebook got me thinking. 'Last born's school had an exam talk for the children and parents – the

kids are 10 years old!?!?! We did not attend. We had our own chat over dinner about work-life balance and quality of life.'

From the moment children come into our lives, we are on a very steep learning curve and parents are confronted with information and advertising from before their birth. Most of this seems to suggest you need a particular product to keep your little one safe and clean or make them successful. Once children reach school there seems to be a rollercoaster of expectation, hoops to jump through and norms to conform to. It is challenging if your child doesn't 'fit', perhaps due to physical ability, neurotypical traits or personality.

The words of my friend reminded me (again) that we have choices. It is so useful to stop and think through the approach we take to parenting, rather than be pulled along with societal expectations. Reading and investigating for yourself is helpful, as is talking to other parents. I was recently able to do these things together with our latest Big Church Read.

As a church we have 'done' several Big Church Reads (www.thebigchurchread.co.uk) since its foundation in 2020. The concept is wonderfully simple, and the website has all the resources you need to get started, plus an ever-growing library of books to choose from. You can join a national Big Church Read, and read along with thousands of others, or form your own small group and meet weekly. With the wonders of technology your group doesn't even need to be local! You are guided to read a chapter a week, or a selection of chapters, then come together to watch a short video from the author before chatting together. There are questions to guide you or you can just go freestyle!

At High Street Baptist Church we started off by advertising the book we were going to read, which linked with the sermon series, and then we formed a small group. Since then, we have just

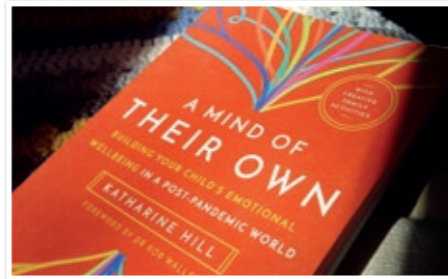
kept going with this format. We choose a new book after a short break and invite others to join in. Sometimes committing to a new group can be daunting, but with each of the Big Church Read books lasting about six to eight weeks, you can dip in or out depending on your commitment at the time. For our latest book, 'A Mind of Their Own' by Katharine Hill, the focus was on raising children, so we advertised and drew a new group together.

Katharine Hill is the Director of Care for The Family, a national charity founded in 1988 which aims to promote strong family life and to help those who face family difficulties. They focus primarily on marriage, parenting and bereavement. While not overtly Christian, their work is motivated by Christian compassion. They have some resources aimed specifically at those who share the Christian faith and seek to equip churches with resources to support families in their community. Find out more about their work at: www.careforthefamily.org.uk.

I thought the book was super, I learned a lot and it'll be something I come back to as my children grow in age and different elements become applicable. My favourite aspect of The Big Church Read was sharing time, conversation and experiences with my fellow Christian friends.

'A Mind of Their Own' was written during the pandemic and therefore touches on very contemporary issues. Katharine Hill discusses the important ways in which parents can nurture their children's resilience and emotional wellbeing. The blurb reads: 'Honest and practical, with tried and tested strategies, it covers key areas including body confidence, dealing with failure and disappointment, school and exam stress, social media, bullying and handling strong emotions.' It does indeed do what it says on the tin. The style is chatty and concise and full of cartoons to illustrate the points.

Our group was made up of parents of new-borns through to 16-year-olds, and everyone found something to relate to – quite an achievement! Some of the group's comments are shared on this page. The book looks at overarching principles rather than advocating certain methods. Sharing with one another really



enhanced the reading. One week we chatted about how important traditions are within families. These might not be the big festivals and events shared nationally or even globally but are part of your family identity. From pancakes on birthdays to naming something you are thankful for at the end of the day, it reminded me how important those little things are that unite you as a family.

I really enjoyed the Big Church Read and talking through 'A Mind of Their Own'. The group provided time and space to talk honestly about some of the challenges we are facing, to be inspired by the approaches of others, and also to laugh together about some of the funny things that happen in family life!

Another key aspect of the book was acknowledging the difference in the world we live in compared to our own childhoods. From the technology and pervasive social media context we live in today, to the pandemic we have just experienced, children and young people are growing up in a very different world. 'Our children need to learn how to navigate the complex world of the 21st century – one full of both opportunity and challenge, potential and risk,' says author Katharine Hill. While this is true, I think my biggest take-away from the book was the reminder that, as parents, we ultimately need to help our children become independent, resilient young adults. In order for this to happen, I need to step back and let them make their own decisions and face the consequences: not easy for me to put into action in the face of GCSE exams for my eldest, when my own expectation for exam 'success' constantly seeps into my mind. I am trying to keep hold of the fact that he has a mind of his own!

Polly Eaton, High Street Baptist Church

A book with lots of wisdom. The experience of meeting with others was as valuable as the book!

Generations of Willmore baptisms!



When our first child was born, there was no question in our minds about whether to baptise him or not. We weren't as quick off the mark as my parents, who followed the tradition of christening a baby within weeks of birth, and so, instead of a traditional long robe and bonnet, our precious and quite chunky 1-year-old wore chinos, a denim shirt and a teeny, tiny red tie.



He was baptised at St John the Baptist, Aldbury, like his father and many other local family members going back centuries. The Willmores are an old Aldbury family whose name can apparently be found in records going back to the 15th century in the village.

As our family grew (and grew and grew!) we duly arranged for our children to be dunked. Our eldest's christening was a private ceremony rather than in the service, according to the vicar's preferences at the time and



we had booked the organist. Unfortunately, the organist didn't turn up, but when the vicar jokingly asked if we had anyone in the congregation who could play a church organ, we had not one, but two volunteers! My lovely Uncle Keith, my dad's brother, is an experienced church organist, so he gamely stepped up and did an amazing job and then a year or so later, played at our second child's baptism too!

The rest of the baptisms were held during services, so thankfully we didn't need to worry about providing our own musicians. Our seventh and final baby, Jonas, was christened during St John the Baptist Church's Patronal Festival service and our guests joined the congregation at the BBQ and celebrations in the vicarage gardens afterwards.

Our first-born, Jacob, is now a father himself and our gorgeous grandson Barnaby (now 6 months old) was baptised in May at St John the Baptist – the first of another generation of Willmores to be listed in the records there.

His was a private event but his parents plan to make sure everyone gets to meet him at services in the next few weeks. Although they don't live locally, Jacob still thinks of Aldbury as 'his' church and I am really pleased he was so keen to have a baptism for his son.

It doesn't seem to be such a tradition any more, as people opt for baby showers and naming ceremonies instead, or just don't bother at all. On one level I was appalled while watching a TV programme recently to see a young couple 'shopping' for a pretty church to have a christening in. It seemed



they were more interested in the Instagram opportunities available rather than the significance of this religious ceremony. But as we know, God moves in mysterious ways. The couple spoke to the very kind vicar at length and came away excited with a plan to be baptised themselves at the same time as their baby.

Chatting about Barnaby's baptism was so much fun, with readings and hymns to be chosen, and, of course, a small party to plan for afterwards. Barnaby's other grandparents and other family members from his mum's side had quite a long trip from Cumbria and it was great to celebrate Barnaby officially joining the church family together with the extended family.

**Afra Willmore
St John the Baptist, Aldbury**

Childhood illnesses



I am part of the baby boomer's generation, born after the second world war, which was also the first generation that has benefited fully from the National Health Service.

Funds deducted directly from my parents' income enabled them and my children to enjoy the benefits of health care in various forms. Dentists, doctors and hospitals, all available 'free' at the point of use. My father, particularly, remembered that, as a young boy in the 1920s, a doctor wasn't visited or sent for unless you were really poorly, as there was little money to spare.

Living at 27 High Street, Tring in my early childhood meant the family were within shouting distance of the main surgery in town, based at 23 High Street. The building has subsequently been an estate agent, restaurant and currently an empty property. You could always get to be seen on the day, either by appointment, or if you just turned up and waited. There were queues coming out of the door and along the High Street on occasions! Medicine bottles were returned to the surgery and reused. Dr Cole was my doctor whom I seldom had to visit.

As a baby I had inoculations for polio, mumps, measles and diphtheria. I know we had to have boosters at 3 and again before we entered school at 5. There was no MMR vaccination at that time. The polio vaccine was administered on a sugar lump.

Children of pre-school age were the responsibility of the clinic on Station Road. This was a building given by the Rothschild estate to serve as a children's clinic and to house the midwives and district nurses who served Tring. At some point, in the 1960s, a building with offices, consulting rooms and meeting hall was built adjacent to the old building. Both have been pulled down recently to make way for housing.

School Health Service nurses regularly visited schools and inspected the pupils for nits, scabies and athlete's foot. I think our school nurse was nicknamed 'Nitty Nora'. Sometimes it was Nurse Ives who turned up; a formidable older lady who always wore a brown uniform. We all had to line up and have our hair, hands and feet examined. No one seemed to object – it was just what happened then. Children who had

an affliction were sent home with a letter in a brown envelope and often not at school the next day! The rest of us always had a little laugh. 'Ooh, so and so has got nits – keep away! You don't want to catch them!'

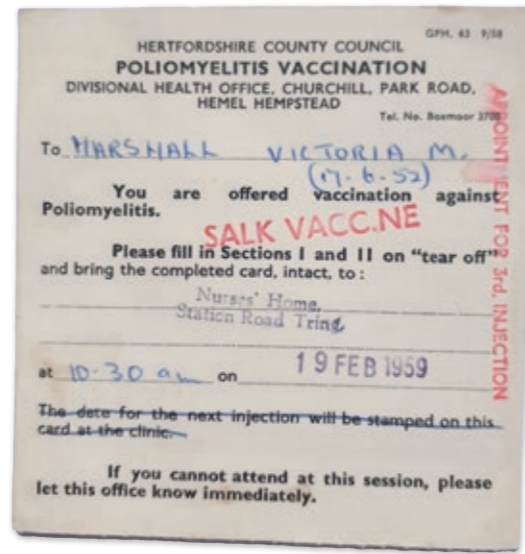
I had very long hair – down to my waist when left loose – but my mum always brushed it 100 times in the morning and evening. It could be agony! We used a medicated shampoo (Vosene) once a week and I never have had nits, not then, nor even later as a teacher, although I saw a few!

At one point I remember the whole school being vaccinated. I think there was a serious outbreak of something and we were all given a booster. I obviously had a booster in 1959 as I found a vaccination record card.

There were also eye tests at school. Failure meant you would probably have to have those horrible round glasses with wire frames. Also, if you didn't walk properly, you got a letter inviting you to the hospital to investigate your gait. Several of my friends had specially made built-up shoes for a few years. These were often unflattering things, but 'free'.

Dental checks were swift, but those children not attending local dentists were easily identified and offered treatment at the clinic in Station Road by a dentist who picked up all the school children with bad teeth – and there were lots. We were the generation where sweet rations had been abandoned and it was customary to sweeten all sorts of things that teething babies ate – sugared rusks to name but one. This was the era of 'drill and fill' by dentists, NHS or otherwise. The rotten part of a tooth was drilled out and the hole filled with a dental amalgam filling (a stable metal alloy, sometimes including mercury in the metal mixture). Badly decayed teeth were pulled out and that was that. Pretty basic dentistry at the time, but at least you did not need to be in pain or attempt a do-it-yourself solution.

I can't remember being ill much. I had tonsillitis at least once, because along with many other children it was the practice at the time to remove large tonsils, to prevent possible future trouble. In late June 1959, I was told that I was going to have an operation to take my tonsils out. I went with Mum and Dad to Tindal hospital in Aylesbury. We went by bus. Tindal Hospital was a Victorian edifice not far from the prison. Today it is still there as offices and treatment rooms



that belong to the mental health team.

The children's ward contained twelve or so beds, six on either side of the long ward. The majority of children were in for a tonsillectomy. We ranged in age between 6 to 11 years. The routine was much regimented and the nurses stood no nonsense. The day after admission, we all had our tonsils removed. There we stayed for 7-10 days depending on progress. Everyone had very sore throats and we were given mushy food of dubious quality but had lots of jelly and ice cream. We were all given a metal basin and encouraged to gargle with salt water and spit out all the blood and grot we brought up. I was praised for doing well and I remember the poor girl next to me who was slightly older, couldn't cope with the blood and wouldn't do as she was told – wouldn't drink, wouldn't spit and cried a lot. After seven days I went home, leaving her there, still crying.

At home I had to have bed rest for up to two weeks. Mum cooked me lots of mince or fish and mashed potatoes. There was lots of jelly and tinned milk too! I remember at this point some orange juice and wonderful fruit appeared – in special official-looking bags – and it was just for me! Although it was June, there were apples, oranges and pears, as well as bananas. Did this come through the NHS? Mum and Dad certainly wouldn't have been able to buy such a lot, nor find oranges in June, as everything we ate then was seasonal.

One autumn term, possibly 1962, a lady came to the junior school and asked us all if we would like to collect rosehips to make rosehip syrup. She would pay 6d (now 2.5p) for every pound of the berries we collected. I was keen to make some extra pocket money so, with Mum's help, collected half a bag full. It took ages and, to my disappointment when weighed, was only 8oz. I did get 3d though!

Vicky Baldock
St Cross, Wilstone

Memories (or not!) of the Queen's Coronation, 1953



My husband and I have varying memories of the Queen's Coronation. I was just under 18 months old

so have no recollection of it, but a treasured memento has always been a peep-show book my parents bought, and I have always been fascinated by it, trying to imagine what it was like to be in Westminster Abbey for the coronation.

My husband John was five and three quarters and lived in Kings Langley, and although he was old enough to have joined in the celebrations, he missed it all as he had come out of hospital the day before having had his tonsils out, so had

to stay at home to recuperate. His father went up to The Common to collect his coronation mug which he still has to this day; he missed the coronation tea as he was not able to eat properly. He was told they listened to the coronation on the radio – but he doesn't remember it!

His parents kept the souvenir programme (it cost one shilling) of the local celebrations that lasted eight days! Among many events for the week, Saturday 30 May had the crowning of the May Queen and a children's fancy-dress parade. That evening there was a 'party for the elderly people' for which you had to be over 60(!), and a Coronation dance with optional fancy dress for the younger element of the village.

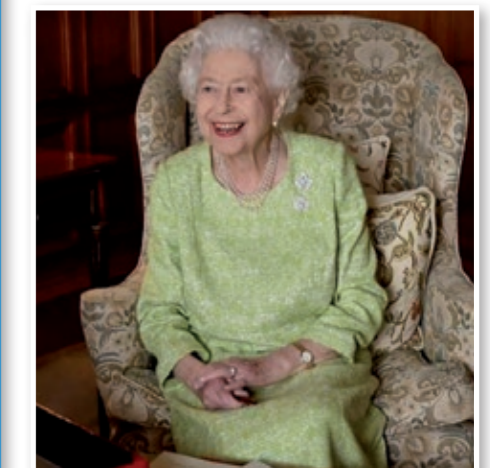
On Coronation Day, Tuesday 2 June



in the afternoon, there was a ceremony of tree planting, children's sports, another fancy-dress parade and a tea put on by the village WI. Then there was an hour of entertainment for the children by Wally Gent, 'The Gay Deceptionist', square dancing, then a two-hour variety concert 'Crown and Anchor' which had an interval for the broadcast of The Queen's Message. The evening finished with a torchlight procession and lighting of the bonfire and National Anthem. Exhausting!

The week continued and was filled with two cricket matches, a Comic football match between The Crocks and The Old Crocks, a baseball match, courtesy of the Americans at Bovingdon Airfield, an adult sports day and finishing off on the Saturday with a display by the local Fire Brigade (unless called out for an emergency), dancing on The Common – and the Grand Finale – Brock's Firework Display. For a village they certainly put on a good community party!

Janet Goodyer, St Peter & St Paul



Sunday 5th June 2022 12 noon—2 pm

£5 a head: please book via website

The Big Church Jubilee Lunch

As part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations communities are asked to come together to plan street parties and have a Big Lunch. Our Church lunch will be on Sunday 5th June. If the weather is fine we will be in the church yard. If weather is poor we will be in the parish hall. Tickets limited to 60 people until we know what the forecast is like!



Memories of the Coronation 1953



The Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth 11 was at last here. It was to be held at Westminster Abbey. Everyone was excited. We hear now 'She was so young'.

In 1953, it was considered that, at 27 years old, Queen Elizabeth (as she had been since the death of her father the previous year) was able to take on the role of monarch. She vowed duty to her country in a very sincere voice, and so she has carried out that duty for seventy years.

2 June 1953 was a dull day, and the evening before we had seen some people walking along our road with blankets to travel to London by train, about an hour's ride, to get a front-view place on the pavement to see the processions. We were fortunate to have a television, a Pye 9-inch. We had listened to the Queen and Prince Philip's (given the title of His Royal Highness the day before) wedding on the wireless, but now we were able to invite our neighbours to share viewing with us. There were five of us and Mr and Mrs Papps (christened names were never used, except I could say Auntie and Uncle Papps) made seven in our small front room, but nobody minded the lack of space. My mum had made some sandwiches as this was to be a long session.

I can't remember what time the TV came on, but it showed thousands of people lining the route, many having slept out all night. Every window was crammed with people, the offices that were lucky to have a balcony crammed as many people as they could, but you did need an invite to join a place there. Tickets had been for sale for £25 to stand on a balcony: a fortune. The atmosphere was so joyful. Small processions had started very early, the Lord Mayor having to leave the Mansion House before 8.00am. Some of the Royal Family were having to leave Buckingham Palace by 8.40am. These were in cars. Carriages followed, with the one before the Queen being her Mother, Queen Elizabeth, leaving Clarence House at 10.00am. I give you these times to show just how long the first arrivals had to wait in the Abbey.

With all these dignitaries, processing in cars and carriages along London streets, very few onlookers knew who

they were, but no one cared: each and every one got a wave and a cheer. This did help to keep everyone warm. Most car and carriage occupants waved back, the atmosphere was getting even better.

Then the Queen, along with her husband, The Duke of Edinburgh, in the Royal Coach of State, came along, guarded by the Household Cavalry, and several other companies, with different bands. She looked beautiful, and I can remember my mother saying, 'I wonder what she is thinking'. Yes indeed.

On entering Westminster Abbey, the anthem 'I Was Glad' greeted the Queen. Since that day this anthem is often heard. The Abbey was built to hold coronations, and the part where the service is held is called the Theatre. I do admit I think I became a little bored at this lengthy pageantry, but my memory tells me the Queen walked down the body of the Abbey, through the choir, passing her throne. After her own personal prayers, she sat in her chair. Various items including the Bible and regalia were placed on the altar. The regalia was used throughout the Service. The Queen received these in turn, more than once, the Orb and Sceptre being the most important to me.

We had been told at school that the Orb weighed 5lbs and the Sceptre was unwieldy. All went well, nothing was dropped. Many questions were put to the Queen, questioning her duty and loyalty to the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. She was asked to maintain the Laws of God and laws of the country. Queen Elizabeth promised to do all this. At some point, the TV camera (for just a very short minute) pointed to the gallery where Prince Charles and Princess Anne were watching with their Nanny. I wonder what they were thinking!

Fairly near the beginning of the Service, the people are asked to accept the Queen. The four corners are faced by the Queen who shout willingly, one corner at a time, 'God Save Queen Elizabeth'. The discussion in our front room was 'Who did we think shouted the loudest?'. I am not sure why but it was important. There was much presentation, Communion, Anointing – all these took a long time, it seemed to me as a 9-year-old. The Queen did move to the Coronation Chair for the putting on of the crown. This was the most exciting bit. We knew it was heavy, and I have since read that although a piece of cotton had

been sewn in, to guide the Archbishop of Canterbury to place it the right way round on Her Majesty's head, he could not find the cotton and therefore it did not sit very well. The Archbishop and other Bishops said they would be faithful and true, plus more. Her husband, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, knelt saying he would become her liege. Then other Dukes and Earls did the same.

At the end of the Service, the Queen changed into a Robe of Purple Velvet. She then elegantly took the long walk, wearing the crown which did not quite fit, carrying the awkward orb, and the difficult sceptre, leaving the Abbey via the altar, through the choir, to the West Door. Fantastic.

Huge cheers, gun salutes, could be heard, and, oh dear, it was a heavy drizzle. No one cared. It was a wonderful occasion that if you were there, you remembered. The State Coach shone in spite of the rain. Most of the carriages had their hoods up, but Queen Salote of Tonga had hers down, waving excitedly to the crowd with a huge smile. They loved her; we all did. The cheers for her were as loud as those for the Queen.

I think we had eaten our sandwiches by then, as it was mid-afternoon. I expect everyone in the procession was longing for a cup of tea or something stronger. The TV went off after the Queen reached Buckingham Palace, but was back on again for the Balcony Scene. I know I was a little afraid that Prince Charles and Princess Anne would fall over the top, as they had been given stools to stand on. But no, they were OK.

Was that the end of the day. Oh no, now the street parties started. Tables had been set up at the end of our road (Birch Crescent: it was not quite a crescent but there were birch trees both sides of the road). Sixpence in old money had been collected from each house for each child during the last few weeks, towards the event. Our mums wore red white and blue crepe paper aprons and hats. It had stopped raining by then (hooray or we would have had stripes of red, white and blue on our mum's faces), paper plates with sandwiches, cakes and (I think) jelly were on the tables, yum yum. I cannot remember anyone misbehaving. A stage had also been set up and when we had finished tea, the chairs were moved in front of the stage for some entertainment. It was Punch and Judy, which I never enjoyed, so I was glad when that was

finished. I could not understand why anyone would laugh at Punch beating his wife, children and anything else. Or was that just me?

This was followed by two men coming on to the stage with huge bags and boxes. Our names were called, girls first. We went to the stage and were given a bag of goodies, much of it small items from companies advertising their goods. We were thrilled. I had my gifts, but my sister had not been called. Her name is Lesley, not a name very much known in 1953, especially as a girl's name. Now the boys were being called, Lesley had not realised she had been left out (she was four years younger than me). I said

nothing to her, but I was wriggly in my chair, getting up the courage to call out that they had forgotten my sister. At last, Lesley was called, and, as she got up, the chaps on stage said, 'Oh, it's a little girl!', and they quickly scrambled to find another 'girl' bag, as the contents were different. Lesley still did not realise what had happened, but all's well that ends well.

Once we got home, and delved into our bags to see what we had (no, we didn't get anything out until we were home, just excited peeps), at the bottom, in a red, white and blue box, safely packed was a Coronation Cup, Saucer and Plate. Wow, we really felt

very special, and I can proudly say that I do still have mine. I think all school children were given a copy of the Souvenir Programme which cost 2/6d. The National Anthem was learnt, if you did not already know it, and being in the Brownies, I also learnt the second verse, which really is the third verse, as the second one is not very nice.

It was a fabulous day, and sharing it with Mum, Dad, my two sisters, and Auntie and Uncle Papps will always make me smile. God Save the Queen!

**Pam Russell
St Peter & St Paul**

The Queen's Coronation



A local association was sponsoring an essay competition for schools on any aspect of the Queen's Coronation. My father had previously taken my little sister and me on an outing to the Tower of London to see the Crown Jewels and we had bought some postcards: of St Edward's Crown, the Orb and Sceptre, the Ampulla, etc. I carefully copied out the explanatory text on the back of

each postcard, stuck the postcards in and submitted my (minimal) effort.

To my great surprise, I won a prize – a book of photographs by E O Hoppé of 'Rural London in Pictures', complete with a lovely Coronation bookplate. I have it still and value it more highly now than I did in 1953.

It is a poignant reminder of a world long vanished: of roads and lanes empty of cars, of a duckpond in Mill Hill, of games of bowls in Hyde Park, girls in gymslips playing rounders in Greenwich Park, a smithy at Elephant and Castle... And, a sight familiar to the post-war generation, little gardens made in bombsites in areas not yet 'redeveloped'.

In my home we watched the Coronation on the television, with the curtains drawn. Several neighbours were also invited in and my mother fed them with sausage rolls.

Carole Wells, St Peter & St Paul



My brother and I listened to the Coronation broadcast on the radio at home with our parents, during which we enjoyed a special souvenir box of chocolates. I remember we had a Coronation-themed tea caddy and a souvenir edition of the Illustrated London News. We were also excited by the news of the conquest of Mount Everest by Edmund Hillary and

Tenzing Norgay, which came through on Coronation day.

We went to a local Coronation fête where there was a fancy dress competition – my brother and I put on our cowboy and Indian (native American) outfits, which our father had brought back from his business trip to the US the year before – we didn't win! At the same event I had my one-and-only ride on a pony.

Our junior school gave us a newly minted 6d (2½p) coin featuring the new Queen's head and a floral design representing the four home nations on the reverse. We soon spent it on buying sweets – a Mars bar cost 5d, which left 1d for an extremely small bar of Cadbury's chocolate. The school also gave us the choice of a souvenir mug or a New Testament with the royal monogram embossed on the cover – I chose the latter! Sometime later we went to the local Odeon cinema to see a showing for schools of the colour film of the impressive Coronation procession and service.

Martin Wells, St Peter & St Paul

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Letter from Orkney



Good morning, People, I really do mean 'good' morning. Carrie is now bug-free, having passed the two day 'Lateral Flow Test' with negative results.

I have remained clear despite not taking any special precautions. Fortunately, Carrie had a fairly mild dose of Covid-19, but – isn't it strange? – a year ago, I, and many like me, were petrified of catching Covid. Because of historical breathing problems and many other conditions, older people in particular were hibernating. Now some eighteen months later, we are so familiar with the virus, due to the news and our stupendous wonderful NHS, that a great number of people here are not thinking 'if' but 'when' they get a dose – including me.

Lambs are now in abundance, with our minister, Edward, rushing around pulling lambs out of ewes (pronounced yows) up here, being taken aback by the number he now has to feed. So Carrie

has been drafted in to give the mothers their daily portion of feed nuts to ensure a good milk supply. In order of priority, it's dog, sheep, me; which leaves me sitting watching everyone else get their breakfast first. Carrie now has a host of 'new best friends'.

Is it a ministerial prerequisite to have a flock of sheep? Is that why their congregation are referred to as their flock? Could lead to some confusion, I think – ask Huw Bellis.

We are close to the visitor season both to the Islands and to our home, with the giant cruise liners docking at Kirkwall, and queues of coaches ready to bus them all to the many sites Orkney has to offer. Fortunately, they are not let loose, and gently herded in and out of the attractions; they happily leave thinking they have 'done' Orkney.

We have an American bishop and our minister Edward along with wives to dinner tomorrow, I am designated Drinks Steward and Starter/Bon-Bouche Chef. That should be fun. I have locked my whisky away and I am giving them truffled cheese on crostinis and shredded

beetroot on Smoked salmon. Carrie is doing mains with a fancy pasta.

Then we have Australians arriving for a couple of weeks, followed two days later by our own exodus to Bamburgh in Northumberland, which will be my first trip 'off Island' since I had the stroke. To say I am nervous would be a great understatement. And all this is followed by my sister descending from Norfolk. To cap it all, Loganair, our little airplane provider, has recently bought a new fleet of planes. Typically, at the onset of the season they are having teething problems. They say that at one point they only had one plane in service. Hey-Ho! That's life on an island.

We hope you all are getting back to some kind of stable, Covid-free, worry-free life where love and shaking hands prevail. I say farewell as the har arrives (thick sea-mist). I can't see the bottom of the garden now. This could last for some days. 'Bring back the wind!'

Mac Dodge
St Mary's, Kirkwall

Your baptisms

Following the article about baptisms by Vicky Baldock in last month's magazine, Maureen Livingstone kindly offered her own baptismal card and those of her children (proving that someone reads *Comment!*). Thank you, Maureen!

Here is Maureen's own card from Holy Innocents Church, the parish church in Kingsbury, NW9, showing she was baptised Maureen Bernice Connolly on 10 August 1941 when she was not quite two months old; and later confirmed on 14 May 1954 by the Bishop of Willesden. The photo of

her was taken when she was about 18 months old.

Maureen was married in 1960 in the same church and they honeymooned in the Rose & Crown Hotel! They moved to Tring and have lived in the same house in Deans Furlong ever since.

Her own children were baptised in St Peter & St Paul's Church in Tring. Her daughter was baptised Bernice Deborah Livingstone on Easter Day, 22 April 1962 and her son baptised David Peter Livingstone on 9 February 1964 by the vicar Revd T K Lowdell.



Maureen's daughter had five sons and her son a boy and a girl. She now has fourteen great grandchildren!

Maureen celebrated her 80th birthday last June – congratulations! – and Happy Birthday for the 14 June!

The Editor



The church in turmoil (in Victorian times...)



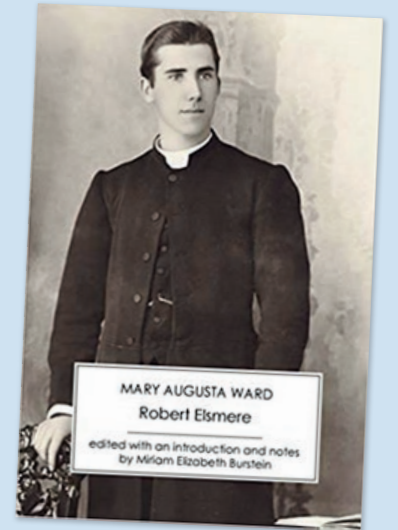
After a number of years of my borrowing (monopolising?) my wife Pat's tablet, I was given my own last Christmas.

It's only a Lenovo, not a fancy Apple device. I became a regular tablet-user during lockdown, when libraries were closed, as I finally adapted to reading books in electronic rather than paper format. This has been very useful during Lent when, with members of the Parish Church Book Group, I've been reading a Victorian religious/romance novel which is most easily available as a download from the Gutenberg library project.

The novel was written by a society lady who described herself as Mrs Humphry Ward. She lived at Stocks, the posh house just outside Aldbury, and her lifestyle is reflected in much of the book. The story is of Robert Elsmere, a well-born Anglican priest, educated in the sceptical environment of Oxford, then meeting and wooing Catherine, a faithful Christian brought up in rural Westmoreland, and moving to take over a parish in Surrey. As well as throwing

themselves into local good works, they encounter Roger Wendover, local squire and proponent of humanism (as expounded for example by Auguste Comte – I had to look him up). Elsmere eventually succumbs to the arguments for religious humanism (sort of Jesus minus the miracles), gives up the parish and moves to London where he sets up a society to educate the urban poor. Along the way his fragile health collapses, and Catherine tries to cope with her husband's wayward faith and physical ailments.

The Book Group this month had the benefit of Dr Caroline Ellwood's knowledge of Victorian religious battles (Caroline is a retired educationalist, living in Aldbury and a long-term member of our parish). Apparently, each of the characters in the book represented a strand of religious thought in England in the 19th century. Most of us had struggled a bit with the book, and few of us had managed to finish it, so we tended to go off at tangents about the authority of the Bible and the interaction between science and religion. The novel also has several love stories, Charlotte Bronte style, and several of us were more engaged by those than by the dry philosophical



agonising of the intellectuals.

'Robert Elsmere' was an international bestseller in its day, but the protagonists about what the Church of England believes, or ought to, have perhaps moved on.

The Book Group likes to experience a wide range of perspectives on our shared faith. Last month we read about Heaven, next month we're reading about Luminaries of Christianity. New books and new members are always welcome; we gather once a month on a Sunday evening.

John Whiteman
Tring Team

Covid-19 – a retrospective



Congratulations on maintaining the regular publication of *Comment*. It has been and is a notable unifier in a time of major social disruption.

I would like to mention in particular the editorial and distribution team, but also those who contribute regular think-pieces. They have all maintained a high continuity of thought and friendship in the world of Tring and its surrounding villages and communities in a time of gross social and medical disruption. It augurs well for the future!

I am very conscious that I have not contributed an article for quite some time now, but family pressures have been very high and other priorities have ruled. I think I am most sad about those I have

lost social contact with, particularly the clergy and activists at St Peter & St Paul.

I am notably aware of three people whose company was a staple of my old week at the Parish Church. I worked as a welcomer; the others were running the Foodbank: Jenny Scholes, Ted Tapson and Colin Kruger. Sadly, Jenny and Ted are no longer with us and nowadays I rarely meet Colin.

The one really good thing for my Jenny and me that has come out of Covid-19 is that our family is now physically and emotionally closer than it has been for many years. Our four children have given much physical support whenever needed and the grandchildren have given psychological support by keeping us up to date with their lives and activities, and visits to us when and if it fits in with their other commitments. Long may it continue!!

Jenny has recently had two NHS

operations: a major one on her lower back and a minor one on her right ankle. Paradoxically, the back operation to fuse several vertebrae has been very successful, while the simpler one on her ankle has demonstrated that major work still needs to be done to stabilise it. By comparison, my own cataract operation went very smoothly. The results have been amazing – I had forgotten what the real world looks like!

Jenny has been putting increasing work into her garden and the results are showing already. Watering has been the recent priority and tomato planting-out is rapidly moving up the agenda!!

The world has changed – it is no use pretending that we can turn the clock back – life has moved on, but much faster than usual!

Bill Bradford
St Peter & St Paul

Tring playgroups picnic



Playgroups started in 1961 when a London mother, Belle Tutaev, could not find a suitable group for her daughter – so she set up her own. Within a year, Belle and other parents had set up the first AGM, and the Preschool Playgroups Association was born.

The first playgroup in Tring was started by the Mother's Union and Young Wives in about 1967 and was held in the Church House. New Mill School closed in 1968 and was taken over for New Mill Playgroup soon after. It was not long before others followed. By 1982 there were eight playgroups in Tring from small house groups to bigger ones at Christchurch Road, Akeman Street and Silk Mill and they were all full, lots of children!

We all belonged to the PPA who supplied training and support and we met other playgroup people at our meetings. Every year we would have a big group outing with the other playgroups. For several years we had Teddy Bears Picnics in Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead. One year, London Zoo closed its doors to the public and opened it just for PPA members and we went along by coach

with hundreds of children.

Then one year, in Tring, we decided to host a picnic here. But where should it be and what would happen if it rained? How about St Peter & St Paul's Church and churchyard – ideal on both counts? So we phoned Donald Howells and he agreed straight away. He even said he would like to come too! We held several meetings to make sure all went well and sent out invitations to all the other playgroups. That was forty years ago.

On the big day, the sun shone. Atkins had made us a huge cake with the PPA logo on the top and we had invited our MP, Nick Lyell, whom we had met at one of our training days. He had a particular interest in PPAs. Soon everyone began to arrive from all over the area, some walking, some by car and several coach loads. It was wonderful. The children played, their mums chatted and we all tucked into our picnics. Photos were taken and the cake cut into slices for all to take home. No sticky fingers!

We went into the church and filled it up, singing playgroup songs led by Aunty Gill and Auntie Rita from the host playgroup, Young Wives and Mothers' Union. The sound of 'The wheels on the bus', 'If you're happy and you know it



clap your hands and stamp your feet' had to be heard to be believed! It was wonderful!

At home time, everyone collected their slice of celebration cake, tired and happy. We, the Tring Playgroup leaders, stayed behind and made sure everything was clean and tidy. We all agreed it had been a great success. The photo appeared in the Bucks Herald the following week and there must be copies in local homes.

There are now three playgroups in Tring: Stepping Stones (Young Wives), ABC (Akeman Street) and Forget Me Nots (Silk Mill). Now, of course, we have nurseries attached to all three Infant Schools and they are all very special places for under-fives.

**Erica Guy, St Peter & St Paul
Formerly Akeman Street Baptist
Playgroup**

*Lord, who hast made me out of mud,
And hast redeem'd me through thy blood
And sanctifi'd me to do good;
Purge all my sins done heretofore:
For I confess my heavy score,
And I will strive to sin no more.
Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,
With faith, with hope, with charity;
That I may run, rise, rest with thee.*

George Herbert

tuberculosis) and uncertainty. He seems to have been torn between a career in the church and the world. His poetry reflects this and is, at times, cheerful and full of hope; at others sad and full of doubt, but always intricate in metre and composition. He was ordained priest in 1630 and, after three years as rector of Bremerton, near Salisbury, he died in 1633.

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

Trinity Sunday



Here is another poem by one of my favourite poets. It is a short, simple but beautifully crafted poem which plays on the theme of the 'three' of the Trinity. The first verse describes the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in each line. The second verse covers the past, present and the future and the last verse has three threes – the parts of the body, the three virtues as mentioned by St Paul (I Corinthians 13:13) and three states of being.

'Herbert's clever arithmetic, spare craftsmanship and sincere devotion has made a bright prayer-toy out of abstruse and cumbersome theology'

said John Drury in 'Music at Midnight: the Life and Poetry of George Herbert', Allen Lane, 2013.

George Herbert (1593-1633) is a well-known 17th century religious writer as well as an accomplished poet and musician. Born in Montgomery, he lost his father when he was 3 and was brought up by his mother who moved the family (ten children) to Shrewsbury, Oxford and finally, to Charing Cross in London. There they moved among the writers, musicians and gentry of the day. After Westminster School, George spent fifteen years in Cambridge, ending up as Public Orator. He lived through times of ecclesiastical turmoil and his own life was chequered with bouts of doubt, ill health (probably

Give me a break...

We all need quiet spaces in our lives: time away from the pressures, demands and distribution of all the things undone or unfinished; time for renewal and recreation. Achieving this combination of time and space can be a problem.

It seems that if you have a physical space, the time seems easier to come by. In 1997 when we created the Quiet Space in Tring Churchyard, there was scepticism about whether it would ever be used. Within weeks, after the death of Princess Diana, it had become an oasis with many, many people needing its tranquillity, and people have sat there

quietly from time to time ever since.

Not quite so accessible but even more peaceful is the Garden of Remembrance at St Mary's, Puttenham, in the northwest corner of the churchyard. There are seats and grass banks to sit on. It is open to wide skies and sunsets and flowers to enjoy, especially in the Spring. Work is in progress to establish a wild flower border and fernery.

Christians are known to have worshipped in Puttenham since the 7th century. Who knows if the faith could have been brought by the Romans at



the time of St Alban, some 1900 years ago?

Come and see. Bring a picnic. Enjoy the feeling of timelessness, the wide horizons and the spiritual presence. Take a deep breath – or two – or three. Give thanks for this very special space.

Celestria Bell, St Peter & St Paul

A room full of puzzles



I blame my sister! To be fair, though, it isn't entirely her fault. When Covid-19 changed our plans for Christmas 2021 – although not as drastically as the previous year, when we were all confined to our own homes – and we were unable to travel to all spend the festive season with our daughter in Germany, my sister came to stay with us in Tring instead. We had already started to work through our small selection of jigsaw puzzles as a change from watching television in the long winter evenings, and she brought a particularly challenging 1000-piece puzzle with her. We completed it together and rather enjoyed it.

A couple of months later I had an email from my sister, who lives in Derbyshire, with a link to a website for an auction house she follows in Lincolnshire. She had spotted a couple of lots coming up for sale the following week – batches of jigsaw puzzles – and thought I might be interested.

I have only very occasionally visited Tring Market Auctions, although I did successfully bid many years ago for a large bookcase that still takes pride of place in a double bedroom, but I thought I would give it a go. I placed online bids, for less than the auctioneer's estimate, for each of the lots and on the day of the sale I was able to join in by Zoom. Imagine my amazement, followed by a slight feeling of panic, when I realised that I had 'won' both lots – 114 boxes

containing a total of 143 jigsaw puzzles! After confessing to my husband that I had made a rather unusual impulse online purchase, we planned a day trip to collect the puzzles. Fortunately, we were able to combine the visit to the auction house with meeting my sister for lunch in the lovely town of Stamford. We laughed over the 'full to the brim' estate car loaded with puzzles and enjoyed an excellent time together.

Back at home I spent a day wiping down all the boxes, labelling them and listing out the puzzles. I then decided that the best plan was to try to distribute them all into households in Tring and district and get them circulating – a bit like a lending library with no building – and that the best way of doing that was to form a Facebook group. So, 'Tring Jigsaw Swap' was born. But the timing hasn't been great, as the weather is improving, the days are lengthening and Covid-19 restrictions have, thankfully, eased and we don't need to stay at home so much. As a result, we now have a small bedroom that has been almost completely overtaken by jigsaws – all except one of those that we brought back

Tring Jigsaw Swap

Be ready for wet weekends, Covid isolation or just some you-time away from a screen.

Lots of puzzles to choose from, between 500 and 2000 pieces, and some extra challenging ones for the most experienced puzzlers.



Find us on Facebook at 'Tring Jigsaw Swap' or call Nicky on 01442 822005 and join in the fun!

from Lincolnshire is still in my house – even the two that were borrowed by a friend, but then returned.

So be prepared – stock up on free puzzles and you will be ready for whatever weather an English summer throws at us. I cannot guarantee that every puzzle has every piece, although the vast majority seem to be in 'as new' condition, and some were still sealed. There is lots of fun to be had, and all I ask is that you don't return them to me but pass them on to another puzzler.

**Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church**

Is inflation evil?



We read of inflation reaching a thirty-year high, and experience it in person as we receive our gas and electricity bills, or fill our cars with fuel, or go shopping at Tesco.

This affliction, which raged in the 1970s (25% p.a. at the peak in 1975) seems to have come back to plague us as we still struggle to recover from a real pandemic. But what does it mean? What are we, as Christians, to make of it? Is inflation an evil to be exorcised?

The first thing to recognise is that inflation is a symptom, not a cause. In the largely market-based system that we (and nearly everybody else in the world) use, prices are the way that information is transmitted about scarcity. It's an imperfect system, and has no intrinsic ethics.

Second, one person's price rise is another person's increase in income; changing prices don't make the world as a whole either poorer or richer, they are a means of distributing income. They can make individual countries richer or poorer; the chart depicts the terms of trade for the UK, showing the significant dip in our purchasing power in the oil shocks of the 1970s, but generally an improving trend since then. Inflation within a country is often a symptom of the struggle amongst different interests to determine who suffers from a fall in the country's spending power.

Third, it's all about decisions made by people and impacts on people; organisations, companies, governments represent or direct people, they don't

have a distinct existence. Those people receive incomes, or benefits, they own shares or hold government debt. When we collectively get richer (or, as recently, poorer), the decision as to who benefits or suffers is effectively a policy choice, not an inevitable economic consequence. It's worth remembering also that a dose of inflation reduces the real value of debt (both individual mortgages and government bonds); 10% inflation in one year reduces the real impact of the government's debt by the equivalent of several years of austerity.

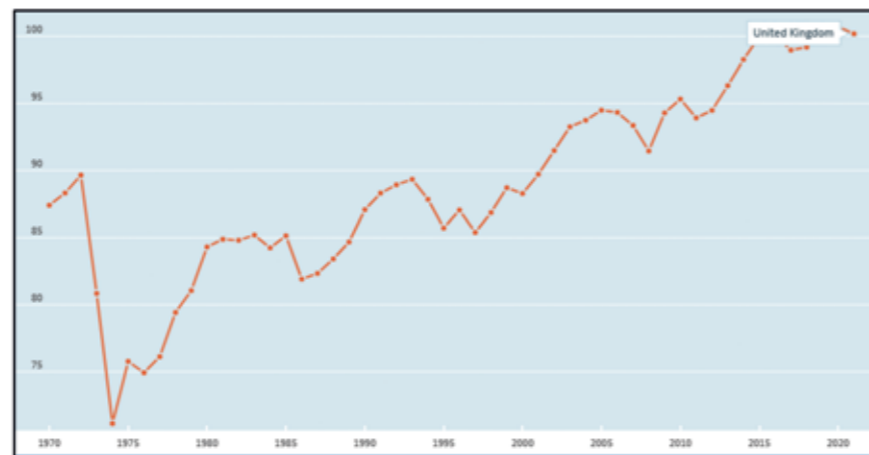
So, inflation can be frightening for us as individuals, because we feel powerless to control our lives, but collectively we can decide its impact, for good or ill. Our desire and

duty as Christians is to protect the poor and vulnerable, and to be sceptical of suggestions that inflation per se means we all have to suffer and that nothing can be done about it.

PS this is a brief summary of a big topic; if you would like more explanation or evidence, please ask! If you disagree, please say so, and why.

John Whiteman
Tring Team

Getting better off as a nation – UK terms of trade from 1970



Source: OECD (2022), Terms of trade (indicator). doi: 10.1787/7722246c-en (Accessed on 20 April 2022)

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Tring's first ever Blossom Day



This year the UK's first ever National Orchard Blossom Day was declared, initiated by the UK Orchard Network with the aim of introducing an annual celebration of fruit trees, flowers and food.

Blossom Days seek to offer time to see buzzing pollinators, eat and drink tasty orchard products, and enjoy the fresh spring air. Tring did not waste time introducing this important celebration of blossom, nature and our environment into the diary and held its first ever Blossom Day event on Saturday 24 April at Jeacock's Orchard.

The UK Orchard Network is a partnership of organisations throughout the British Isles, working together to actively promote the conservation of orchard fruit and nut trees and their varieties, and in their many forms – as individual trees, traditional, garden, and other orchards – and conserve the orchard habitat's biodiversity. Tring is proud to have its own historic orchard on Cow Lane and many people are familiar with it for hosting the annual Autumn Apple Day.

Jeacock's Orchard was created around 1920 on land owned by the Rothschild family, and it had formerly been part of a holding known as Dunsley Farm. The land was purchased



by the County Council as part of the Land Settlement Movement of the 1920s. Mr Andrew Jeacock, who was a Head Gardener for the Rothschilds, applied for the land and set up a plant nursery and fruit orchard. Mr Jeacock lived on the smallholding in the weather-boarded cottage, which remains there to this day. The whole site is now Grade II listed.

The Tring Blossom Day focused on opening up the orchard for people to enjoy. While the weather at the end of April can be unpredictable, a cool night gave way to blue skies and sunshine. The whole atmosphere was gentle and relaxed and there was plenty of time to chat, sit, listen and watch. The birdsong was amazing and the spirit of Blossom Day was well and truly fulfilled. There were delicious refreshments, a few stalls, free craft and games and even some impromptu maypole dancing. The day was earth-focused and very enjoyable: one person even commented 'very Tring!'.

On one stall there were moths to see and information about these fascinating creatures. The wonderful 5 Kites Forest School had an area with interactive nature-based activities and stories. Tring's Justice & Peace Group had a stall to highlight the plight of pollinators, notice the different bee species



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Thoughts on Trinity Sunday



Many years ago, on Trinity Sunday, in two successive years I was ordained deacon and priest. Nowadays because Trinity Sunday is a variable feast,

dependent on the date of Easter and so falling in May or June, Pentecost, at the end of June, is preferred for ordinations. It also fits in better with the end of the academic year. Actually, by tradition there were four seasons for ordinations – Advent, Lent, Trinity and Michaelmas. The first two were never popular dates, although I did know one or two who were ordained in Advent (fancy starting in a parish just before Christmas!).

Trinity could be described as the climax of the church's year. It sums up what we believe to be true about God as he has revealed himself from Advent to Pentecost as Three Persons in One God. It is also a great challenge to the preacher to explain what the doctrine of the Trinity means. Indeed, I knew one priest who was glad that the ordinations took place on Trinity Sunday because he found it easier to preach about the Church's ministry rather than the central mystery of the nature of the Godhead!

As a feast of the church's year, Trinity Sunday only entered the church's calendar in the Middle Ages, but it is a splendid reminder of all we believe about God. He revealed himself in the Old Testament (part of the Advent message); he revealed himself as Christ Jesus (Christmas to Easter); he reveals himself in the coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost and the continuing life of the church). So for us, we might say the word Trinity is another way of saying God in the uniquely Christian sense. But I wonder how each of us would explain the words – Trinity and God. Both are terms with a

range of meanings or associations.

In my boyhood days (long ago in the West Riding of Yorkshire) Trinity was the name of a rugby league team – Wakefield Trinity! Various churches, colleges and so on are called Trinity and, in recent years, I have met Trinity as a girl's name.

All sorts of thoughts come to mind, not only because of Trinity Sunday, but also because one notices how often, in this unbelieving age, the word God is used. In particular, I was thinking about the exclamations people use in TV interviews and the like. For something special or amazing there is 'Wow', but, more often, for something bad or wrong there is 'O my God' – OMG - or phrases like 'God knows', 'good God' and so on. This unthinking use of God's name is somewhat of a contrast with the Third Commandment – 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain' or 'You shall not dishonour the name of the Lord your God'. What then do we mean by misusing God's name? And, following from that, we might ask 'Does God have a name?'. After all, we tend to distinguish God from gods. We use the names of pagan gods for the days of the week. We know for us there is a clear distinction between God and gods.

There is a further complication that in the Old Testament God does have a name which we sometimes use. To respect God's name, the Jews never pronounced God's special name but, instead, read that name as Shem, which means 'name'. For God's particular name was the one revealed to Moses, when Moses asked what he could tell the Israelites back in Egypt. He was told to tell them 'I AM WHO I AM has sent me'. That is, God's name is connected to the verb 'to be' in Hebrew which is HWH. In Hebrew there were originally no vowels written and this sacred name was first thought of as Jehovah; later Yahweh was felt to be more accurate. One problem is that not all alphabets have the same

letters. There is a Y in Hebrew but not in Greek or Latin, the languages through which the Scriptures came to us. There is an SH letter in Hebrew but not in Greek or Latin. However, a good example of a sacred name much affected by these variations in different alphabets is 'Jesus'. Originally there was a name Yehoshua. This was shortened and changed to Joshua and changed again in Greek to Iesous, from which, of course, we get Jesus, a name meaning 'God saves'. Here, as a sideline, we may again note how 'Jesus' and 'Christ' are often heard as exclamations or names misused as swear words. If you are keen on languages all this is fascinating! In the Old Testament God has other names, such as El Shaddai, translated as God Almighty.

Trinity Sunday reminds us that our limited human minds struggle to put into words the wonder and majesty of God and that we only say something about God because we cannot say nothing. We approach God in awe and yet he is our father, whose son became one of us that we might hope to share his divinity. His son told us to call the Almighty Creator 'our father' and promised to send his spirit to lead us into all truth. On Trinity Sunday we pray that, as God has given us grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, so we may keep this faith. This we do in our prayers and worship, even if we at times struggle to find the right words to do so.

PS In the Book of Common Prayer, where, after Morning and Evening Prayer, is printed The Creed of St Athanasius, ordered to be said thirteen times a year instead of the Apostles' Creed. The first part of this defines the doctrine of the Trinity; the second part the Incarnation of Jesus.

Martin Banister
St Albans Cathedral

A prayer of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury

O my God, teach my heart where and how to seek you, where and how to find you. You are my God and you are my all and I have never seen you. You have made me and remade me, You have bestowed on me all the good things I possess, Still I do not know you. I have not yet done that for which I was made. Teach me to seek you. I cannot seek you unless you teach me or find you unless you show yourself to me. Let me seek you in my desire, let me desire you in my seeking. Let me find you by loving you, let me love you when I find you. Amen

Tweet of the month



As I write this, I am in Cornwall again and unlike most of my previous visits the winds have been light to non-existent and fog or mist has been present most

mornings. This has meant that not many migrants have been about so when a Night Heron turned up in Devon, I decided it was worth the trip to see it and other birds there. Besides, Devon is still much closer to Land's End than it is to Tring!

Anyway, I went to Devon and saw the Night Heron and also Cirl Buntings and bonus Cattle Egrets that I didn't know were there so it was a good trip and worth the effort. When I saw my first in 1983 it was called Night Heron, it is now also known as the Black-crowned Night Heron to clearly separate it from other species of Night Herons around the world such as the Yellow-crowned Night Heron in the Americas – its new name is certainly appropriate and more descriptive. Its scientific name is *Nycticorax nycticorax* and *nycticorax* is derived from two ancient

Greek words *nyctos*, which means night and *korax*, which means raven. So, its scientific name means Night Raven – night for its nocturnal habits and raven for its croaking, Raven-like, calls.

It brought to mind the first one I saw in 1983 and how that revised my mental image of what herons can be like. Up until then most of the herons I had seen had really long legs and long necks and are also diurnal and so mostly active during the day. So, in 1983 I was confronted with a bird that had medium-length legs, a short thick neck and it spent the whole time I was watching it sat up in a tree roosting and barely moved at all. They are well known for this behaviour and there is a famous case subsequent to this where a stuffed Night Heron was placed in a tree on a nature reserve near Newcastle and a good number of people went to see it before someone figured out it was stuffed. Fortunately, the bird in Devon was mobile and walked down the tree it was roosting on to hunt in the water below – so no danger of it being stuffed!

I am sure that most Christians have a mental image of what Jesus and God are like. When I was younger the blonde, blue-eyed images seen on most



paintings portraying Jesus influenced my visual image, but as I got older, I have modified my visual image to one more fitting someone born in Israel more than 2000 years ago and similarly my mental image of what Jesus was like and what God could be like have modified as I have learned more from The Bible and other sources – including the world we live in. I am guessing other people have mental images that have also changed and this can only be a good thing. We may all be slightly wrong in the images we have but thinking about God and Jesus and deepening our knowledge of them can only be a good thing.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

TRINGO!

A fundraising Bingo evening organised by Tring's Justice & Peace Group in aid of DEC

Saturday 25 June at 7pm

The hall at High Street Baptist Church

Doors open 6.30pm

- Hot drinks & snacks included
- PRIZES from local shops & businesses
- Tickets £10
- Bring your own cold drinks
- Raffle on the night



Tickets available from Our Bookshop, Tring

The Disasters Emergency Committee brings together 15 leading UK aid charities to respond quickly and efficiently to crises overseas, including in Ukraine.



TRING CHORAL SOCIETY and Orchestra

Conductor: Colin Stevens

J S Bach
Choruses from *B Minor Mass*

Mozart
La ci darem

Vaughan Williams
Five Mystical Songs

Elgar
The Music Makers

Soloists:
Mezzo Soprano – Gaynor Keeble
Tenor – Phillip Brown

Saturday 02 July 2022
Church of St Peter & St Paul, Tring
7.30pm (doors open 6.45pm)

Tickets: £15 Under 18s free
e: tickets@tringchoral.org.uk
www.tringchoral.org.uk/tickets

Tring Choral Society Reg Charity No. 276980

Bumping into old friends



Normally when we stay in Cornwall, Moira likes to visit the Sennen Farmers' Market that normally takes place in the Sennen Community

Centre every Tuesday morning. Obviously, the past few years it was closed due to Covid-19, but in the latter part of 2021 it reopened again so was back on the agenda. I took Moira there so we could purchase locally-made food for the week. While doing this, Moira spotted Jo and Simon Wetherall literally a few metres from us! To put this in context, the market is small – but it was an amazing coincidence to be in the same place at the same time. Anyway, we sat and chatted at the market and invited them round for a meal and caught up further over a meal of flans purchased at the market.

Jo (formerly vicar of St John the Baptist in Aldbury, part of the Tring Team and, with myself and others, part of the team that went to help build a house in Kyrgyzstan in 2013 with Habitat for Humanity) is still in the same role she moved into seven years ago in the Gloucester Diocese. She is still enjoying it. Family circumstances have changed though. Jo and Simon are now proud grandparents as their two daughters now each have two daughters of their own and live in easy reach of Jo and Simon. Unfortunately, during the Covid-19 lockdown, Jo's mother and sister were involved in a horrific car accident that left her sister in a coma for three weeks and on a long road to recovery, the extent of which has still yet to be determined. Your prayers would be appreciated for Jo and her sister.

Additionally, Simon has been diagnosed as being in the early stages of Parkinson's Disease. This is only really discernible at the moment if you knew

Simon from when he was in Aldbury. He has yet to start the medication because the disease has not yet advanced enough for him to benefit from it. So, in order to cope with what is going on, with the agreement of the diocese, Jo has reduced her working week from six days to four.

One thing Jo did say was that she often wondered where I was whenever she saw a bird she didn't recognise; and the day after the meal, we accidentally bumped into each other on the coast path between Sennen Cove and Land's End. I showed her some of the birds and identified some of the others they had seen on their holiday.

The main thing we took from this chance encounter is they are still both the same lovely people we remembered from their time in the Tring Team.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

Church clocks



The earliest church clocks were water clocks which had existed since 4000BC. Such clocks could be made to strike a bell but were very unreliable

due to leaks and the water freezing in winter. One of the most complex water clocks, which included multiple sundials, was constructed in around 50BC. It was called The Tower of the Winds. It was incorporated into an Eastern Orthodox Church at an unknown date – probably in the second century AD, making it the first-recorded church clock. The first water clock with a dial was made around 1020 by Muslim engineers and refined in 1154 when al-Kaysarani constructed a famous one in Damascus. It is thought that water clocks with a dial were incorporated into churches shortly after this – probably in the early 13th century.

The earliest mechanical bell-ringing church clocks had no dials. Before about 1400, churches had a bell that was rung to announce services, funerals etc. but many were also rung to signal dawn (Prime) and dusk (Vespers) – the start and finish of the working day, together with the other monastic services. This told people when to turn up for work, and when working time was finished. These daily bells were usually rung by the church sexton or an official bellringer who was paid – but when the ringer was ill, drunk or otherwise indisposed, the bell was not rung – causing chaos. Obviously, a mechanical bell ringer would be more reliable (and cheaper!) and

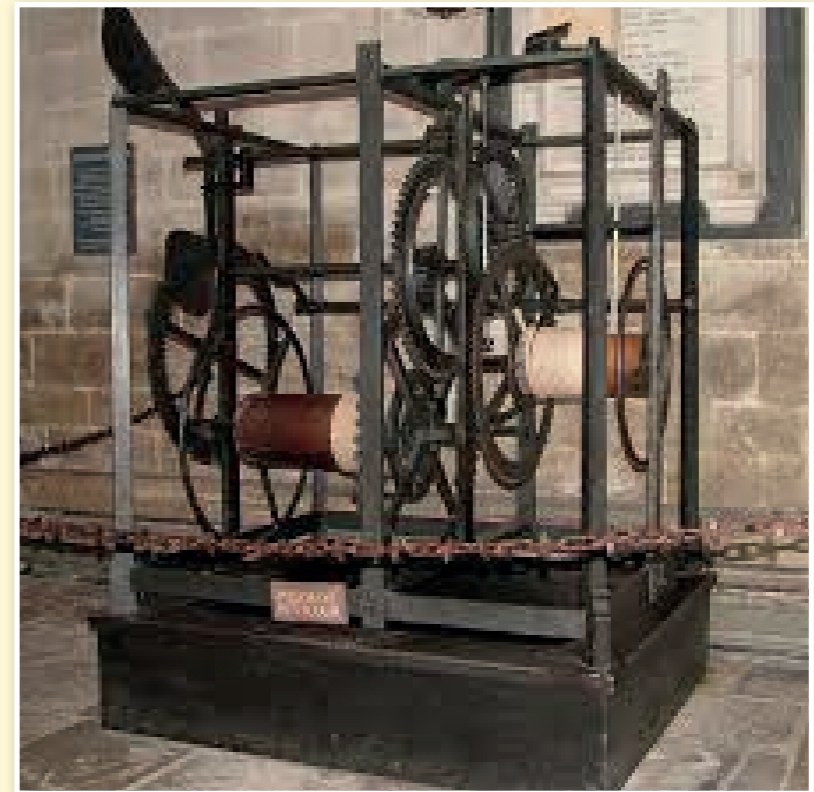
around 1386 a mechanical bell ringer was constructed at Salisbury Cathedral. Other mechanical bell ringers were constructed in municipal buildings in Europe a little before this date.

These simple bell ringers consisted

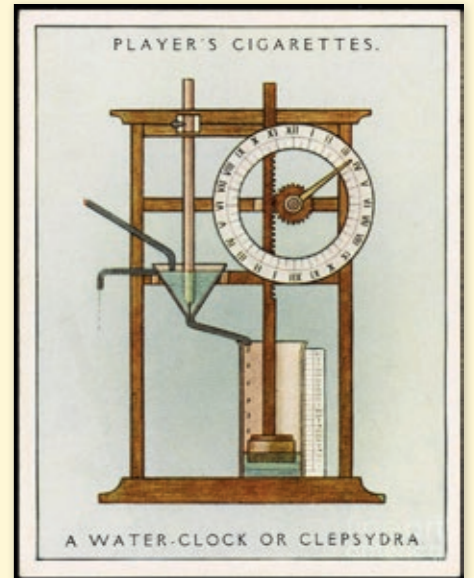
of two sections, a going train and a striking train – each powered by a rope with weights turned round a spindle. There was no clock face by which to tell the time. The going train kept continuous motion and triggered the striking train each hour to ring the bell.

In the Middle Ages, the day was divided into twelve hours, and the night into twelve hours – as had been the case in ancient Rome. This meant that hours varied in length as days lengthened and shortened during the year. The bells were rung for Matins, just before sunrise, Prime, sunrise, Terce, mid-morning, Sext, noon, None, mid-afternoon, Vespers, just before sunset and Compline, just after sunset. As an example of the variability, in London Prime was at 8.00am in winter and 3.40am in summer!

The Reformation in 1586 led to the removal of many bells from monasteries and churches, but most of these were being replaced by 1612 when the 'Companie of Ringers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lincoln' was formed – the first lay bell ringing group.



Clocks with a dial for home use dated from around 1200 but did not appear in churches until 1283 when one was mounted on the rood screen of Dunstable Priory. The first known church clock of any size with a complex



dial was one built in 1390 which can still be seen in Wells Cathedral. Around the same time a clock with an hour dial which did not strike was constructed in Strasbourg Cathedral.

The modern church clock tower with dial and hands and bell is assumed to date from around 1450 – but there are none clearly recorded at this time.

Early church clocks had purely mechanical gears and were not very accurate. Accuracy came with the

pendulum clock which was invented in the Netherlands in 1665. From 1670 onwards churches started to install accurate clocks with pendulums that could keep time to within a minute, and provide accurate hourly chimes by which the locals could keep track of time, and set their clocks and watches. The first pocket watch was invented in 1510 in Germany – but was not as accurate as a pendulum clock.

As church clocks grew more accurate, they could not only chime the hours, but also the quarter hours. The clock in St Peter & St Paul's Church, which chimes the quarters, is quite modern – it was installed

in 1882. If anyone knows the history of the clock it replaced, maybe an article could be written on it?

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

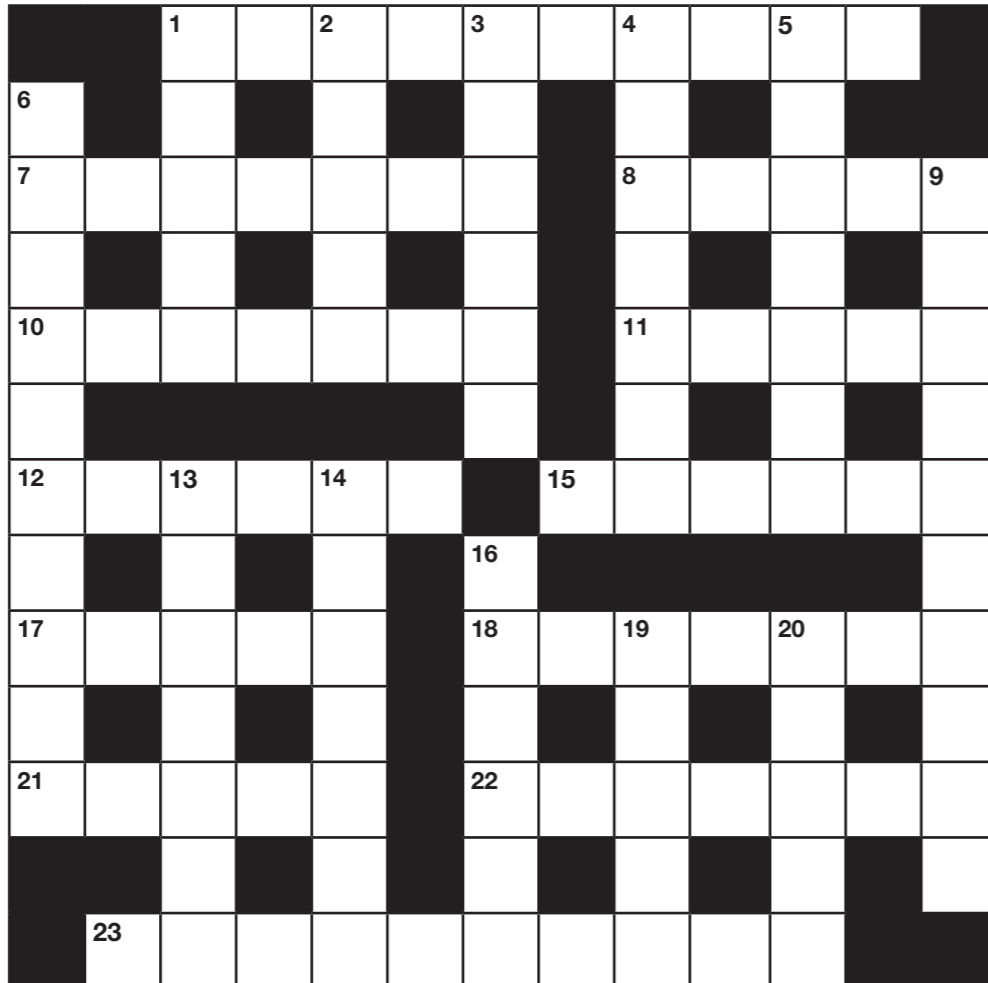
Crossword

ACROSS

1. Dedicate as now sacred (10)
7. Completely full (7)
8. Underneath (5)
10. Most difficult (6)
11. Relating to the kidney (5)
12. Collision (6)
15. Virtuous (5)
17. Wading bird (5)
18. Wall between England/Scotland (7)
21. Cut back on hedge or tree (5)
22. Edible fish (7)
23. Church of England (10)

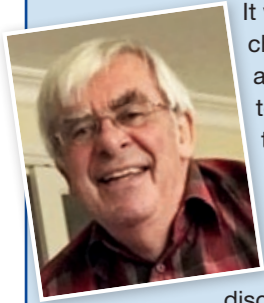
DOWN

1. Leap or jump for joy (5)
2. A close relative (5)
3. Happenings (6)
4. Resurrection (7)
5. Skills (7)
6. Head of the C of E (10)
9. Jesus stays here for 40 days/nights (10)
13. Hunter (7)
14. Change/now a Christian (7)
16. Sound of church bells (6)
19. Mouth of a river (5)
20. Lifeless (5)



Answers on page 30

More about sex and identity



It was an interesting challenge for us, as newcomers to the parish, to identify the working dynamic for a house group which we did not know, and to lead

discussion into the intimidating topics of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage! Such was our experience of the Parish Church Lent group this year!

With the goodwill of the nine in our group, we were able to share life experiences in the knowledge that we were all keen to support and encourage one another in exploring the challenges set us through the 'Living in Love and Faith' material. We soon discovered that we came from a range of family backgrounds, had experienced both supportive and destructive relationships and approached the sessions with divergent views but a willingness to be open to different opinions. Someone observed that age is not a factor in determining our views: in our group we ranged from 30-something through 60 and 70s to 90-plus. Sometimes we agreed and often we held our differences in love. A younger member shared that the course had helped her understand why people held different views and that gave her hope for the well-being of the church.

We quickly came to the conclusion that all are welcomed in communion within the Christian community as God's children, if they accept Jesus as Lord, whatever the differences and 'otherness' of their nature. It is certainly not for us to judge another Christian's relationship with God, but help one another with prayer and encouragement to grow more like Christ.

For several of us, the conversations helped to ratify an orthodox point of view while for others, there was an acceptance of a more liberal standpoint, more closely reflecting the mores of secular society. We found the five-minute videos a helpful way to interact with life-styles which might have been difficult to explore because of the sense of 'other'. We needed to be reminded that the essential thesis of the discussion was how the issues we were reviewing stand within the Christian

fellowship, the body of Christ. It raised the challenge whether Christian morality and ethics should stand apart from contemporary social ethics or should be open to hear the liberal consensus on acceptance of changes to orthodox views about gender, sexuality and relationships.

We were reminded that we are to be in the world, but not of it. John 17:14-18 highlights the dichotomy that we are called out of the world in order to be disciples, but we are sent back into the world in order to be witnesses. We struggled with the implications for the relationship between Christians called out as the church and the unbelieving majority of secular society we know as the world. This highlighted for us the essence of the questions before us: how compliant should the church become to conform to secular beliefs?

As we explored Bible passages, we found it helpful to consider where we felt ourselves to be on the spectrum of biblical 'Unity and Authority'. We considered the seeming anomalies in the Bible which appeared to contradict one another and showed the importance of understanding the context in which and for which any passage was written. Was there any contradiction between responding to God's command to love one another as he loves us, and the call for defined and demonstrable Christian behaviour, marking out the Christian from the world? Does restriction on certain behaviours deny God's love for a same-sex attracted individual? Can we benefit from boundaries within which to live and behave? Are those boundaries defined by the precepts in the Bible? Some of us certainly felt the Bible gives us clear guidelines to living well, whereas others tended toward a less authority-directed view.

The core issue posed by the course is an attempt to move the Anglican church to accept and offer marriage as a sacramental commitment between a same-sex couple. We noted amongst our members a need for the formal acceptance of the formal recognition of the commitment within a loving long-term relationship but some felt that this was not 'marriage' as we know it (the union of one man and one woman), and some other expression should have been found both in the secular rite, and

certainly for any commitment ceremony in church. A number of us felt marriage in church should be honoured as such and not include same-sex couples; others stressed that the prevailing view in the church makes homosexual couples feel excluded from parts of society. Is it realistic to demand celibacy of a same-sex couple, which is not required of a heterosexual couple?

Some of us were challenged by the subject of transgender changes. It was helpful that the world at large was facing up to the issues in sport where especially a man who is exploring transgender interventions is currently permitted to compete in sports against biological women. As with most subjects, we experienced a range of views, but the overall feeling was that children and young people should be discouraged from pursuing any transgender intervention. Are we 'born what we are?' and should we not accept that both for ourselves and for the 'other'?

Our conclusion was that the church is spending too much time working itself into knots over gender and sexuality when we are taught that in heaven, we are not sexual beings as our relationships will be in a completely different context. We are neglecting the promise of salvation and we seem to have forgotten the call by Jesus with his Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20 'And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."'

Paul Boddam-Whetham
Tring Team

My view on allowing same-sex marriage in the Church of England



It's as simple as this picture, isn't it? I loved this image shared a few years ago by Boy George because this is

what it comes down to. We are all human; and my belief as a Christian is that God created and loves us all.

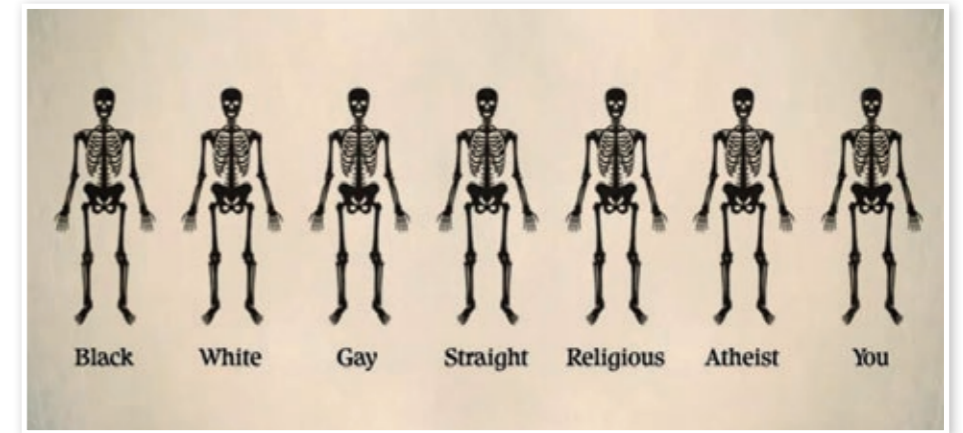
But sadly, to my mind, the Anglican church, the Church of England, still doesn't allow same-sex couples to even have a blessing of their relationship in church, never mind a wedding. Thankfully it seems the church, as an institution, knows that many people are unhappy with this situation, so has decided to invite opinions on whether things need to change. It has produced a 'Living in Love and Faith' course which you have heard about before in *Comment*. It recognises that many of us may have lived in a time when homosexuality was illegal, or who have had no contact with anyone who is openly gay, and invited us to talk together about what is happening in society and to reflect on what view the church should have today.

As well as discussions on how each of us interpret the Bible, we heard from a variety of people with different experiences of living in love and faith, including same-sex couples, transgender, disabled and celibate Christians.

Our team parish offered a number of opportunities for people to join together to explore the course resources in house groups or via Zoom through Lent. This was quite well attended compared to our usual Lent groups, which was a good sign of the strength of feeling on the matter. The course was available nationally so hopefully lots of people who wanted to learn and pray before offering an opinion will have had the chance to do that.

The church has softened its view on divorcees, gay clergy and female priests relatively recently and although there are still a LOT of issues that need to be prayed about, now is the time to talk about our policies on same-sex marriage.

Before I knew what choices my children would make, I was already uncomfortable about the ban on blessing or marrying same-sex couples. Now this rule directly affects my own family, which feels like a betrayal from the church



I have been part of since birth. In the summer the General Synod will meet to discuss whether the situation should change. Should the church allow same-sex marriages? What message would the Tring Team send to Synod?

My seven children have grown up as 'church kids'. They attended toddler groups and toddler worship. They joined the Junior choir, helped me run 'Messy Church' and 'Light up the Dark' events on 31 October, have sat through endless Sunday services and festivals. We have held the true meaning of Christmas and Easter close. They have all studied to be allowed to take Holy Communion and some of them have chosen to be confirmed. Throughout it all they have been welcomed and supported and loved by their church family. As mentioned in another article here, my eldest son has just had his baby, our beloved first grandchild, baptised in our church and the congregation prayed for us all and celebrated with us. But although my son, who is in a loving, heterosexual relationship, could marry there, some of his siblings would be turned away – because they may want to marry a same-sex partner.

After a lifetime of being raised Christian, with an overriding message that God loves and forgives us, this is more than an embarrassment. It's an issue which has already had some part in driving some of them away from faith. The people we are talking about are not 'them' but 'us'. As well as deciding the future for people we will never meet, we are talking about existing members of our community – our friends, our relatives, our children. I was not the only one sobbing in frustration and disappointment on their behalf during the church meeting that brought together our discussions.

Every year the church marries hundreds, possibly thousands of couples who fall short of biblical ideals. One interpretation of scripture would suggest that we shouldn't be marrying divorcees or anyone who doesn't honour their body – alcoholics, the obese, drug addicts, etc. Sadly, we may marry people who go on to abuse, rape, murder. We don't check criminal records, weigh people or ask how many cigarettes they smoke. We rightly and willingly marry marry people who have never set foot in church previously and may never again. But loving couples (who may even be practising Christians) but happen to be the same sex? Nope. Sorry. Argh!

The overwhelming feeling in the Tring Team seemed to be that we would support a change in the church's stance on same-sex marriage; not 100% agreement but certainly a majority. There did seem to be some residual confusion about how trans people would fit into the equation.

One of my children is non-binary and many people also don't understand this definition of gender. It's really, really easy. Whatever the label or pronoun or reassignment status, they are just people, fellow human beings. My children don't see what all the fuss is about when it comes to gender and sexuality, and I gather from friends that their children feel the same. In the way we ask someone's name, they ask their preferred pronouns. In my experience, there is no judgment, no proof required, no disbelief.

I believe that God created us all with love. We are all people created in his image; and if two of those people want to be joined in Holy Matrimony, we should support and enable that.

Afra Willmore (she, her)
St John the Baptist, Aldbury

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www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
www.newmillbaptist.org.uk
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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 26

ACROSS

1. CONSECRATE
7. REPLETE
8. BELOW
10. HARDEST
11. RENAL
12. IMPACT
15. CHASTE
17. HERON
18. HADRIAN
21. PRUNE
22. MULLETS
23. PROTESTANT

DOWN

1. CAPER
2. NIECE
3. EVENTS
4. REBIRTH
5. TALENTS
6. ARCHBISHOP
9. WILDERNESS
13. PURSUER
14. CONVERT
16. CHIMES
19. DELTA
20. INERT



Services in June in Tring Team Parish

Friday 3rd June - Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Party at Tring Church/Churchyard

From 5pm Afternoon Tea, music, kid's activities etc. 7pm Thanksgiving Service for Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee
8pm - 9.30pm BBQ and Tring Brewery bar, ending with beacon at sunset. RSVP to info@tringtogether.org.uk

Sunday 5th June

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**
8am Holy Communion traditional language **Aldbury**
10am ** Holy Communion with Sunday Club **Tring**
10am Communion Together **Aldbury**
10am Holy Communion **Long Marston**

Sunday 19th June

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**
10am ** Holy Communion and Sunday Club **Tring**
10am Holy Communion **Aldbury**
10am Worship for All **Long Marston**

Sunday 12th June

8am **Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**
10am Worship for all **Tring**
10am Holy Communion **Aldbury**
6pm Celtic Evening Prayer **Long Marston**

Sunday 26th June

8am ** Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**
10am Communion Together **Tring**
11am Patronal Holy Communion **Aldbury**
3.30pm Team Parish Evensong **Puttenham**
6pm Holy Communion **Long Marston**

Wednesday 29th June - St Peter and St Paul's Day

Come to Tring and celebrate our Patronal Festival with paella (traditional and vegetarian), cake and a glass of bubbly from 7pm followed by an informal Festival Communion at 8pm.

Lots more going on in the parish

Mondays 3.30pm - 5pm Youth café for secondary school age pupils **Tring**
Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm Craft and a Cuppa **Tring - Wednesdays 10am - 12noon** Baby/toddler/carer drop-in **Tring**
Social Coffee Fridays, Saturdays 10am - 12 noon and after Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday services **Tring**,
Tuesdays 10.30 - 12noon **Wilstone** Tuesdays 10.30-12noon **Aldbury**
Thursdays 10.30am - 12 noon **Puttenham**

Mid-week Services in the Parish

9.15am Tuesdays Holy Communion **Tring**
10am Tuesdays Alternates weekly either Holy Communion or Morning Worship **Wilstone**
10am Thursdays Holy Communion in traditional language **Tring**

Worship for All and Communion Together

At these services we all worship together but there is more provision for children, however they are for everyone. Worship for All doesn't have Holy Communion, Communion Together does. They are a more relaxed style of worship and are a bit shorter.

Holy Communion with Sunday Club in Tring

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

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

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

25 x "THANK YOU'S!"

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY
BOX-OPENING

GARDEN DAY

The
Children's
Society

No child
should feel
alone

Over many years we have been privileged to hold a garden day for the loyal band of box holders and friends who have done so much to support the Children's Society each summer. In lockdown year we had to miss out completely. Last year we managed to squeeze in a day on 17th July once things became a little more relaxed.

This year we are planning our 25th Children's Society Garden Day to say 25 thank you's to all who have done so much to help.

GREENWAYS • 88 GROVE ROAD
11AM - 2PM SATURDAY 18TH JUNE 2022



**BIG
PRIZE
RAFFLE**

PLEASE COME AND JOIN US

We shall be open from 11am until 2pm offering coffee and cakes, wine and a ploughman's lunch. There will be a combined stall with bring & buy items, homemade cakes and preserves and a few garden plants, most of all there will be good company to enjoy.

We'd like to thank everyone who supports the Children's Society whether or not you have a box. Please feel free to offer a donation which can be collected on the day if you haven't had the chance to use your box (coins are in short supply!)

The Children's Society needs all our support in this challenging time.

ALL ARE VERY WELCOME

If you need any further information, please call Prue or Grahame Senior on 01442 822 770