

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



Tring Team Parish

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

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

Please visit our website for everything.

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

It's ok to contact any of the clergy

Team Rector Revd Huw Bellis 01442 822170 or 07411483229 huw@tringteamparish.org.uk

Team Vicar Revd Jane Banister 01442 822170

Long Marston and Wilstone: jane@tringteamparish.org.uk

Team Vicar Revd Michelle Grace 01442 851200

Aldbury: michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk

Curate Revd Sarah Marshall 07538 888502

sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk

Open churches for Services

We have services in our five churches throughout the month. You need to book through our website, to allow space and for track and trace.

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

Full schedule listed there, and type of service.

Generally, Aldbury, Sundays at 10am, Tring, Sundays 8am and 10am, Wednesdays at 10am. Long Marston Sundays at 6pm. Wilstone weekly, day TBA. Puttenham 2nd Sunday of the month 3.30pm.

Open Churches for individual Prayer

Tring Church open weekdays, 10am - 12noon, weekends 2 - 4pm

Wilstone Church open Tuesdays, 10.30am - 12.30pm,

Long Marston Church open Wednesdays, 3 - 5pm

Aldbury Church open daily, 11am - 1pm

Puttenham likely to be open for a time on Sunday afternoons.



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

Services featuring our clergy and others coming into your home!

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Access to daily prayer and services from the Church of England.

Pastoral Care and Support

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



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



The God who sees us



The other day I was playing with my son in the garden. We were looking for bugs in the grass and the vegetable patch and looking for dinosaur 'fossils' in the gravel (funny-shaped gravel that looked like dinosaur teeth, eggs or claws). As we searched and searched through the grass, amongst the weeds (I mean vegetables) and in the gravel for things of interest, I was reminded of the 90s Disney movie classic 'Honey I shrunk the kids'.



For those unfamiliar with the film, it's about a group of children who accidentally get shrunk down to just 6mm in height by an invention in the attic of two of the children. To make matters worse they then get thrown out with the rubbish into the bins on the far side of the garden. The film continues as the children go on an adventure navigating their way through the 'dangers' of the garden (lawnmowers, ants etc) and the house, back to the

invention. Meanwhile the father, realising the accident, creates an elaborate pulley and harness system to search for them without touching the ground.

The film was always a firm favourite when I was growing up and was a great success for Disney, winning a BAFTA in 1991 for visual effects and grossing almost £500 million worldwide in today's money.

Just like the children in the film, sometimes we can feel small in the 'grand scheme of things'. We can feel at times that even the smallest of hurdles seems like a big step; we feel sometimes that things we would normally take in our stride seem to trip us up. There's no doubting the challenges we've faced so far this year. Everyday tasks like shopping, meeting friends and family, and work require greater planning (I'm sure I'm not the only one who has gone shopping only to get to the supermarket door and realise I left my face mask at home!). For some, the challenges are in the continued isolation from social and family groups which compounds a sense of loneliness. In current circumstances and at times it can feel as if we are like those children in the film; aliens in our everyday environment.

There's a story in Genesis chapter 16 of a women called Hagar, who was the servant of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Hagar is pregnant with Abraham's child but quickly feels belittled and alienated and consequently

wanders off into the wilderness. Like the father in the film searching for his lost children, God meets with Hagar in the place where she had wandered to; and with tender mercy, God reassures her, comforts her, strengthens her and restores her.

In this wonderful dialogue between God and Hagar, Hagar identifies God as 'El Roi' which means 'You are the God who sees me'. Personally, I love this as a descriptive name for God because it reminds me that whenever I feel lost, whenever I feel small, whenever I feel the hurdles and challenges are greater than I have the energy and enthusiasm to deal with, God sees me and will come to the rescue, to comfort, to strengthen and to restore.

October is the truly Autumnal month where change and transformation takes place all around us. Whatever it holds for you, I pray that in the challenges, changes, joys and adventures you encounter, you will know and meet with God in both the expected and unexpected places. For God is the God who sees us wherever we are and in whatever situation we find ourselves – and he meets us there.

Joe Egan, High Street Baptist Church



The printing of Comment

Easy, right? Well, sometimes it is – until we get the duplication of pages which happened inside some copies of the September edition. This we call a PICNIC issue (problem in chair not in computer) or, in other words, operator error.

Even though *Comment* is produced on a printing machine and finishing machine costing in excess of £500,000, it still needs to be fed and controlled by a real person; and as we are but human, mistakes do happen (rarely), thank goodness.



The printer has very kindly rectified the mistake in the September issue and if you do have a faulty copy (which will become a collector's item), and need an edition with the correct pages in the correct order(!), you can pick up a replacement copy in St Peter & St Paul's Church. Please accept our apologies if you received a bad copy.

**Ian Matthews
St Peter & St Paul**

Bring back singing!

For me, church, worship and music all go together, and being in a church choir has meant I can do them all. I like hearing, but I love the taking part.

My formative years, ages 10-20, were in my home church of Christ Church in Sutton, Surrey, where Sundays were church – contemplative Communion at 8.00am, probably before breakfast, then Matins which was a veritable music feast with settings of the Te Deum, Jubilate, Psalms, and every Sunday an anthem; before ending the day with the wonderful peace

of Evensong with its settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis.

And hymns of course. (My Desert Island book choice is Hymns Ancient and Modern, my other the Bible).

All this worshipful music was instilled in me for life.

For the past twenty-seven years I have helped lead the worship with the choir in St Peter & St Paul under a succession of choir directors: Timothy Phillips, Norman Hodge, Jane Nash and Cliff Brown, each giving me a different vision of choir singing.

The choir has gone from summer stays in Cathedrals to lead the worship, to being a small group staying at home in Tring. And, sadly for me, much of the 'classical' church music which I know and love is no longer sung, unless one visits a cathedral.

But making music of any sort with any number of people is always uplifting and comforting, and I long to do it again. 'There is joy in my heart when I sing.'

Jane Legg
St Peter & St Paul

Childhood Halloween in Scotland



I experienced Halloween in three parts of Scotland in the late 1940s: Aberdeen, Edinburgh and East Linton (a small village in East Lothian).

They were very similar.

Scottish Halloween evolved from the Celtic Samhain – a harvest festival marking the change from long to short days – and in Aberdeen where I was born, the days became very short – only eight hours long in late December.

Samhain was mentioned in Celtic literature over 2,000 years ago and derives from Sain meaning summer and fuin meaning ending. Samhain gradually evolved into All Saints' Day when Christianity spread throughout Scotland, in much the same way as in England, but with some different customs. Samhain was when the dead might rise, and many superstitious families set an extra place at the supper table that night, in case an invisible member of the family came back.

Interestingly this tradition is also held at the Jewish Seder meal when a place is set for Elijah in case he visits – and the youngest person at the meal has to go and check the door to see if he is there!

There was often a communal bonfire and fire would be taken from the bonfire to light a fire in the hearth of each house in the evening. In Celtic Samhain, large bonfires were seen as a ritual cleansing.

There was a tradition of 'Kale pulling' – which Robert Burns mentions in his poem 'Halloween'. Youngsters would go

into a kale field on Samhain night and pull up a kale plant with their eyes shut. The size and shape of the kale stalk was supposed to represent your future lover.

The children dressed up as Guisers and went guising round houses. Guisers was short for disguisers, so children would dress up in old clothes (ideally adult ones) and visit houses to entertain with songs, recitations and magic tricks. Originally the disguise was to stop ghosts from recognising you! In return they were given nuts and fruit (chocolate was rationed when I was a boy). This going round and collecting food was based on the old Samhain tradition of going round to collect food and fuel for the Samhain feast and bonfire. You were always given food in case you were a ghost in disguise.

Guisers were originally linked to mummers – medieval actors who performed plays. In Celtic tradition a mummer, as well as acting in plays, could travel between the real and the spirit world.

Mumming was found throughout Europe and was particularly for the entertainment of children at Halloween, or equivalent.

At our Halloween parties there were two essentials: treacle scones and apple dooking. Scones covered in treacle were tied to a

long length of string about 3ft from the floor and you had to eat them with your hands behind your back. Apples were put in a bucket of water and you had to take them in your teeth, again with your hands behind your back.

The windows had Neep lanterns – carved out of large Scottish turnips (swedes to the English) which had a scary face and a candle inside to scare off the ghosts who might want to come in.

It is thought that Halloween migrated to the USA in the late 1700s through Irish and Scottish immigrants. It evolved there to pumpkin lanterns instead of neep lanterns, and 'trick or treat' instead of guising. Sadly this has migrated back to Scotland and there are more USA style celebrations nowadays than traditional Scottish.

At High Street Baptist Church, in common with many churches, Halloween is seen as a pagan festival: so we have a Light Party instead.

John Allan, High Street Baptist Church

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All fresco worship for all!



We have gone outside! The congregation arrive with deckchairs and picnic rugs; songs are full of actions; and craft activities are bagged up in advance so we don't have to share anything.

Our post-lockdown work with children in the Tring Team (but all are welcome) has worked well, as it gives our younger church members an easier way of worship than having to stay seated in a pew with masks on.

But it is not just for children, as some of our more mature members have

come along and enjoyed it too.

We look forward to seeing you at future events.

Jane Banister, Tring Team



Coming late to baptism



I have been in Tring for 29 years – all my life. I went to Dundale School and then to Tring School. I now work for a watch distribution company based in Birmingham but worked four days a week from home even before lockdown.

I was not raised or particularly exposed to religion as a child. After losing my parents (Mum when I was 13 and Dad when I was 26) it made me

really look at life. I had started to make 'strange' requests to my fiancé, Chloe, like buying me a Bible and also getting me a necklace with a cross even though I had not shown any intent till then of joining the Christian faith.

At the start of this year I had a huge existential crisis. I had always classed myself as an agnostic but decided that I had to get off the fence. I'm already very familiar with the atheist side so I decided to dive into some theology. The Christian doctrine not only made more sense to me but also clearly showed that you'd live a better, more selfless, life. Reading the likes of 'Mere Christianity' by C.S. Lewis only re-confirmed this! After reading and understanding them better, I believe that the teachings of Jesus are how everyone should live their lives. I'd like to try to follow these steps, become more selfless, help people and hopefully get salvation for my soul along the way!

I've always loved the way St Peter & St Paul's Church looked and felt safe in and around it even before accepting the Christian faith as my own. So I talked to Huw Bellis and asked to be baptised. We agreed a date of 13 September.

Chloé's mum and Nana are already Christians and have been integrated in that community for a while, so she was very encouraging. It's also brought her mum and me a lot closer. Chloé



has really enjoyed and embraced my newfound faith. She also really enjoys being part of the church community! We plan to be married this year on 28 November at Missenden Abbey, but afterwards we will be looking at having the marriage blessed. As if organising a wedding wasn't hard enough, I decided to change my belief system after we'd booked everything!

Charlie Dickenson
St Peter & St Paul

Doing wellbeing well



Lockdown came upon us suddenly and, while it has eased, many changes remain in the way we live. Hugs with friends and family still seem

a distant prospect; we are getting better at reading people's expressions from their eyes peeking above their mask; and we need to book rather than be spontaneous.

Living with my family, with a large garden and surrounded by countryside, I am conscious of my privileged situation. My children are old enough to be able to amuse themselves and working from home has been flexible to keep school and family life ticking along.

Experiences of life in a time of Covid will inevitably vary from person to person but, for many, life has been forced into the slow lane. Many have commented about the renewed appreciation of nature and the time to stop and take stock. Social situations can now seem rather exhausting after so long by ourselves or in very small groups. Although things are gradually picking up, opening up and re-starting, they are with caution and new protocols. I am feeling comfortable with the new routine and loving the new gentle pace. I didn't feel like this a year ago.

A year ago, I felt anxious and overwhelmed. I didn't realise it at the time, but I was on a downhill spiral with my emotions and slipping into depression. Around November I felt out of control and went to my GP, unable to get through the door before I burst into tears and blubbed out that I couldn't stop crying and tried to describe how I was



feeling. I think this might come as a quite a surprise to many who know me. I tried to keep it together, to soldier on, to get over it. But it was not going away.

Thankfully, my GP responded thoughtfully and I responded well to the treatment she suggested. Whatever the cause of a change in mood it can be all-consuming and difficult to ask for help. I am not suggesting that there is a magic answer, but these past few months have prompted me to think more about how to maintain good mental health.

During lockdown, I started to listen to Ruth Rice, founder of Renew Wellbeing spaces. She gave short daily posts about how to maintain our wellbeing, which were rooted in Christian faith. She structured the weekday posts around the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. I wasn't familiar with this model and sought to find out more.

Five ways to wellbeing

Evidence suggests that a small improvement in wellbeing can help to decrease some mental health problems and also help people to flourish. There are five ways to wellbeing that are proven to make a real difference. They

are promoted by the NHS as well as by mental health organisations all over the world. The five ways to wellbeing are actions which, when incorporated into your daily life, can make you feel good, and feeling good is an important part of being healthy. The five actions to improve personal wellbeing are: connect; be active; keep learning; give; take notice.

I like frameworks, and this one is simple yet holistic. There is a little more detail about what each action entails, and there are plenty of sources of more information if you wish to read more.

I think these past few months have given me space to digest some of what has been going on for me over recent months and to realise that what I have been putting into practice fits into the five ways of wellbeing structure. Perhaps some of what I have shared resonates with you, or perhaps you would like to explore this topic further. While it is important that professional help is sought for mental illness, I hope that we are all able to practise being well well.

Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church



Five ways to wellbeing

1. Connect

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others

2. Be active

Being physically active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence also shows it can improve your mental wellbeing by:

- raising your self-esteem
- helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them
- causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood

3. Keep learning

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem
- helping you to build a sense of purpose
- helping you to connect with others

Even if you feel that do not have enough time, or that you do not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life.



Read more about the five ways to wellbeing:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-ways-to-mental-wellbeing
www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/

4. Give

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- helping you connect with other people

It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

5. Take notice

- Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing.
- This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.
- Some people call this awareness 'mindfulness'.
- Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better.
- It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/

Wellbeing project

World Mental Health Day is observed on 10 October every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilising efforts in support of mental health.

One in six of us will experience a common mental health disorder during our lifetime. High Street Baptist Church values the whole person, including their mental wellbeing, and we want to do something to support people and promote wellbeing. We echo the words of Ephesians 3:16 which say: 'I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with

power through his Spirit in your inner being.'

Earlier in 2020 we secured a small grant to develop wellbeing activity. With the onset of lockdown many of these

plans have been stalled, but we have created a new website page to start this activity that points to a range of links and resources (www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/well-being/).



Over the coming months we hope to be offering opportunities to explore this topic with workshops, creative sessions and talks, as well as facilitating a wellbeing community support group. If you are interested in finding out more then please look out for updates on our website and Facebook page coming soon.

Polly Eaton, High Street Baptist Church

Sabbatical musings



A sabbatical is usually planned at least a year in advance and often further ahead than that: it isn't usually disrupted by a pandemic!

When the lockdown was announced, one of my first thoughts was about my sabbatical. Should I still take it? Do I need to be around for the churches? Will I be able to do what I had planned?

Guidance quickly came that, unless there was a good reason, we were still expected to take our sabbaticals and I knew that, although some things would need to change, I could still do a lot of what I had planned. I needed to get used to the idea that the sabbatical would be going ahead.

The next few weeks were spent getting used to the changes that lockdown brought – I'm sure we can all remember the strange time that that was. Easter came and went and suddenly I was in my last few days before my sabbatical started. I began looking forward to it, and after all the chaos of lockdown, it felt good to have a break approaching: time to stop, time to reflect, space for me, my family and God.

Call nothing common

Early on I bought a journal to note down some of my reflections and at the beginning is written a poem by Malcolm Guite 'The Singing Bowl', a poem that Guite describes as being 'both about how to pray and how to fulfil my vocation as a poet'. I don't remember where I first came across it, but it was one of those moments when I read the poem and immediately linked with one line, 'Call nothing common in the earth or air'. It was a line that stayed with me throughout my sabbatical.



The bread of life

Another thing that we often treat as common is bread. As a family, we have regularly been making our own bread for about a year now

The lockdown had reminded me of the value and the gift of where we live; the garden became incredibly important; we took a family walk to Ashridge; just walking to the bridge over the canal gave me a view of wildlife. We so easily take for granted those things that we see every day, and yet they are all gifts from our creator God, they all speak of his love and care for all creation, the world that includes us. We may see these things day after day, but none of it is common, it all has value and beauty.



Photography

While those words were in my mind, Andrew, my husband, saw a short course on smartphone photography that I could access for free. I decided to sign up. I'm not sure how much I learnt or retained, but it was a stimulus to start taking photos, and specifically photos of the things that were around me, a way to meditate further on the beauty of those 'common' things. And so my phone is now filled with flowers, leaves, trees, butterflies, dandelion clocks: photos that I hope to use over the next months and years in different ways.

and it has helped me to reflect on the various mentions of bread in the Bible, particularly in the Gospels. I've been reminded once again of the wonder of the simple mix of flour, water, yeast and oil, transforming from a wet dough to that basic food of life that most of us eat each day. Many of you will remember that early on in lockdown the supermarket shelves emptied of flour (was there a sense of security in having flour?). This common thing that we took for granted was suddenly not to be taken for granted. Would we be able to get the flour that we needed for the bread to feed our two hungry boys?

All of us can take our faith for granted, the bread of life that feeds us, and yet being separated from our routines of going to church on a Sunday certainly reminded me of how important my faith was to me. The church is not just a social club that I'm a part of, but the way that I share with others something that is the bedrock of my life, the sure foundation that I build my life on.

Thankfully we were able to get some flour delivered and so I began trialling a few different breads: flat breads, naan, burger buns, bagels and focaccia were all attempted, with varied results! And in the meantime, Andrew kept his sourdough fed, producing loaves and baguettes at various intervals. We were fed our daily bread, but also I recognised that daily feeding from God as I prayed and reflected.

Prayer

'Pray As You Go' has become an app that I use regularly in my prayer time and the website 'Take Time' has also been helpful. Interestingly, both of them



able to give the boys time while they were home schooling, eating together each evening, going on family walks and bike rides, watching streamed theatre plays and films has been good. I hope that they have valued the time as well – I haven't asked them yet!

Leadership styles

I had also intended to think about leadership styles during my sabbatical and had found a course to help me reflect on my own leadership style. Sadly the course was cancelled, but I began to explore what I then discovered is a massive area through various books and websites. Steven Croft's 'Ministry in Three Dimensions' reminded me of the importance of the servant ministry that remains as a basis of ministry of all levels; and Rowan Williams' 'Luminaries: Twenty Lives that Illuminate the Christian Way' gave some valuable insights into the lives of those whose influence we still recognise today. Helen Cameron's 'Living in the Gaze of God' had several insights that I found valuable. One quote that I will continue to reflect on was when she wrote that as ministers 'our hearts must be reachable and breakable'. A challenging but important insight.

are influenced by Ignatian spirituality. Through the gift of the internet though, I have also accessed worship in various places both in this country and overseas, and it's been good to be reminded of the worldwide body of Christ that we are a part of.

Family time

One of the aims for my sabbatical when it was first planned was spending time with the family. I didn't expect to spend quite as much time as I did! But being

God is with us

The Methodist Conference came in the middle of the sabbatical and took place using Zoom. It was good to be there and be part of the debates. It wasn't the same as gathering in the conference hall and I missed the continued discussions over coffee and meals, but it was good to be a part of it.

This year's President and Vice President have taken as their theme what are believed to be the last words of John Wesley 'The best of all is, God is with us'. They are good words to have in this time of continued restrictions. We may not be able to go where we want or do what we want, we may be restricted in seeing friends and family, but ultimately our God is with us and that is good!

No, the sabbatical wasn't what I expected, but I have had time to pray, to reflect, to read, to be with my family, to garden and bake and God has been good. I am grateful to those who took on more so that I could have this time and look forward to seeing where God leads us next.

Rachael Hawkins
St Martha's Methodist Church

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Respect for diversity



Privilege is a word that has been used a lot recently – mainly with relation to the Black Lives Matter movement. The view, to put it simply, is that if you cannot

see what all the fuss is about, it means that you are privileged. It is a conversation that is very heated, and there is much anger, but it is vital to have the conversation and to listen. If you are in a privileged position, then it can be infuriating to be told that, but that anger gives you a little idea of what it is like to be on the other side.

A very good friend of mine, whom I have known from our school days, is of mixed Indian and white parentage, and she has three older brothers. I can remember her telling me over twenty-five years ago, that whenever her brothers travelled anywhere by plane, they made sure that they were clean shaven and smartly dressed. It did not stop them being pulled over by security, but if they did not do that, they could be certain of being pulled to one side and the journey delayed. They are all university-educated, and work in medicine and finance – but looking Indian or Arabic with a beard is seen as meaning only one thing, even twenty-five years ago. If our response to that is to say we cannot see the problem, then

we are privileged.

I don't think we should give out CBE medals: the Empire does not exist, but the Commonwealth does and surely is a better image of how we should work together and recognise the talents of others. So why not a CMA, a Commonwealth Medal for Achievement? If our response to that is to say that changing is removing our history, and forgetting the benefits of Empire, then we really cannot see our privilege. Walking around the remains of Hadrian's Wall and Roman settlements on our holiday reminded me that human empires do not last for ever; nor are they forgotten.

For many of us, more minor privilege can be closer to home. I still remember taking the car for a service a few years ago, and when I had made a decision on what needed to be done based on the mechanic's advice, I was asked if I wanted to check with my husband first; Huw was equally indignant when he was out buying a new fridge and being asked if he needed to check with his wife before making a decision.

Many of us are privileged in many ways – through nationality, through the colour of our skin, through gender. To recognise this is not to say that we are worthless, or wrong. It is about opening our eyes and ears, and changing in response to the world around us, which is what we should do all through our lives. The virus has made us change;

age makes us change; loss, joy, all these things make us change. Why should looking at our lives of privilege be any different? The minute we stop looking, we are shutting ourselves away. Anyone who follows God is one of his servants, no matter what their background or nationality. We need to make sacrifices in order to show our faith and our desire for change.

As you know, John Hume, a leading light in the Northern Ireland peace process died recently. He was a man who said one of his greatest achievements at school was avoiding PE for two years and not being found out; and who also, according to his family, kept the Irish chocolate industry going. When he won the Nobel Prize for Peace, he divided the money between the Salvation Army and the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the social work arm of the Protestant and Catholic churches. And he said, 'Difference is the essence of humanity. Difference is an accident of birth and should never be the source of hatred or conflict. Therein lies a most fundamental principle of peace: respect for diversity.'

It is about openness and conversation – it always has been – but we are all human and sometimes we don't want to have the conversation. But we must.

Jane Banister, Tring Team

Feedback



The article 'Be Inspired' by author Fern Asquith in last month's *Comment* was an absolute delight. Her philosophy and approach to life is very much in line with my own. It

has taken me close to five times as long to reach the same point. I can only have a great admiration for her insight at such an early age, and without the benefit of many years of experience.

It is hardly surprising she has taken to the art of painting (as I have for many years) to illustrate the wonder of the natural world. This whole article has been very, very refreshing for a grumpy old

man in the wilds of Orkney on several levels; mainly, it has been a joy to hear a young person enthuse about something so profound, and not only that but to have such a command of the written word.



I would highly recommend a visit to Orkney when she is older, this being the hub of Neolithic Britain, one of the few real wild bird wildernesses left in the UK (there are only 20,000 people on seventy

islands where Tring has 14,000 people. The light is akin to Cornwall so an artist's or photographer's delight (if you can hold the sketchbook in the 100mph winds). I am absolutely certain this young writer will go far in whatever career she decides upon. I really do hope that she will contribute more articles for *Comment* and that her life experiences will never dull her enthusiasm and love of nature and life.

Mac Dodge, St Mary's, Kirkwall



Our Covid wedding!

Waking up in the morning of our wedding in a calm, quiet house was not what we were expecting nor had been planning! Our original plans consisted of a guest list of 130 people, eight bridesmaids, two best men, two ushers and two page boys. We dreamed of all our family and friends joining us in church to watch us get married, followed by a reception and evening of singing and dancing.



We tried to remain positive early in the year as lockdown happened, but soon the realisation dawned that the wedding we planned would not be happening, both of us heart broken that our wedding would have to be postponed. After speaking with our Vicar, Michelle Grace, who managed to bring some positivity back to our wedding spark, we changed our focus from not being able to get married to having a small intimate wedding with our immediate family. Three weeks before our wedding day we got the news we'd been hoping for, that the Church of England had reopened for small services. We notified our sixteen guests of what would be the new plan, and everyone was happy to go ahead.

I arrived at St John the Baptist in Aldbury to be greeted by friends and family socially distancing in the churchyard, all wanting to celebrate with us anyway they could! As I walked up the church path with my dad, we were surprised by three of our bridesmaids who insisted on being there to see us marry! Walking into the church was really surreal when you'd been expecting 130 guests but being restricted to thirty. Our



service was beautiful, very personal, and intimate.

We are extremely thankful and very lucky that we were still able to get married on our original date as we had planned. We are looking forward (restrictions permitting) to our blessing and reception next year, to be able to celebrate with our wider friends and family.

**Kim Wright
St John the Baptist**

Bike & Hike 2020

Thank you to all who sponsored the walkers and cyclists on a very warm September day: we raised at least £750 to support the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust. A good day was had by all – though thanks to Covid-19 and the churches being closed, we missed the loos and refreshments as well as fellowship on the journey!

**Janet Goodyer
St Peter & St Paul**



Life and faith



I was brought up in the Anglican faith and it wasn't something used for form filling; my mum always went to church and, most of the time, so did my dad, although he wasn't

confirmed until the year after I had been.

I was baptised or christened as a baby and my godmothers always acted as such. One of my godmothers was my 16-year-old cousin and we remained close until her death. And I still have the ivory-backed prayer book they gave me when I was confirmed. On the other hand, my godfather, who was an uncle, never showed the slightest interest. I suspect he was chosen just because he was my uncle.

I myself have four godchildren and I tried to keep in touch with all of them but one was taken to America when he was young and his parents didn't keep in touch. Another chose not to keep in touch. The final two I am still in contact with but obviously have no influence over – if I ever did!

I don't think of myself as 'religious'; in fact I am not sure exactly what that term implies, but I have enjoyed going to church for most of my life and, for the largest part of my life, I have been part of the church congregation of St Peter & St Paul here in Tring. I enjoy being part of that community and have always tried to take an active part in church life, taking on various responsibilities.

I was Young Wives' Leader (a LONG time ago), member of the Mothers' Union where I served on the committee for many years, member of the Church Council, sidesperson, Church Secretary and involved in many of the other things associated with a community – making coffee, serving on stalls at fetes etc. etc.

In the early years I went to Sunday School every Sunday afternoon, collected text cards very eagerly and enjoyed the outings and parties which were an important part of belonging; but I can't honestly say that I remember learning very much.

I was confirmed, along with several friends, when I was 13 and we all had to wear white dresses (an easy requirement to meet as we all had walking day dresses, which were shortened for the purpose) and white veils which were the

property of the church. There was lots of preparation involved and we learnt lots about the Book of Common Prayer Communion Service, but the thing I most remember is the event itself when the Bishop of Liverpool came to conduct the service and the refreshments afterwards when we were allowed to choose first! I also belonged to the Church Girls' Brigade which had lots of activities.

I have tried hard to remember anything I could recall which might amount to 'moral guidance'. I think it was generally much easier for parents in those 'olden days' as opportunities to be 'immoral' were much more limited and social norms were very much stricter. But I still remember the hushed tones used when describing so-and-so who 'had to get married'; and even more condemnatory, the person who had 'no shame' because she didn't get married.

Living so near to Liverpool there was a large Roman Catholic community and I remember vividly the family divisions caused by someone 'turning'. (This usually meant leaving the Anglican Church to become a Roman Catholic. At the time it seemed only rarely to apply to the reverse process!) And in some ways having to be married in the vestry of the Roman Catholic Church was considered the worst possible option. I remember trying to argue at one time that there was only one God, but no one seemed to be interested in the opinion of a teenager who 'couldn't understand'.

As far as I can remember, I never heard anyone use the word 'homosexuality' until I went to university. Obviously I had read about it in books but I can just imagine my mother's face if I had ever wanted to talk about the subject. I still chuckle when I think of reading 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' under the bedclothes with the only light a small torch.

Scripture was taught in both junior and secondary schools. I don't remember a single thing about it at junior level but as I attended a church school it must have happened; whilst in the first two years at secondary school scripture lessons were generally a farce as we were taught by a retired, more than slightly deaf Methodist minister and the boys in the class made his life hell. I say the boys, as they were the ringleaders, but the girls were willing accomplices.

There was a religious assembly every morning which consisted of a hymn,

prayers, a Bible reading and sometimes an address, usually about some aspect of bad behaviour. There was one occasion when five boys were caned in front of the whole school. I don't remember why, but there was an outcry from some parents. I never did discover whether they disapproved of caning, public humiliation or the 'crime' the boys had committed. And neither did I ever find out what that 'crime' was, but it was spoken about in hushed tones by adults and imagined vividly by school juniors!

Both my children were baptised and confirmed, both happily went to Sunday School, and my son and family are regular worshippers, but my daughter never goes to church and her son wasn't baptised. She was married in St Peter & St Paul's, but rather more for the ceremony than belief; and I still feel guilty about going along with her wish because it was also what I wanted.

When my son and his family lived near Brussels they attended an Anglican church in which most of the members were ex pats. There was no official church building, but a very active church community which met in a school hall. The minister was Australian, the curate a young English woman and the members from all over the world. The rather odd mixture worked extremely well. Now that David is settled permanently in the town where my daughter-in-law grew up, they attend the Roman Catholic Church which she attended in her youth. When we visit each other we all go together to our respective Churches and my younger granddaughter used to love going to our Sunday School here in Tring. She still enjoys coming to St Peter & St Paul 'because I get wine there!'

When I was at college I went to chapel but I never got involved with any other church. During my year in America I went to two Anglican churches but never got really involved with either church community there either. For Easter I went to North Carolina to stay with a friend. I went to the 8.00am Communion Service in the Anglican Church where there were five people including the minister. For the main morning service I went to the Southern Baptist Church with my friend. It was packed to the rafters! Some of the hymns were sung sitting down, unusual for me, and the sermon was very lively both in content and delivery. But the most amazing thing happened at the end of the sermon: someone presented

the preacher with a small piece of paper and we were then told that the collection had produced insufficient funds so there would be another one!

I was married in the church I had always attended whilst growing up. To me that was a natural choice, but it also meant that my mum was comfortable with all the arrangements, as by then she was a widow.

It appears very much as if my 'church life' was something I took for granted, and in some ways I suppose it was. But it was also something I never doubted or even considered doing without. It has always been an essential part of my life.

I have always wanted to go to church and almost always enjoy being there. My faith has been challenged on many occasions, usually due to events in my

own life or that of close friends or family; but it was the fellowship of the church community (as well as the support of close friends and family) which got me through the first year after my husband's death. And I am firmly convinced that God spared my husband much suffering when his life came to an end so suddenly. At the same time I found myself wondering why I had not been tested by having to care for him and watch him suffer, and felt guilty for being grateful for that fact.

One is not always aware of support until long afterwards. I remember many occasions when I have asked God for help and nothing has seemed to happen. Later I realise that in fact that was the whole point; nothing had needed to happen! There are also many occasions

when I hear other people talking about their faith that I feel my own faith is rather shallow. Yet it is something that I feel is a part of me that I could not do without.

Last year when a very dear friend was diagnosed with a terminal illness I struggled, and again this year when my granddaughter's boyfriend aged 17 died from lymphoma. I want answers and there don't necessarily seem to be any. But I remember a priest once saying to me that God always answers prayers; but sometimes he simply says no.

Faith must be something we accept without proof, and rightly or wrongly, I cling to that.

Dorothy Townshend
St Peter & St Paul

Lockdown for Catholics in Tring and Berkhamsted



There are some advantages at the moment for the older or disabled parishioners in Tring and Berkhamsted.

Those over 70 and/or with mobility issues have priority when it comes to allocating places inside Sacred Heart Church, Berkhamsted for Mass. The numbers inside the church are limited but there is room for others outside to whom the Mass is relayed. Sacred Heart Church has extensive grounds and many people can be seen sitting on their own chairs outside the church on a Sunday

morning. Those not coming to the church can watch Mass livestreamed on the internet.

Corpus Christi Church in Tring is open just for prayer, two days each week. Both parishes, of course, have Father David Burke as their priest.

Places inside the churches are marked out with a one way system so one enters and leaves by different doors; no-go areas are taped off, and after each use, the church is cleaned and sanitised.

We know, of course, that the church is the people rather than the building, but the church building is a holy place. Catholics believe that God is present in the church, in the tabernacle. The eucharist is there, Christ's body, the



bread offered during Mass, having changed during the process of transubstantiation into the substance of Christ.

Michael Demidecki
Corpus Christi Church



Known and loved by God



When we meet someone new, we often ask them what they do. It's as if our employment, or whatever it is, is the thing which defines us. I think of my

mother, in particular:

when she was ill and dying, it wasn't so much the fear of illness and dying that concerned her, but the fact that she couldn't continue to 'do'. Her whole life was based around 'doing'. It's a problem which many of us in the church suffer from. There is a need to feel worthwhile and useful and to spend our time doing stuff; it is in the doing that we get our value and worth.

Identity shouldn't be about that, though. Over the summer St Peter & St Paul's has been focusing on supporting Dementia charities. Of course, that starts us asking fundamental questions about ourselves and our values as we change and age.

What happens as people move into retirement, when people have been identified with the work they do and their job tells us something about who they are? What starts as a way to earn a living to keep our families together eventually becomes part of our identity: what happens when these things are removed from us?

It was a problem for students at the beginning of lockdown, when everything they'd been working towards was taken away and they were no longer studying for exams. It's quite a fundamental question. Who am I if I'm a student but I don't need to study anymore? Back in our day, we automatically told each other our results when we got them. We still want to ask students how they did. But it appears that students don't do that anymore. They may say instead that they are pleased with what they got; that they're happy with their results... But it's good to know that you're not actually defined by the actual numbers you are given. I hope that's a really positive thing, but more fundamentally, I really hope that no student is feeling themselves defined by their results because that's not who they are as a person at all.

My father-in-law was talking to Jeffrey John, the dean at St Albans Cathedral, about how much reading anyone can do in lockdown. Jeffrey is probably

struggling from the same thing which many of us are finding: we've actually had to find new ways to live our lives, and new things to do. I've certainly found it a challenge finding new ways to be a priest throughout this period; how to redefine what my job is. All the things I have to do, that I took for granted, now have to be changed.

People have found the same thing whatever they do as they have worked from home. As a country we don't actually make much of anything anymore: we don't have much of an industry of construction – much of our industry is about leisure and consumerism and shopping.

So we ask: who are we if we can't go out to the places that we used to go to, and do the things that we used to do?

Anyone who spends a lot of time with Jesus begins to see things through God's eyes. When the apostle Peter is asked by Jesus, 'Who do you say that I am?' he no longer identifies Jesus by what he did. He could quite easily see Jesus as a preacher or a teacher or a prophet or a miracle-worker; he could define Jesus in that way and say that is who he is. But Peter recognises that Jesus is the son of God.

As a people of faith, those of us who love and worship God try to live our lives as God wants us to. We are asked these same questions of identity. For me, the heart of the Jesus story is to remind us that whenever we identify ourselves, we, too, need to identify ourselves as children of God. We need to see that the fundamental thing about us is that we are known and loved by God.

If asked who Jesus is, my answer is that he's the one who helps me makes sense of God and

God make sense of me. I'm probably still going to get stuck identifying myself by the things I do. I have that need to work, to feel useful. I need to say, 'This is who I am,' but it would be so much better if I could just rest in knowing that I was a child of God.

I desperately hope that any child who was disappointed with their results, or any child who was rejoicing, knows that they are not defined by this; that they are fundamentally and most importantly known and loved by God; and that's the same for each of us.

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

Choices

Do you have an 'If I had made a different choice' story from your own life, a story of how God guided you to where you are now? If you would like to share it with *Comment* readers, please send it to the Editor at comment.magazine@gmail.com.

The Editor

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Admiral nurses



At the beginning of August, Sarah Marshall, the curate at St Peter & St Paul's Church, arranged a Zoom meeting about dementia and the work of Admiral nurses.

These nurses were named by the family of Joseph Levy CBE BEM who founded Dementia UK. Joseph had vascular dementia and was known affectionately as 'Admiral Joe' because of his love of sailing.

The speaker for the evening was Pat Brown, herself an Admiral nurse. The nurses help the sufferer and their families. They work in people's homes, care homes, hospitals and hospices.

Pat explained that dementia is an

umbrella term to describe conditions affecting the brain. There are many different types of dementia.

Alzheimers is the most common, with vascular dementia being the second.

Different dementias are caused by different areas of the brain being affected and dementia affects people in different ways depending on the type they have.

Pat gave examples of different ways to help make an environment safer and easier for a dementia sufferer. A dementia sufferer, for example, may be wary of walking on a shiny floor as they may think it is water. She stressed how important it is to get a diagnosis even though this can necessarily be a long process.

There is lots of information on the Dementia UK website, and if you don't have on-line access, the Dementia UK helpline telephone number is 0800 888 6678 where you can get help and support

from Admiral nurses.

This was a very informative and helpful meeting – thank you, Sarah, for arranging it.

I attended the meeting to learn more about something I knew little about. I'd never heard of Admiral nurses so the fact that I now know they exist, who they are, and what they do, made it worthwhile.

Interestingly, since the meeting, I have seen Admiral nurses mentioned in the press. One article was about a lady who is about to take on the care of her mother-in-law who has dementia and is going to live with her and her husband. Admiral nurses will be supporting them.

If you want to watch the Zoom meeting, you can find it on the parish website.

Alison Bickerton
St Peter & St Paul

In search of a normal life...



Ali, a 25-year-old refugee, approached me nervously wringing his hands.

'Can I talk to you?' he asked.

Due to all of my plans being written off due to Coronavirus, I found myself determined to better myself and to try to help my worldwide community, trying to 'put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience' and be the Christian I always know I should be, but often find myself not being.

So I found myself in Calais, volunteering with Care4Calais, with my main job being physical labour, distributing food, and lending an ear. It was my job to be available for Ali to talk to.

Ali's English was astonishingly good, especially for a man who spent the best part of last year being prey to the vicious French Riot police, a team so cruel they have been condemned by the European Human Rights Court, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International multiple times: an impressive feat for the French police.

Ali launched into a story of his life. He was born into a comfortable house in Iran, grew up and studied computer

science. After saying I knew a little bit of code, he told me all of his favourite programming languages, the latest updates. I nodded as I pretended to understand. He showed me pictures of his 21st birthday, a lavish affair: he DJ-ed. Proudly, he told me he knew four languages.



Not long after that he had to go. He never went into detail why. I knew better than to ask.

He landed in Italy, applied and got offered asylum. 'Why didn't you stay?' I shot back at him. 'Gangs,' he responded. The housing was little better than any slum, there was massive unemployment. All of this meant he had no chance to build a life.

He heard that Germany was offering a chance of a life, so he went and was given a job at a Primary School. He got paid £0.60 an hour, and there was no chance of citizenship.

After this and fed up, he came to know his family was in England. After residing in a camp for the best part of six months, he got enough money together to pay to try to get to the UK.

Eventually, Ali talked of England. He spoke in such a way that it should have been accompanied by the tune of Rule Britannia; of how fair and just the UK is; how uncorrupt it is; how caring people are. Then he spoke of his family here, how he missed them. Finally, he talked of how he wanted a chance at a life, to settle down, not to be rich but not to worry about food anymore or just for a chance to get a normal life.

Last week he paid £3000 to a smuggler to try his luck on a dingy. Sadly, that's where the trail runs cold.

I find myself wondering: was he accepted by the UK? Or was he mugged for all his money? Or did the Channel claim him, as it has so many others?

Ali, if you made it across the channel, and if the country of your dreams accepts you, and if by some chance of fate you are reading this: Good luck.

Alex Lashley
St Peter & St Paul

Tweet of the month

This month's bird is definitely a weird looking bird and has a weird name – it is called the Common Potoo. The word Potoo originated from the mid-nineteenth century in Jamaica from the word patoo and is thought to mean owl – and they are certainly superficially owl-like. Its scientific name is Nyctibius griseus. Nyctibius is derived from two Greek words, nuktos means night and bios means living, so literally it means night-living and it is a nocturnal bird. Griseus is derived from the Latin word for grey and Grey Potoo is an alternative name for Common Potoo and arguably more descriptive as the bird is mainly grey.

The Common Potoo is part of the Potoo family, which comprises seven species. They are found in Mexico and Central America and as far south as Argentina in South America. The Potoo family belongs to the Caprimulgiformes order as do Nightjars such as the European Nightjar, also known as just Nightjar, which is the species that breeds in Britain and winters in sub-Saharan Africa. The Caprimulgiformes

are all nocturnal and characterised by larger than average eyes, a small bill and wide mouth – all adaptations to help them catch flying insects at night. They also all have rictal bristles – these are feathers adapted so that they look like hairs and grow around the sides of the mouth. While it is generally thought that the rictal bristles are there to help guide insects into the bird's mouth, there is no evidence to corroborate this. but they are obviously there for a reason and this seems the most likely.

While the nightjar family is nocturnal, most of them are cryptically-plumaged so that they are camouflaged where they sit to roost during the day. Nightjars and Nighthawks can sit on the ground or along a branch of a tree or bush. Potoos, however, often pretend to be a stump on the side of a large branch and often



have their head hunched into their body and their eyes shut so the bird in the photo is in a slightly uncharacteristic pose that allows us to get a better look at it.

In the past Nightjars and their relatives were referred to as Goatsuckers and Caprimulgus means Nanny-goat milker and as far back as 300 BC Aristotle wrote about Nightjars milking goats: this superstition persisted for centuries but has now faded out.

Leviticus chapter 11 verse 16 mentions the nighthawk, the name given to the European Nightjar's American cousins, as being detestable and unclean to eat. Obviously this means nightjars and presumably it is because they eat insects, as most insects were also considered to be unclean. While I wouldn't want to eat one I think that any bird that eats mosquitoes and midges has a place in God's creation.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

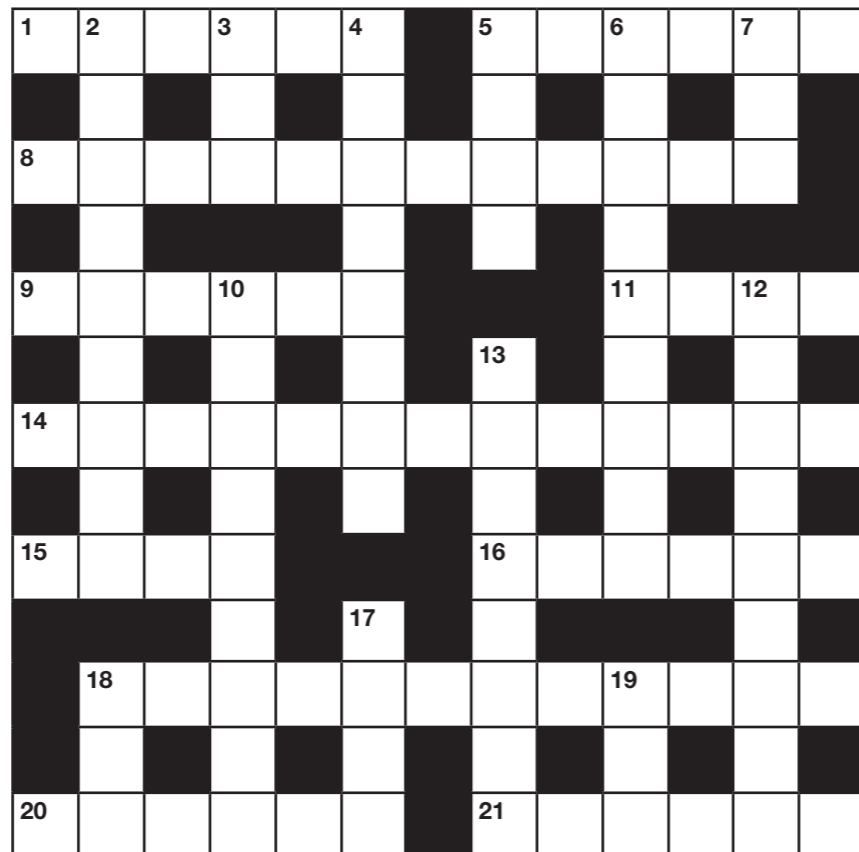
Crossword

ACROSS

- 1. Mistakes (6)
- 5. A repeat game (6)
- 8. Book of the Old Testament (12)
- 9. Relating to a community group (6)
- 11. To engrave (4)
- 14. First line of a children's story (4) (4) (1) (4)
- 15. Floor of a ship (4)
- 16. Those in authority in the Old Testament
- 18. Church window artistry (7) (5)
- 20. One of these saves nine (6)
- 21. Loiter (6)

DOWN

- 2. Put in a different order (9)
- 3. How old you are (3)
- 4. Agile animal (8)
- 5. Formal religious system (4)
- 6. Vocally disagreed (9)
- 7. Donkey (3)
- 10. First meal of the day (9)
- 12. Act of summing up (9)
- 13. Ignored (8)
- 17. Short measure (4)
- 18. You can do this up or down (3)
- 19. Formal rule (3)



Answers on page 39

High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



Worship at home

For our weekly Worship at Home resources, sermon links and prayer meetings visit www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk.



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Open all hours!
Our recycling area is located at the left hand side entrance to High Street Baptist



church. We collect bras, plastic milk bottle tops, baby food pouches, pens, glasses, mobile phones, stamps, batteries.

Our sermons, all-age talks and other videos are available on our YouTube channel **'High Street Baptist Church, Tring, UK'**.



For kids' activities, links, news and resources:



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

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

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High Street Baptist Church

Many acts of kindness

What is kindness?

The dictionary definition is consideration, benevolence, helpfulness and wishing to do good. We have read about many examples of this over the last few months, and there must be many more that never hit the headlines but mean a lot to the recipients. I have experienced several – probably due in part to my age – it does have its advantages! – and here are three of them.

I was standing outside the chemists in Dolphin Square waiting my turn to go in when my dentist happened to pass by and stopped to say hello. I told him I had trouble with two of my teeth and was hoping to make an appointment to see him. He said 'wait here' and went back to his surgery, returning with a packet of antibiotics. He was unable to make me an appointment as I was not an emergency but a month

later, still being in trouble, I rang him for advice. He suggested another course of antibiotics, made an appointment to see me the following week and gave me his mobile number in case of need. And the greatest kindness? He delivered the antibiotics to my house to save me going out.

The next act happened in June. Alison and I went to Pitstone to visit a very dear friend who was terminally ill. We all knew she hadn't long to live so it was a very poignant meeting. We were coming home via the lane that runs past Pitstone Green Farm when there was a terrible clanking noise from the rear of the car and we found the exhaust pipe dragging along the ground. It is a quiet road and we were just deciding how to explain to the RAC where we were (Alison's efforts to fix it

having proved unsuccessful), when a car coming in the opposite direction stopped. A young chap, accompanied by his wife and young child, got out and asked if we were in trouble. He then spent the next half an hour lying in the road – he refused the offer of our car blanket – and with a lanyard he had in his car finally managed to tie up the exhaust sufficiently for us to



proceed. But that wasn't all. As we were about to move off he said to us, 'wait while I turn my car round and I will follow to see you get home safely'. He wouldn't accept anything or even tell us his name, except it was Tom. As you can imagine, our thanks were truly heartfelt.

And finally. My friend's funeral service was on Tuesday 7 July and we had been invited as two of the few mourners allowed to attend. I hadn't been to the hairdressers because they were

in lockdown but they had been allowed to open three days prior, on Saturday 4 July. My hair, despite Alison's noble efforts, was far from looking its best! I rang my hairdresser without much hope, guessing he would already be choc-a-bloc but, bless him, he opened his salon on the Sunday afternoon especially to give me a perm so that I would look presentable

for my friend's funeral. I shall be eternally grateful to a very kind gentleman and friend.

I want to say thank you again to these three very kind people. I have deliberately omitted their names, apart from Tom, as I don't wish to embarrass them but they will recognise themselves if by any chance they read *Comment*. If any good has come out of this awful virus, it is the many acts of kindness that have been shown by so many to so many and I am

lucky to be one of them.
Pam Cockerill
St Cross, Wilstone

COMMENT
The magazine of the Churches in Tring

Please submit your article to the Editor by the 1st of the month.
Aim for 400 or 800 words and please send a head and shoulders colour photo or jpg and any other photos in high resolution.
Contact comment.magazine@gmail.com

Stephen Hearn
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Knocking on heaven's door



It started as an ordinary day, as life-changing days often do. We went to Kirk for the first time since lockdown, home for a quick lunch, out for a walk, and back for a cup of tea.

That's when Mac appeared looking worried. 'I really don't feel well. That pain I've had in my right shoulder is getting worse.' As he sat down at the table it seemed this was more than the indigestion he'd been talking about for a day or so.

'Do we need to get someone here?' I asked, he nodded. I dialled 999 and was soon talking to a very reassuring operator. I was aware it was important to sound calm, even if I wasn't feeling it, hoping Mac would stay calm as well. The pain was moving to the centre of his chest and he was starting to hyperventilate. Following instructions I gave him 300mg of aspirin and was told the ambulance was on its way.

The next twenty minutes lasted a lifetime as Mac was getting worse, but thankfully he was conscious and breathing throughout. As the ambulance drew up outside the relief was enormous. Two paramedics appeared with an ECG machine and a bag full of Class A painkillers. The ECG leads were attached with some difficulty as Mac was clammy with sweat. He was also not talking which indicated the situation was pretty serious.

The ECG was connected via wifi to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. It appeared there were 'irregularities' which prompted the paramedic to say to me 'we'll blue light him to the Balfour' (our local hospital) 'and they will deal with him from there. You can't come in the ambulance but you can follow in your car'. Mac was duly wheeled into the ambulance and after a quick farewell kiss and wave, the door closed and he was gone. My twenty-five minute drive to the hospital seemed to take for ever.

When I was finally allowed to see him in A&E he still looked very pale and hardly talking. A consultant doctor appeared and told me Mac had definitely had a heart attack. 'How severe is it?' I asked. 'A heart attack is a heart attack but your husband has had a good one,' he said over his shoulder as he swept off. When I looked at Mac lying there looking pale, barely conscious and hooked up to various machines, I felt like saying to him, 'Did



you hear that? He said you've had a good heart attack', but on reflection felt I'd better not.

Another doctor appeared to say that Mac would be taken by air to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary Coronary Care Unit and could I go home to pack him a case for a stay in hospital. He would be leaving in an hour. I was told I could not go with him as Aberdeen was back in lockdown and no visitors were allowed at the hospital: another horrible side effect of Coronavirus. I therefore did not have much time to get home, pack a case with everything he might need and get back to the hospital. Fortunately the roads were empty and I arrived back as they were wheeling him out

into an ambulance. He was now alert, looking much better and talking again! It transpired he had been given a clot-busting drug which had made all the difference and although not out of the woods, he was not at death's door any more. Another fond farewell in the back of an ambulance and he was whisked off to the airport for his private plane trip to Aberdeen. The system worked seamlessly and was a testament to the very best of the NHS and its staff to whom we give our thanks.

Back in the car I made all the necessary phone calls to our nearest and dearest to let them know what was happening. It was good to hear all the supportive messages. I arrived home as it was getting dark to be greeted by Jasper, our dog, as cheerful as ever and oblivious to the drama. I then had time to reflect on the day. Who knew when we woke up this morning it would finish like this? A lesson on treasuring every moment and never taking anything for granted – one which has become apparent to many during the Covid-19 crisis.

Mac was home four days later with two more coronary artery stents to add to his existing collection of five and is doing well. Lifestyle adaptations are underway, with fewer drams and smaller meal portions. So far so good but it's early days and the

regime of moderation does not come naturally to someone who has enjoyed food and drink in abundance all his life – which may have been noticed by any regular readers of this column. I think a compromise will have to be reached. He is not allowed to do any heavy lifting for a while, which also causes him some angst when he has to stand and watch me lift heavy bags of shopping.

We were very touched and appreciative of the love and prayers that were sent to Mac by many people and we give thanks for those, as well as to God that he lived to fight another day.

Carrie Dodge
St Mary's, Kirkwall

Growing creation care#2



The work of A Rocha and how they can help us

My daughter and her friend started a little photography project during the Spring. They wanted to stay out until sunset to capture the colours and make silhouettes, they experimented with close-ups, and re-visited the same spot to see how it changed over the weeks. It was such a joy to hear about what they had been up to. Yes, they were using digital technology, but they were using it as a tool to engage in nature and marvel at their surroundings. They planned bike rides along the canal to get new shots.



The project was not a brief phase, it has lasted months. My daughter didn't let the limits on being out and about halt her photography; when out for her daily walk or run she would have her camera (phone!), and snap away. In fact, as the physical isolation rules came into force, I used their photos as backdrops for verses of Scripture, as part of daily posts on social media and in our church WhatsApp groups. The purpose was to share verses of encouragement and backdrops of nature to remind us of our Creator. It was such a delight to have so many local and seasonal images to choose from. Looking back, they provide a really great visual account of the coming of Spring and into Summer.

I wrote a few reflections on the green journey experience of High Street Baptist Church in the March 2020 edition of *Comment*. However, in this article I want to share more about the work of A Rocha and how they can help us with our personal as well as church eco journey.

Why does this concern my church?

This is still a question asked by some when asked to think about environmental matters in a Christian setting. It can be an obstacle to making headway as a leadership or church family. However, most denominations have recognised creation care as a priority for many years. Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, in 2015, remains a profound invitation to everyone on the planet to care for 'our common home'. Each year, during May, *Laudato Si'* week calls for further action to care for creation. The theme for 2020 was 'Everything is Connected'.

The General Synod of the Church of England adopted the five marks of mission in 1996, the mission statement of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth' is the fifth mark of mission.

When I attended an A Rocha training day in March, I was struck by how simple their message was: God created the earth, and we are called to enjoy and protect it. I was struck by the emphasis on enjoying the nature that surrounds us, and that this is often the first step to a sense of caring for it. This sounds rather obvious, but in our rushing world we often forget it. It is not only my daughter who has a heightened awareness of her surroundings and nature. During lockdown many people have commented on noticing the birdsong, the blossom on trees, the daily change as buds appear and leaves emerge. Gardeners' World has seen soaring viewing figures. We

were forced to slow down. I certainly remember standing outside in the supermarket queue and thinking how amazing it was to have forty minutes to stand and look at trees, noticing how they changed week by week.

Appreciation of creation is certainly the first step towards caring for it. It is here that A Rocha seeks to offer guidance in both these areas. They can offer practical assistance and advice. A Rocha has five core commitments, the first of which is their biblical foundation. They have two projects designed to help churches and individuals implement the A Rocha objectives: Eco Church and Wild Christian.

Eco Church

This is a tool to help churches further their eco journey. It is an easily accessible online form which enables self-assessment and re-evaluation to progress through the series of awards. They issue bronze, silver and gold awards depending on where the church has reached on their journey. The form is simple to complete and addresses five key areas of church life, with spaces to expand answers and justify responses.

While there are only ten gold Eco Churches in the UK at present, thousands of churches are registered with Eco Church, highlighting the momentum being gained in this area. As part of our implementation of Eco Church, we recently completed a survey of all our members to create a baseline for our individual journeys. With over fifty questionnaires completed the response

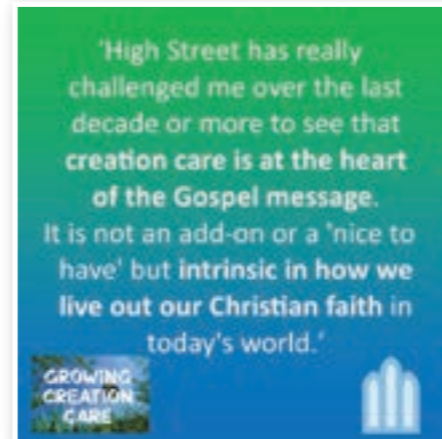


was really encouraging. We will use this audit to ask questions again in a year's time to look for movement. Included in the questionnaire was a space for pledges for people to put what they want to work on during the coming months; the results were truly inspiring (see image bottom right of page 20).



Where do I go from here?

Eco Church is most definitely a journey, and as with all journeys there needs to be a first step. You might be reading this and thinking, 'Let's get registered with Eco Church!', while others may read this and be thinking more tentatively, 'I want to explore more about what the Bible says about this topic.' Whatever your starting point, I encourage you to prayerfully consider your response to our call to care for creation.



Practical next steps

Here are a few ideas of what to do, in no particular order!

- Hold a workshop or house group series on exploring biblical teaching on creation care.
- Appoint climate stewards on your leadership team.
- Have Eco Church as a permanent agenda item on church meetings/

leadership meetings.

- Embrace partnership, e.g. with local community groups, with secular or Christian environmental organisations, mental health projects, town initiatives.
- Mark national/local environmental days within your church events or kids' activities.
- Carry out an Environmental Lifestyle Audit within your church.
- Register with Eco Church.



A Rocha

A Rocha UK (ARUK) is a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world and committed to mobilising Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment. Part of the worldwide family of A Rocha organisations committed to conservation action as an expression of Christian mission, they work collaboratively with others who share a passion for the planet and a desire for its flourishing. Their areas of work are:

- practical involvement in nature conservation projects and ecological research;
 - campaigning on biodiversity issues; and
 - engaging with churches, schools, communities and individuals.
- www.arocha.org.uk/about-us/

The five core commitments of A Rocha

- **Christian:** Underlying all they do is a biblical faith in the living God, who made the world, loves it and entrusts it to the care of human society.
- **Conservation:** They carry out research for the conservation and restoration of the natural world and run environmental education programmes for people of all ages.
- **Community:** Through their commitment to God, each other and the wider creation, they aim to develop good relationships both within the A Rocha family and in their local communities.
- **Cross-Cultural:** They draw on the insights and skills of people from

diverse cultures, both locally and around the world.

- **Cooperation:** They work in partnership with a wide variety of organisations and individuals who share their concerns for a sustainable world.



Eco Church

A Rocha UK has an award scheme for churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God's earth. Churches complete a free online survey addressing five key areas of church life to assess the level they have reached and provide a focus for development:

- Worship and teaching
- Management of church buildings
- Management of church land
- Community and global engagement
- Lifestyle

Their website contains supporting resources designed to assist churches in their eco journey, visit www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk.

Wild Christian

A Rocha UK's Wild Christian scheme is a community of families and individuals exploring the connections between their Christian faith, the natural environment, and how they live. Sign up to receive regular emails of ideas and resources to promote an appreciation of nature within your family.

www.arocha.org.uk/wildchristian/
Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church

Is it all over?



Life with Covid-19 was life without... the gym, golf, and football on TV: not for me, but for my husband who goes to the gym every day and plays golf every weekend.

Steve was classed as an 'essential worker' so the alarm went off at 6.30am each weekday morning.

In the evenings and weekends though, life was very different. We enjoyed walks around the area, Tring Reservoir and along the canal to Wendover. We became used to chatting to friends we passed, whilst standing on opposite pavements, or even from the middle of a vehicle-free road. It was a pleasure to cross from Miswell Lane over Icknield Way without oncoming traffic.

With only Steve's 80+ year-old mother in Scotland to concern us, we were in the fortunate position of not having anyone to miss – or anyone to miss us. Fay was well taken care of in Fife by Social Services, and lots of phone calls from family and friends. We had stocked up on tins of food to take to her before the

border closed, but they weren't needed. Eventually, the Food Bank benefited from them.

There wasn't time to be 'fed up'. I still worked from home with my part time job, continued with YouTube Japanese language lessons, finished a best-selling novel (dream on!) and occasionally did chores in the home. It's been a treat to watch National Theatre productions online whilst lying on the sofa.

The Zoom Sunday services were a spiritual substitute for the real thing. I church-hopped around High Street Baptist Church, Homelands, Frinton with Andrew Openshaw and New Mill Baptist Church when it was possible.

The best part of Lockdown was taking long walks in perfect spring and summer weather. We've watched ducklings and cygnets from tiny hatched status, through cute waddles and glides to their teenage independence.



Lockdown! Thank goodness we didn't! We saw our friend 'Half-Beak' almost every time we walked along the canal and she seemed to be doing all right. Sensing our over-zealous intentions to 'help' her she even made a point of lapping up water from the canal. We felt sure that was her 'Back off, Townies. Leave nature alone. Look but don't touch,' message to us.

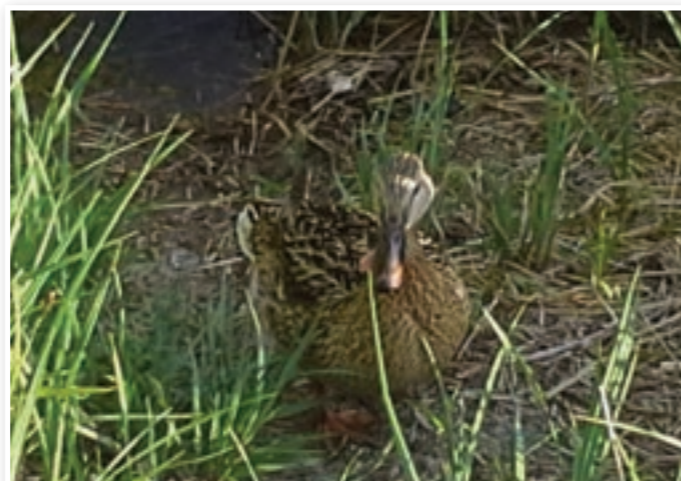
As businesses try to return to normal, we've enjoyed a few of our favourite things. On 1 August we finally returned to The Rex in Berkhamsted to see Cinema Paradiso. A complimentary glass of Prosecco awaited us on arrival and enthusiastic applause greeted the owner, James, when he appeared on stage to deliver his usual welcome. The half-empty cinema was a bleak reminder of the direct hit to the Arts throughout the pandemic. It felt good to be back.

Well done to all businesses, especially in Tring for their inventive ideas to help the community whilst trying to survive without regular custom. It was highly appreciated.

And now we wait for an echo of that famous line from the 1966 World Cup: They think it's all over... it is now!

Julie Harris, New Mill Baptist Church

At Easter we discovered a female duck who seemed to be in trouble hanging from her tongue. Should we do something we wondered? We regretted not having a carrier bag with us so we could bundle her in and then find a vet to deal with her – in



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Moths – creatures of darkness and light

I started 2020 with the intention of seeing more species of birds in a year than I had ever managed to see in a year before, i.e. more than 300. I also had it in the back of my mind to see species of moths that I hadn't seen before, but this was a secondary objective.

Obviously, by March the thought of travelling around Britain to see birds was out of the question and so seeing more moths became my top priority. Why moths I hear you say? Over 2,600 species of moths have been recorded in Britain and it is possible to see hundreds of them in your garden with the right equipment – a perfect pastime for lockdown when staying at home for most of the time was the new norm.

The right equipment is a moth trap. A typical moth trap consists of a light above a container that the moths drop into unharmed and find it difficult to get out of. The light is either a Mercury-vapour lamp, a fluorescent tube or a LED bulb. The key thing is that this light emits a specific type of Ultra-Violet light. So basically I set up the moth trap before it gets dark, with egg boxes in it for the moths to perch on, turn on the light at dusk and then turn it off in the morning and photograph the moths to identify them later. Then that day and the following night I leave the trap out with the top off it and let the moths fly out of their own accord either during the day or night as they prefer.

Moths, skippers and butterflies make up the order known as Lepidoptera that is part of the insect class. Moths have the greatest number of species within Lepidoptera – contrast the 2,600+ seen in Britain with the sixty-six species of butterfly seen. Moths come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The world's smallest moth is found in Britain and is 1.5mm (1/16th inches) long and Britain's largest resident moth, the Privet Hawk-Moth, is more than 60mm (2.5 inches) long. Also, they are not all dull and cryptically patterned, some are truly beautiful. Buff-tip is superbly camouflaged and beautiful at the same time and Elephant Hawk-



Privet Hawk-Moth

Moth is outrageously coloured and actually named because the caterpillar resembles an elephant's trunk.

While moths are predominantly nocturnal, there are hundreds of species that do fly around during the day.

It is fair to say that having a moth trap seriously increases the number of moths you see. In my case I first started recording moth sightings in 1984 with a Hummingbird Hawk-Moth on the Isles of Scilly in October. By the end of 2017 I had seen 151 moth species in Britain just by seeing what came into the house, landed on a window outside or were seen flying or perched in daylight. In 2018 a friend started running their moth trap regularly and by the end of that year, I had seen 107 new species of moths and increased to 258 in Britain. In 2019 a combination of my friend's trap and my trap each run once a week led to 121 new species and a total of 379 species.

This year I hoped to see 250 species of moth in total and have been trying to run my trap on alternate nights – weather permitting. By the end of August I had seen 259 species, including seventy-seven new ones, and the total for my garden is now at 290 with hopes of reaching 300 by the end of the year. However, numbers aside, the excitement of seeing new moths and learning how to identify them is reason enough to do this and carry on, even though lockdown has now eased a bit.

One thing I have learnt is how similar moths and people are – not in appearance obviously but in their

response to light. Obviously we respond to the Light of Christ whereas moths respond to a different sort of light – albeit one that we can't see. Sometimes I go out in the evening to see if there are many moths about before I go to bed. When I do go out, I see moths heading straight for the light and dropping into the trap. Then there are moths that fly around in ever-decreasing circles before dropping into the trap. Some moths fly towards the light and stop near to it but don't go into the trap. Others I see flying in to look but they are gone before morning having lost interest in the light and finally there are moths that I see in the garden that take no interest in the light and go about their business ignoring it completely.



Elephant Hawk-Moth

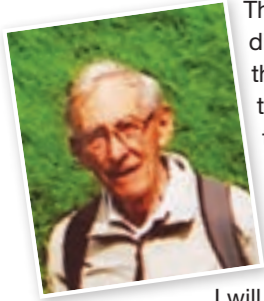
My hope is that you are one of those 'moths' that go toward the light and stay – whether it be in a straight line or a more circular route. It doesn't matter which route you follow, as long as you use the Light of Christ as your guide.

Roy Hargreaves, St Peter & St Paul



Buff-tip Moth

Leaving school, then and now



There is a vast difference between the options available to my grandchildren today, and my options as a late teenager. But there are also some similarities. Firstly,

I will explain what my options were. I had one year in the sixth form at Watford Grammar School. Why only one year? I expected to take A levels after two years, but my father had other ideas. I discovered in the summer that he had found a job for me. I had to leave at the end of term. Why had he done this?

The common expectation at that time was that once an offspring was in their late teens, he/she was expected to contribute to the family income. If he had let me finish the next year, I would then have to serve two years of National Service, and if I had better school qualifications, I might then go to university, and I would be 22 or 23 before earning any income.

It is extraordinary that the modern expectations end at the same age, but with some even worse effects. The goal today is to ensure that your children go to university, in order for it to be possible for them to get a chosen profession. Many will have no chosen profession. If they make a wrong choice, their efforts may have been a waste of time.

I had no idea after I had finished National Service what I might do. At the crunch time today, there is another awful burden to have to accept, and that is that you are in debt for thousands of pounds. You have to pay to go to University, and you start off your life owing all this money!

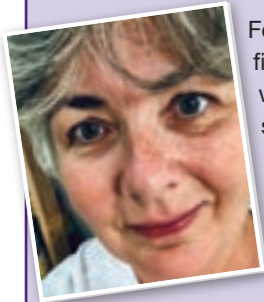
Why is this so? It is because the majority of all school children are expected to attend university. There so many to choose from to cater for that aim. There is then an enormous queue for the best career choices. When I got my first job, my O level results were quite sufficient to get any job I wanted. Thereafter, I was able to expand my knowledge in chosen

subjects, both through encouragement from the company I worked for, and my own choice by logging in to the Open University. I ended up with professional qualifications which were equivalent to degree status.

I was interested to see in the current chaos, made worse because of the inability to take the usual exams, that nine out of ten protestors were girls. This is because the career opportunities for women today are vastly more varied than they were in my day. Men still have the instinct that they must be earning money at the earliest opportunity to look after a future family. They also have another band of opportunity, to go for an apprenticeship. I also sympathise with the current life pattern for youngsters, which means that for the first few decades of your life, you have to sit behind a desk and listen to all you must do. This might start at the age of 3 and continue until you are over 20!

David Gittins
St Peter & St Paul

A new turn in the road



For the last twenty-five years I've worked for the same IT company and loved it. I met Steve there, had Daisy and Matt and enjoyed many challenging roles.

Covid-19 changed this.

In March I was working on a European compliance role, with a view to travelling around our European sites enforcing data protection compliance. Covid-19 took away this opportunity and requirement and from 1 April I was furloughed.

Having worked full time for twenty-five years, with short maternity breaks, this was a shock! My salary went down, but not significantly as the company topped up furlough and we learned to live on a reduced income. With Daisy and Matt back from school and Steve very busy at work (he specialises in software to enable home working: need I say more) my free time was very welcome. And we had a new arrival in the shape of Annie, the baby Irish Terrier,

who kept me very busy (and still does).

Fully expecting to return to work, albeit from home, in July, the opportunity of redundancy was offered. At the age of 53, with only a few more years to work, it seemed churlish not to consider a payout. It was likely to be the last opportunity to get this before retirement. On the lower furlough salary the settlement enabled me, if careful, not to think about working until late 2021 and to give me time to really consider what I wanted to do next.

So here I am, approaching a new chapter, with Matt starting sixth form and Daisy off to Uni in September and a more independent puppy, what do I do? Brush off my CV, yes, but do I do the same role again or something for the greater good (I'd love to work for a charity so this needs investigating)? Can I, at the age of 53, retrain? In my positive moments this is very exciting, and I know that I am in a very fortunate position. But I do look at the job market and wonder if I'd be selfish taking a role that someone else, who doesn't have a mortgage that is nearly paid off and a husband with a great job, could take?



Eventually I do have to earn money; in the meantime, if I can help anyone in Tring or the surrounding area on a volunteer basis, please let me know. My skills are in accountancy and commercial contract management. You can contact me on debsberryhome@gmail.com.

Debs Berry
St Peter & St Paul

A learning people in a time of change



This theme for Education Sunday last month has given me many things to consider as I started my journey into teaching twenty-five years ago.

To say that I know so much more than then sounds trite. There is the overconfidence of youth replaced now with the appreciation of how much I have learnt from my pupils.

Three spiritual lessons have struck me: God's presence is at the core of all things, though at times there is a lot of noise and distraction making it hard to recognise it. Slowly, via his grace, I am learning to be better at listening more and speaking less.

The power of 'yet'; we do not master everything instantly. Learning to learn is challenging. Learning how to teach is definitely in the category.

The power of community. We cry together, we learn together, we share and take interesting journeys together...

and we laugh in the good and bad times as we seek the best path. Prayer helps us risk that next step... and the next one, often into the unknown; especially in these challenging times. Through the ups and downs of life (and if you are with a lot of teenagers this must ring true), there are many blessings. Some may not look like they are at first glance, and some start off in tiny ways but can flourish to have wide-reaching consequences that go far beyond that starting point.

Sarah Bell, Tring Park School

Our Covid wedding

Lake Orta in Italy was where we should have been in May this year to celebrate our wedding – surrounded by pizza, prosecco and sunshine. Having been together since meeting in Morocco ten years ago, we were disappointed, but accepting, of our wedding postponement.

Over the course of April, May and June however, and what seemed like thousands of walks around Aldbury from our home in Tring Station, St John the Baptist Church became part of our daily routine – if only from the outside. Having been so central to our 'lockdown lifestyle', when weddings were given the go-ahead in late June, we didn't hesitate in calling Michelle. We were blown away by Michelle's support in arranging a wedding at such short notice, especially with all the new 'covid-secure' measures to be put into place.

Amazingly, within three weeks of calling, we were married on Saturday 18 July 2020 in a beautiful, intimate ceremony at St John the Baptist, Aldbury, with twenty members of our family and close friends. Despite guests being sat two metres apart, no singing taking place, and almost spraying hand-sanitiser over the registry book, it was so wonderful to have such a happy occasion after a difficult period, particularly as it was the first time we had seen many family and friends since March.

We couldn't have asked for a better day, and were so thankful to celebrate in the place that our lives had centred around during the pandemic – no Italian pizza or ice-cream – but we were blessed with sunshine!

Rachael Henwood



Example of Jesus

If Jesus came to Hertfordshire and made his way to Tring; Who would he meet? How would we know him? What challenge would he bring?

Would he go off to church each Sunday, meet us there and pray?

Would he go down the High Street and find somewhere nice to stay?

A few might understand him and want to go with him as he had come to seek and save and more disciples win.

Since he was here on earth two thousand years ago some have taught about him faithfully, so that all may know.

But others may have joined a church but forgot the Great Commission or have they done what Jesus did - God's plan to bring completion?

If Jesus came to Tring today, he might go to Dolphin Square to meet the homeless man and to show that he does care not only for the souls of men, but for their sufferings too;

he'd talk to alcoholics of which there's not a few; to drug addicts, the lonely and to many who are needy; he'd meet with the law-breakers and those corrupt and greedy.

No preaching, just compassion and much love to all the lost; for them he'd come to seek and save when he died on the cross.

An offer of a new beginning, sins forgiven, fresh new start for all who trusted him would have new life and a changed heart.

For all of us who sit in church each week should think again how Jesus took the great Good News and made it all so plain;

that we go out to others who never will come in, especially those who've lost their way and are sunk in sin.

We must beware we feel self-righteous like the Pharisees so proud

for they condemned who Jesus met whether outcasts or the crowd.

Of course, it's good to hear the Word of God preached and to offer prayers,

to feed our souls, learn more of God - but such good news to share

with such a sad and troubled world, but Jesus is the way, so let us try and live like him, both now and every day.

If Jesus came to church in Tring and sat in the back pew, we might approach him at the end and say, "Do I know you?"

He'd say, "My name is Jesus, so have you ever heard me mentioned in your services - my name from God's true Word?"

"Oh, yes," you'd say, "I know about your lovely life on earth and all you did here teaching people of a life of faith."

"You may know all about me and what happened long ago, but have I first place in your life, so do you really know that when I died it was for you, I took the punishment for your sin

so that you and all who put their trust in me to heaven may enter in?"

John Young, Akeman Street Baptist Church



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Wabi Sabi: Japanese wisdom for a perfectly imperfect life

This delightful, gentle and wise book is written by Beth Kempton, who first went to Japan aged 19, and in all she has twenty years' experience of the Japanese way of life.

Initially, she lived with a Japanese family just outside Kyoto. She could not speak Japanese and they did not speak English. Life did grow and change and she gained a masters in Japanese, worked in TV, in interpreting, teaching English and writing. She is a respected Japanologist.

What prompted her to write about 'Wabi Sabi? What is it? Animal, vegetable or mineral or maybe an idea or way of life? Many Japanese intuitively know it (Wabi Sabi) but will rarely talk about it and maybe find difficult to articulate.

Wabi is about finding beauty in simplicity, a spiritual richness and serenity in detaching from the material world - this is rooted in Shinto, the ancient wisdom of Japan. Sabi is more concerned with the passage of time, with the way that all things grow and decay and how ageing alters the visual nature of those things. When both these concepts are combined in Wabi Sabi it becomes really fascinating. 'The secret of Wabi Sabi lies in seeing the world not with the logical mind but through the feeling heart.'

The spirit of Wabi is appreciating and accepting that our true needs are simple and of being humble and grateful for the beauty that already exists right where we are! Sabi beauty reminds us of our own connection with the past, of the natural cycle of life and of our own mortality.

Is Wabi Sabi relevant in 2020? Maybe the lockdown has given us the time to look at our lives and the world around us and gather some sense of perspective; to reflect on what is important to us and look to what is real, and meaningful, what we really need and what we think we might need. We see that we are living in a time of prejudicial algorithms, questionable media, false news. We are still dependent on, even addicted to, our mobile phones. All our waking days we are fed messages about how we should dress, what we should wear, eat, buy, love, believe, even how to bring up our children - or we won't fit in!

Thankfully, by working at home, many of us have been able to slow our pace of

life. But even at home we still have the bright lights of our laptops, phones and TVs which overstimulate our children and us and plays havoc with our sleep. Thinking of social media, which does have positive points, it has turned many of us into 'comparison junkies'. What will they think? Will they approve? 'We interrupt precious moments in our own lives to take a picture and post it, then spend the next hour checking how much approval we have received from people we hardly know!'

Any spare time or a pause in activity, out comes the phone and down go the eyes! We look at others' life stories and assume they actually live like that. The sad thing is that we miss the opportunity to connect with those who are actually around us. We are losing something precious and essential - to give our attention to our families, friends and the natural world around us. It is in giving our attention that we gift something of ourselves to others.

Wabi Sabi suggests we take time, give our attention to: the passing beauty, of the beauty found in small, simple things - a flower, a leaf, a stone or fleeting smile. We can gain an appreciation of the natural world and

our place in it, an ephemeral beauty, a presence of perfection which will pass and never return.

There is a depth and much wise advice in this book and I have just skimmed the surface. Beth Kempton has a friendly, kindly style of writing, and often begins with a story from her time in Japan which helps to develop the theme of her chapter.

I will finish with one of her stories, abridged.

'It is a cold, winter night in Kyoto. Incense fills the air. It smells like the colour purple. Tiny lights scattered over the garden... Overhead a chenille moon is peeping through the trees... Fallen leaves skate over the surface of the pond... A week from now the branches of many of these trees will be bare. I pick up a fallen Momiji leaf, blushing burgundy and curling at the edges. It's a treasure, crinkled and papery, like the back of my grandmother's hand. A space in my heart opens up. Right now, I have everything I need. I feel a quiet contentment, tinged with melancholy in the knowledge that this fleeting moment will never return.'

This is the world of Wabi Sabi.

Tricia Apps
Corpus Christi

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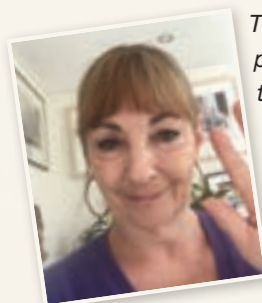
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War diary of a Jewish refugee



This is the fourth part of an article that started in the June edition of Comment supplied by Jackie Robinson who lives in

Aldbury. Her late mother, Rosi Schul, came to the UK in 1939 as the teacher accompanying a Kindertransport.

3 November 1938

No one was allowed to leave our train. We saw other stationary trains on the tracks to our left and right. One was from Berlin and one from Karlsruhe. We were able to shout to each other and have conversations. We recognised friends and even dared to get out of the carriages and walk about on the platforms. Some people fetched water and some even tried to ask for it in Polish. 'Prosche woda.' On Platform 1, I spotted people from Mannheim – Fritz Klingenholtz and Oskar Haendler. Tanne ran to and fro and fetched water for many people. He became the 'leader' of our carriage. He could speak Polish and made himself busy. His mother asked me for some water so I ran 100 meters in the rainy evening twilight to a pump. Tanne bumped into me and then accompanied me to the pump. Whilst walking back together he suddenly said, 'I'm so pleased I met you here. You are such a dear young thing and like a ray of sunshine on the journey.' I was completely taken aback.

Soon orders were given for us all to alight. The train was to be completely evacuated. We gathered up our luggage and carried it into our new homeland. No one guessed then that Zbaszyn would become our 'Open' prison for ten months.

There were crowds on the platforms – old and young, cases, parcels – everything in chaos. Everywhere people stood in groups talking agitatedly. I

remained with Horowitzes and Golds. We believed that we would be returned to Germany shortly. We heard that thousands of people had arrived during the course of the day. They were lodged in barracks, stables and station waiting-rooms. On the platform itself there were at least 2000 – standing, sitting or lying down. It was about 8.00pm and we had not slept for two nights. This would be the third. People tried to sleep in any place and any position they could find. It was gruesome to see the children lying there in the wet and cold, wrapped in coats and rugs and staring incomprehensibly into the chaos of the night. Children, children – what went on in their heads? How would these experiences imprint themselves in their psyches? It broke my heart. I sat down next to a few and told them stories. Every now and then I walked about with Ruth Gold through the huge crowds all waiting... waiting for what? No one knew anything but everyone wanted to go back to Germany. What a tragic irony! Hadn't we been repressed and persecuted enough? No – obviously not.

Somebody discovered a secret route from the platforms into the barracks and waiting rooms which had been officially closed. One could sneak into them. I heard that there were people who had been deported from Hanover. Thinking maybe Papa and Ruthie were there I set out to search for them. One glance into one of the waiting rooms shook me to the core. There must have been a thousand people in the one room. It was stiflingly hot and stinking. People slept on top of one another, little children screamed and mothers cried. People kept fainting or becoming hysterical. I searched and searched but found no one but acquaintances from Hanover. They told me that there were others from Hanover locked up in the dark stables and barracks. I struggled to push through this hell of desperation and misery. Again I met Tanne. He was

also looking for relatives.

Next morning people had to queue at the ticket office. German silver coins were exchanged for zloty and we bought tickets to Poznan and were registered. Registration was a typical feature of our time in Zbaszyn. Now everyone looked out for themselves. Even the Golds and Tanne just bought their own tickets and no one got me one. So there I was alone on the platform at 6.00am watching the first train pull out of the station with Golds and Horowitzes on board.

I had to wait for my people from Hanover. The next train to Poznan wasn't due to leave until 3.00pm so I had to wait and walk around the station. Not everyone had chosen to leave on the first train and those remaining were waiting for their return to Germany feeling that Zbaszyn was closer to Germany than Poznan.

29 October 1938

How strong one has to be, just to bear it all!

At last the stable doors were unlocked, and amongst the huge crowd, I saw Papa and Grandma emerge, along with all the Schul uncles and cousins. Outside the stables a soup kitchen was opened and hundreds milled around it. That night we spent locked back in the filthy, stinking stables, lying on damp straw, everyone squashed together like animals, not human beings... so much sadness and wailing... it was difficult to breathe.

So, I'm in a refugee camp, with about 6-8000 Jews... so much horror... hunger, desperation and suffering, sickness and death... it's hard to describe.

1 November 1938

Now I'm writing this in our small room, but it's warm, with just two beds and a little table for Oma, Papa and me. Washing facilities are communal, in a dingy corridor, where there is also only

one toilet for all the other people living in the house. We have the use of a tiny kitchen, let to us by a poor postman and his wife – they have a small baby, and they all sleep on the kitchen floor... they are grateful for the extra zloty. I sleep in the middle of the two beds on the wooden frame, but at least it's warm, and a bed of sorts! So, the first night was spent in a cell, the second on the train, the third on the platform in Zbaszyn, the fourth in a stable, and now, at last, a bed... I must sleep.

5 November 1938

After the first night in our room, whilst walking in the chaos around me, and seeing the children, all filthy and bewildered, an idea came to me to do something for them. At the corner, I saw a poster saying 'Punkt Sanitany', like a Red Cross Centre, where the Polish Ort and Centos had bought boxes and boxes of clothes, utilities, and other useful things for the children, who were milling around me. I asked for bowls of water, and with the help of some of the mothers, I washed them, and found suitable clothes for them. I managed to joke and laugh with them, and later took them for a walk to a lovely field, where we played together, and I told my usual stories to an ever-growing crowd. It made me feel so good to see them happy and interested, and after a few days, spending our time like this, it came to the attention of the Polish organisations, especially two members at the top of the newly formed Committee, Schneider from Krakau and Blechstein. They had already organised a children's home in the local Stadium, and needed teachers and other volunteers. They asked me to join the Polish doctors, nurses, and other personnel, who spoke Polish and Yiddish only, because my Yiddish would come in handy to liaise between the Polish helpers and the children. I was invited to a farewell party for some of those who were leaving, and they

couldn't have been more kind and welcoming to me – the future seemed full of promise, when we would one day be free to enter Poland properly.

11 November 1938

Lovely work in the Stadium... good relationships with the Polish doctors, nurses, and other personnel. My work with the children has been successful and is appreciated, and they gave a lovely performance in the barracks... an hour-long show, singing, dancing and playing percussion... a la Esslingen! Afterwards the Committee asked for it to be repeated in a big hotel hall! This was the result of my work with the children on a daily basis, which we all really enjoyed, and kept them busy and happy. My singing, guitar and piano playing came in very handy... well, what else have I done all my life?!

14 November 1938

All hell was let loose throughout Germany... Kristalnacht etc. etc. and the beautiful school also suffered the inevitable fate... everything was burned and destroyed. I heard that the children dispersed, running anywhere they could into the countryside... the teachers were beaten and manhandled. Rothschild

had to leave immediately, although he was not taken to the concentration camp, like the rest of the adults... it was Pogrom, as of old... But, what a twist of fate for us... being in Zbaszyn, we 6000 refugees escaped all that suffering, and the children who were so deprived during our first days here and safe and warm and 'happy' – how is it possible that we can still sing and dance, and put on entertainment shows?... but, yes, life goes on here...

All my family have managed to escape to Belgium... 'Glueck im Unglueck' (how can I translate this)? 'Fortune amidst misfortune' or perhaps, 'every cloud has a silver lining'... and yet, what will happen to us? Nobody knows... I must say that at the moment, I love what I'm doing, even with no social life outside of work... I fall straight into my space in the middle of the two beds at night, where the worst thing is only the snoring from Grandma and Papa! Through my work I have met many people, not least of all is Dr Broches, a brilliant violinist from Hamburg. He lives in one of the little rooms next to the Gymnasium, and whenever I have time, I can listen to some of my favourite music.



Koalas and coastal adventures

We almost can't believe that it has now been over six months since we moved Down Under and what a crazy six months it has been! So in late July, we thought it was finally time for a well-deserved winter holiday. The Covid-19 situation in Victoria was just taking a turn for the worse and internal borders starting to close again, but fortunately the situation here in New South Wales remained fairly stable. The fact that we couldn't go anywhere beyond our state didn't bother us too much as we hadn't really seen much of our area beyond Sydney and parts of the Blue Mountains, so we decided on a little trip up the coast. Well, we say 'little'... we are talking about a round trip of more than 600 miles, but by Australian standards it felt like nothing.

We are still getting our head around the scale of the country: NSW alone is over six times as large as England. We went for a week and decided to stop in three different locations: Nelson Bay on the Port Stephens peninsula, Port Macquarie – one of the oldest settlements on that stretch of coast – and Newcastle, the second biggest city in NSW. It felt good, after the Covid-19 restrictions, to be getting out and about and helping local businesses, many of which have had a devastating year: devastating bushfires followed by global pandemic. Travelling to Port Stephens

via the inland route between Yengo and Wollemi National Parks, we saw clear signs of the bushfire damage on blackened trees, but with hopeful signs, as those same trees had sprung back to life with new growth.

Our first stop, Nelson Bay, is a lovely seaside resort, and it was great to enjoy the ocean a bit more: living slightly inland in the lower Blue Mountains, we have seen surprisingly little of it since we got here. The definite highlight was a whale-watching cruise spotting dolphins and humpback whales on what locals call the Humpback Highway along Australia's eastern coast. Apparently, more than 30,000 whales migrate up and down this stretch of coast during our winter months! A climb up to Tomaree Head on the tip of the peninsula gave grandiose views of the bay and the ocean beyond (we were

reminded of Pembrokeshire!), while a little drive to the southern side allowed us to explore the largest sand dunes in the Southern hemisphere – complete with camel treks.

After two days, we headed further north to Port Macquarie, where the main attraction was a visit to the Koala Hospital, one of our new favourite charities. This became quite famous during the recent bushfires, which hit this region especially hard. Some *Comment* readers might remember the reports from the hospital that made news in the UK. It was lovely to see the resident koalas and read the stories of all the ones that were saved and nurtured back to health at the hospital.

The usual buffet breakfast room at the hotel we stayed in was closed due to the current restrictions. Instead the hotel

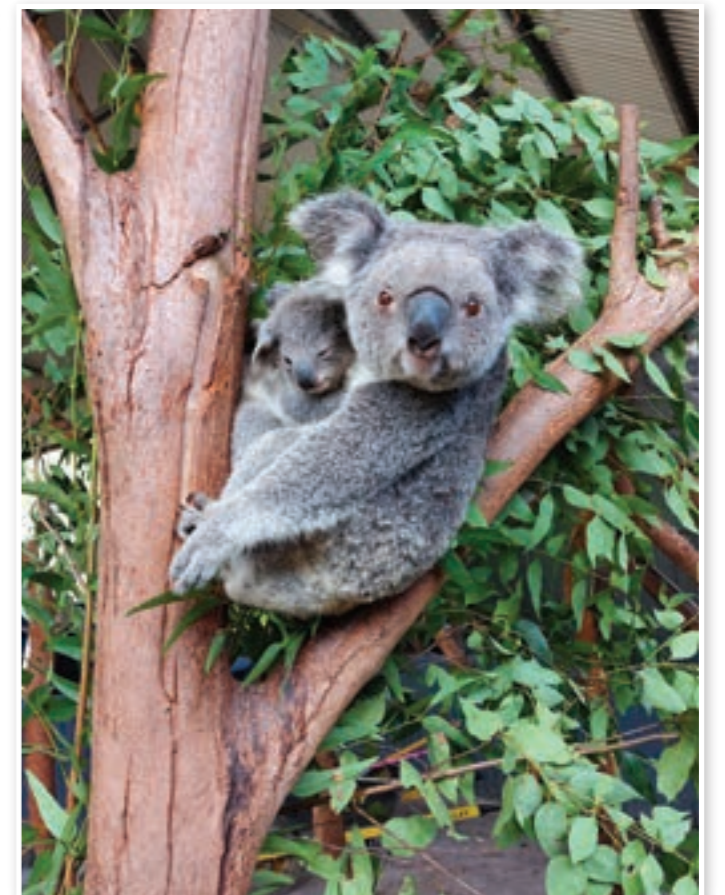
offered a room service breakfast, which enabled us to enjoy our morning coffee while sitting on the balcony and gazing out to sea. We got used to sharing our breakfast with a greedy rainbow lorikeet. On the second day in Port Macquarie, we headed further inland, on a 'chauffeur'-driven tour through the wine country, sampling some of the local produce. Before heading on to Newcastle, we still had a special birthday treat for Sylvie in store as we stopped at Billabong Zoo and Koala Park the following day. Here, we had a special Koala Encounter booked, which allowed us to get up close with those lovely creatures and even feed one of them – a blind but surprisingly feisty bull koala called Leo – with special supplementary food. We were lucky enough that they also had four little joeys, adding to the already high 'cuteness factor'. As an extra bonus, there were wallabies to feed, too, so we could fully embrace the Aussie animal experience.

Our final stop was Newcastle, about half-way between Port Macquarie and Sydney. Like its UK namesake, it's famous for coal, which here in NSW is still very much a bustling industry. When we visited Sydney last year to meet our new employers, we read an article about the recent redevelopment of the

Newcastle harbour area, turning the once industrial area into a stylish new seafront. The city reminded us of places like Liverpool and Hull, which have also reinvented themselves after a period of industrial decline.

International travel seems to be off the agenda for us for some time yet, as closed borders are predicted to remain the default well into the new year. So outside work time, we are looking forward to exploring a bit more of NSW in the coming months.

John Lippitt and Sylvie Magerstaedt formerly St Peter & St Paul



Known unknowns about Coronavirus



Viruses are astonishingly successful at reproducing in organisms, ranging from bacteria to plants to mammals to ocean plankton.

In the ocean ecosystem they prevent phytoplankton multiplying uncontrollably. In medicine, they have been used to kill bacteria, transport curative genetic sequences into cystic fibrosis sufferers, and are useful tools in molecular science. But in nature in general, their effects are generally undesirable, unpleasant or fatal.

Identifying viruses associated with specific human disease relies on techniques which have only been available since the early 1970s. Advances in microscopic imaging, detecting traces of viral material by the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), and genetic sequencing are some of the current tools used in detecting and identifying them.

Differentiating diseases caused by viruses from those caused by other pathogens is important, because viral illnesses are generally not specifically treatable. Herpes Simplex ('cold sores') is the commonest exception: it usually responds to acyclovir.

In the current pandemic a Coronavirus was speedily identified and genetically sequenced by Chinese scientists as the agent causing the characteristic symptoms. Studies of SARS and MERS had prepared the ground. The coupling of Covid-19 genetics with mathematical network analysis revealed much needed information about the initial spread of three variants. Nevertheless, there are caveats about the precise species jump from animals to humans, and the location of the initial outbreaks.

Viruses all invade tissues and multiply by hijacking the host's molecular machinery. The classification devised by David Baltimore in 1971 recognises seven types, and a Google search will reveal their elegant chemistry.

The broad division is between DNA and RNA viruses, the 'NA' being the repository of their genetic code, the basis of their continuing existence. Smallpox (Variola) is a DNA virus, and has been eliminated in humans. Covid-19 is an RNA virus, a class tending to be less genetically stable than DNA viruses,

making nailing down an effective vaccine difficult, the common cold being an exemplar.

It may come as a surprise, but one of the crucial unknowns is the amount of virus needed to produce a full-blown infection in a newly exposed person. The precautionary principle has had to be that any dose is potentially hazardous to health, i.e. ignoring possible variations in susceptibility.

Because Covid-19 originates from the nose, mouth and lungs (and possibly other secretions) of an infected, maybe asymptomatic person, exhaled moist air and contaminated fingers or other intimate objects may pass-on the disease. The precise practical mechanics of aerosol transfer are incompletely understood, but fortunately the emergency approach of social distancing and lockdown have been remarkably effective in mitigating spread within the UK. The relaxation of these measures has generated acres of media coverage about distancing, mostly unhelpful medically, but relevant socially and economically. There are still 'known unknowns' as Donald Rumsfeld might say, which allow for endless though unhelpful speculation.

Epidemics require co-ordinated national responses (with international coordination if pandemic). The UK government's initial responses were rational, but subsequent events have been confusing. At the outset, modelling of how fast the virus might spread was badly flawed, and legitimately differing views among the expert advisors could not have helped policymaking. Unfortunately, the popular media have developed recurring themes and criticisms, not always justified, and backed by no apparent curiosity about intrinsic uncertainties. For example, the totemic 'R' number is dependent on several assumptions and it becomes unreliable if the number of cases is small. A dose of salt taken with press reports might help.

Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to controlling the disease and carrying on with normal life. Key to any focused, as opposed to blunderbuss approach, is the rapid early identification of cases, and tracing those with whom they have been in contact, thereby isolating each potential cluster of cases for long enough to interrupt the chain of transmission – not rocket science, but difficult to achieve.

Various NHS/public health reforms of the last decade did not make adequate provision for infectious disease control, leading to a feeble response. There is now a consensus that locally resourced initiatives work far better than central call-centres. Targeted testing for the presence of the virus in exposed individuals can cut short the current fourteen-day precautionary period of self-isolation, but this enhanced testing has had a disappointingly patchy inadequate progress from myriad causes.

Testing an entire population regularly with a process that is 100% accurate is impossible. The best that can be achieved is inferring what is happening from the various small-scale sources of data, either the prevalence of virus particles from swabs or the detection of persisting antibodies from previous recent infection. Policy can be improved if the data are sufficiently focused and reliable. In a local outbreak, for example, this can restrict the geographic scope of lockdowns.

Control measures need compliance from large swathes of the population. Control also requires confidence in national decisions. Misleading assertions were made in April about numbers of UK tests done, and more recently claims about the track, test and trace system were overblown. Mis-steps and changes of tactics in response to changing events are inevitable but need to be minimised. Access to reliable information is the best hope for citizens. Assertions by President Trump are a prime example of untrustworthy information, so 5-hydroxychloroquine is known to be useless in Covid-19, and his statistics on the benefits of convalescent plasma were considerably adrift. Therapy for hospitalised patients has improved by experience, and by the discovery of disease-modifying drugs, most notably dexamethasone that is ubiquitous and encouragingly cheap and probably Remdesivir which is expensive.

Academia and the pharmaceutical companies stand a good chance of halting the spread of Covid-19 by enabling immunisation of citizens with one of several novel vaccines. Successful immunisation induces immunity that should protect individuals against the worst (or any) effects of the disease. Provided rigorously controlled trials of the treatment have been completed and analysed, the risk to individuals of

unwanted effects is very small.

For older people the case for being vaccinated is extremely strong. For younger people, the choice for them as individuals is nuanced, since symptoms have tended to be mild. Increasing the overall immunity of the population by vaccinating nearly everybody should be worthwhile. Smallpox and now polio have not vanished by magic, but by the mix of public health and vaccination measures being proposed right now with Covid-19.

In some countries, suspicion about vaccination (immunisation) is more prevalent than it is in the UK. The shocking behaviour of Andrew Wakefield over MMR started a process in western countries that continues to reverberate. In Nigeria false rumours delayed polio eradication, and in Pakistan and Afghanistan, false beliefs are currently the reason why polio remains a scourge. Conspiracy theories are a particular form of dystopia which quickly gain currency. The antidote is fostering trust, which as Baroness Onora O'Neill said in her Reith lectures, is built on experience – which takes time.

To round this off: it has been impossible to cover all aspects of virology and disease control so I apologise for omissions or errors and for any sections that might seem to over-state the case. I hope you are feeling more informed by my culling the medical and scientific literature for information. The medical side of the epidemic may well be the dimension most amenable to analysis and action, whereas the social and financial changes are much more nebulous.

Michael Sherratt, Corpus Christi

Michael Sherratt studied Medicine at Oxford University including an extra year in Neuroendocrinology research before attending Westminster Medical School and qualifying in 1970. Laboratory posts in pathology (Chemical Pathology, Microbiology and Haematology) followed before an entirely clinical period in London in various branches of General Medicine, including Neurology. Michael then specialised at the National Hospital Queen Square in Clinical Neurophysiology, and spent three years at the Institute of Neurology in basic research before heading Neurophysiology Departments in London teaching hospitals and latterly Luton & Dunstable Hospital. Clinical Neurophysiology specialists deal with patients of every age and a large range of conditions so have a widely ranging knowledge, including infectious diseases.

Memories of being a curate



In 1963 Jenny and I moved to work at the University Church, Great St Mary's, in Cambridge.

We still had a small flat with one bedroom, but the view over one of the college playing fields was rather different from the one in our Clapham flat, which was at the back of another tenement block where they had outside toilets. My sermon thoughts were often being interrupted by the flushing toilet outside!

There was a curate's office in the church, shared by my colleague and myself. It was a ten minute walk from the flat and each day I walked along the Cam river and through King's College with its world-famous chapel. The paths were lined with daffodils in spring but often I did not appreciate it as I was 'off to work'!

As at Clapham we began the day with Morning and Evening Prayer and the Eucharist, and usually there were a few members of the congregation and visitors with us.

The vicar was a remarkable man called Hugh Montefiore, a converted Jew, who later became Bishop of Kingston and then Birmingham. He was immensely clever and had been Dean of Caius College in the University. He had a mind like a laser and everything had to be done 'just so'. We met for a weekly staff meeting in his office in the church. We were expected to show any sermon we were going to preach to Hugh beforehand and he often made changes(!). At the staff meeting we discussed and criticised each other's sermons, including the vicar's! Hugh was a brilliant preacher and teacher and later was in demand all over the world as a lecturer and preacher. It has to be said he was as good at receiving criticism as he was at doling it out.

Hugh was the most dynamic person I have ever worked for and had a constant stream of new ideas, most of which were great but occasionally needed to be quickly dropped! Because of his intellect he was not always good at recognising and greeting people in the street. I remember telling him how

upset a lady in the congregation had been when he ignored her in the road. Immediately he rushed to her house and apologised and had tea in her kitchen with her. He could do no wrong in her eyes after that!

My main job was to visit the congregation, who came from all over Cambridge and were a very mixed bag, from dons to college porters and business people and young people from the town. There were regular Confirmation classes and Baptism preparation classes. I started a group there for graduate students, who could often be lonely in Cambridge when everything was geared to the undergraduates. We called it the Backbenchers and had about twenty to twenty-five intelligent young people who came to study the Bible, take part in discussion and try to work out a Christian position on current issues. As you can imagine with a crowd like, that discussion was fast and furious!

When I was at Clapham I had begun what we called Beat Services for the teenagers and I wanted to do something similar in Cambridge. In his autobiography ('Oh, God, what next?') to my surprise, Hugh Montefiore wrote this: 'One of the curates, Ian Ogilvie, was keen on Youth Services and we instituted these once a quarter for young people in the town during the vacations. Again we would get over a thousand for these services, which involved a great deal of work, arranging and rehearsing rock groups etc but was well worth it. All sorts of young people turned up to these services and we had to ask them to put out their cigarettes and young people came from other churches who did not have this kind of service.'

We felt we were meeting a need. What Hugh did not say was him finding four youngsters having a cigarette in the church loos and having to be calmed down by me. In later services he never worried!

Ian Ogilvie, Tring Team

Past and present



Reading Annette's article in a previous edition of *Comment* on her walk around her local parish churches, and in particular the 'redundant' church of St

Mary's in Pitstone, I was reminded of the time I accompanied Andrew Minter on the annual Bike and Hike fundraiser.

Andrew was a member of St Cross in Wilstone for over forty years and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Beds and Herts Historic Churches event. For many years he cycled around the local area in support of this charity and was very disappointed when he was no longer fit enough to do so. But with a lot of encouragement from friends at the church he was persuaded to undertake one last ride – this time by car – and I went with him.

I assumed we would be going in his Vauxhall Astra, old but comfortable, but no – Andrew arrived behind the wheel of his pride and joy, a veteran open-top Fiat Spider, renowned for its unreliability. Many times, Andrew took this car to France, where he visited his uncle's WW1 grave, and many times the French equivalent of the RAC had to rescue him when the Fiat broke down. However, on this occasion the car behaved and we spent a chilly windblown day visiting churches, initially in Tring but then moving over the county (and diocesan) border into Buckinghamshire, and it is these churches that I remember so clearly.

When Andrew and Mary were looking to leave their home area of Coventry and move to a more rural location, their first choice was Bucks and they had spent many hours driving around the villages in the Winslow/Buckingham area looking for a suitable property. Although eventually settling in Wilstone, they came to know the Bucks villages very well and it was to these places that Andrew headed for Bike and Hike. I cannot recall the names of all the different villages we visited

but I can recall the size of the churches, much larger than the buildings I was familiar with in Wilstone, Long Marston, Puttenham, Buckland, Marsworth and Pitstone.

One in particular has always remained in my memory; it seemed to me to be almost as large as St Peter & St Paul in Tring but the Electoral Roll had only seven names on it. How on earth, I wondered, did they manage to maintain it and how many people attended the services? The church was open, with help-yourself refreshments, and leaflets detailing the history of the building through the centuries. The interior was dark, partly due to the stained glass and the dark wood of the pews, but also because the lighting was old and sparse and could cast little luminescence in such a big space. However, the church was part of a team and had a service once a month, in common with many of the churches in that area, and it was heartening to know that these buildings were still places of worship for local parishioners.

We toured Bucks for several hours. I thought the areas around Tring were fairly rural but had no idea that the neighbouring county was much more so, with vistas of glorious countryside mainly populated by farms, and distant villages pinpointed by the huge towers on their churches. The sightseeing alone made up for the increasingly uncomfortable journey and the pub lunch was excellent. Ever mindful of refreshment, Andrew headed homewards about 4.00pm, finishing at Puttenham for a late afternoon tea.

More than anything else, the day had highlighted for me the need for the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Fund, and all the other organisations that exist to support church buildings. A close friend, who sadly died in June, was a member of St Mary's in Pitstone and her funeral service was held in the church grounds. Jean was buried in the churchyard there, alongside many Pitstone residents whose families still live in the village. As Annette said, the views are fantastic, and it is a very lovely

Christmas 2020

Are you dreaming of a white Christmas – or do you have plans for celebrating this year? What will be missing in your life if the worst happens over the next few months and plans have to be cancelled? Maybe you have memories of the best or strangest Christmas ever that you could share with readers of *Comment*? Please send them to me by the end of October for inclusion in the December edition of *Comment*.

The Editor

peaceful location. Interestingly, the exterior of the church is maintained by the Churches Conservation Trust and the interior by the Friends of St Mary's, but the church grounds are still an active part of the parish and the responsibility of St Mary's in Ivinghoe. The church remains fully consecrated and villagers celebrate weddings and christenings there, as well as occasional services throughout the year. At the end of May the Friends stage an annual Arts Festival when the church is open to display paintings, flowers, crafts etc, and musical entertainment and teas are available for visitors. On summer Sunday afternoons the building is open again, with local volunteers serving tea and cakes to those who call in to enjoy an old but lovingly maintained place of worship.

I have long thought that this arrangement at Pitstone is a fine example of how to sustain a viable church when there is no longer sufficient demand for weekly services but a strong desire by the community to retain an active church presence in the village. Churches are so much more than places of worship, old or new they are repositories of family and national history, and cherished places within their communities. I sincerely hope that the churches I visited with Andrew are all thriving, but if not, that they too have found a solution akin to that at St Mary's in Pitstone.

Alison Cockerill, St Cross, Wilstone



Join our gardening team!



Have you noticed how tidy the St Peter & St Paul Church lawns have looked this summer? I would like to thank John Luddington for his many years of faithful care and maintenance of the lawns, paths and hedges around the church. He has spent more than his fair share of time, usually working on his own, in tending the grounds. He had a small team who would work on a weekly rota to cut whichever area of the grounds looked most overgrown, taking special care to have the two front lawns

neat if there was a wedding that week. As a result of the Covid-19 lockdown, John had to stop his work; indeed all the gardeners had to cease, due to their ages being over 70. It was then that Ben Cartwright, his family, Elaine Winter and Peter Child became a team to cut the lawns weekly and keep the grounds looking welcoming. Many thanks to them for their Wednesday marathons.

Since the rules around volunteers have been relaxed a little recently, those aged over 70 may now volunteer for a task not involving face-to-face contact. Hence Colin Kruger, another long-term mowing volunteer, and I were asked if we would be happy to return to the

task. We said yes, and Ben also said that he would continue, despite waiting for knee surgery!

So, the reformed little team will try to keep the areas as neat and tidy as John did. I believe that the three of us can handle the remainder of the year. However, more bodies to share the jobs would be welcome. Would you like to join us next year? You would not be needed every week, as the rota system has returned. Personally, I have found it very encouraging when members of the public, passing by, stop to say how nice the area is and thank you for your efforts.

**Barry Anscombe
St Peter & St Paul**

Charles Spurgeon's visits to Tring



After the last article in *Comment* on Spurgeon (see the September 2020 edition), I looked a little further into the history of his visits to Tring. I found the following story retold by the Baptist church historian J C Carlile.

Spurgeon visited a Baptist Chapel in Tring where William Skelton was the Pastor. He did this at the prompting of 'Father Olney', Spurgeon's joking name for the Pastor of New Street Chapel in Southwark, the forerunner of the Metropolitan Chapel near the Elephant and Castle.

Olney was born in Tring.

The fact that Skelton was the Pastor places the visit at the now-closed Ebenezer Baptist Chapel in Chapel Street. The building was very crowded: it held about 300 people. Pastor Skelton

was present and Spurgeon noticed how shiny and worn his suit was. At the close of the service Spurgeon astonished the congregation by saying: 'Now dear friends, I have preached to you as well as I could, I don't want anything for myself, but I note that the minister might not object to a new suit of clothes. Father Olney down there will give half a sovereign. I will give the same and you will give the rest.'

More than one suit was provided.

Spurgeon also preached at New Mill Baptist Church on a number of occasions. He even advised them on their choice of Pastor. 'In 1883, on the recommendation of the renowned Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who preached on several occasions at New Mill, then H F Gower was inducted as Pastor, and during his ministry, restrictions as to closed Communion were removed.'

The High Church Anglican church historian (and Rugby International at

Hooker) Owen Chadwick makes an interesting comparison between John Keble, the Anglican priest and poet, and Spurgeon. You would expect him to prefer Keble but his judgement was not that simple.

'Keble thought jest in the pulpit worse than unfitting and of set purpose preached dull sermons. Keble was quiet, restrained, buttoned, high-collared, prayerful; Spurgeon quick and abounding with gusto or panache, overflowing with illustration wise or gay or piercing. Keble wanted to make holy, Spurgeon to make Christian. Keble was English religion of the past, shepherd in ordered peaceable squire-ruled village of farm labourers; Spurgeon was English religion of the future, preacher to a waste of London, more brash, aggressive, public, biting, and worldly because haunted by multitudes of souls athirst.'

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team

Schools are back



Before the summer holidays, the staff and teachers of our schools worked incredibly hard keeping schools open for key workers, providing lessons on-line for their students,

and keeping up-to-date with all of the changing regulations. I have never seen our head teachers look more stressed. It was no easy task.

Above all, the teachers and staff care about the students. It must have been incredibly hard for the staff to see the mess that was made of A Level results and the concern they will have had about GCSEs too. The mess didn't

inspire them about the plans in place to get all students back in school in September, but locally we know that they have all worked hard to make it happen.

The schools are a huge part of our community. The staff, teachers and volunteers at all the schools deserve recognition for all that they do.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

Parish registers

Funerals

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

**Sian Barton 82
Barry Wood 96**

**Peter Weedon 78
Kay Delph 78**

**James Parton 84
Alan Highfield 77**

Steve Newland 67

Make Tring a bee town!

We are inviting residents of Tring to get involved in making Tring a 'bee town'.

Climate change will affect the poor most severely throughout the world. Climate justice is the belief that by working together we can create a better future for present and future generations. 'Make Tring a bee town' is a new initiative from Tring's Justice & Peace Group to protect and increase the amount and quality of pollinator habitat in Tring and the surrounding area.

UK insect populations have suffered badly over the last fifty or so years, due to changes in land use as a result of modern farming methods, urban spread and new transport links. Reductions in pollen and nectar sources have led to a serious decline in the wildlife depending on wildflower-rich habitat. It has been predicted that 40-70% of species could go extinct if action is not taken (www.buglife.org.uk).



'Buglife', a charity set up to protect invertebrates in the UK, has drawn up a network of pathways across the country to help stop the decline of bees and other insects in the UK. These B-Lines will create wildflower-rich stepping stones to allow pollinators to move through the landscape. Tring is in a B-Line! You can see a map of these insect corridors and read more on the Buglife website: www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines.

We are proposing to work together in Tring to create more and better wildflower areas for bees and pollinators. We think that if individuals, the local authorities, schools, churches and businesses all play a part, we can achieve this together. You may well be doing a lot for wildlife already, in which case, great! But could you do one or two extra things to help? These can be small actions, such as stopping using herbicides on the lawn, or more ambitious changes such as bee-friendly planting.

What can I do?

- Stop using weedkiller and pesticides
- Leave at least part of the lawn uncut between February and September
- Set the lawnmower to its highest setting and remove the cuttings
- Plant native wildflowers in the lawn (using plugs or seeds)
- Create a wild patch and sow native, organic wildflower seeds
- Plant a bee-friendly climber, shrub or tree
- Set up a 'nectar bar' – a range of different-shaped flowers in a group of pots or in window boxes
- Plant a flowerbed to provide pollen and nectar for most of the year
- Put up one or two bee houses

We hope as many as possible will be involved in this initiative; if you would like to know more or get involved please contact the Justice & Peace Group. We also invite you to share what you are doing so we can build up evidence to

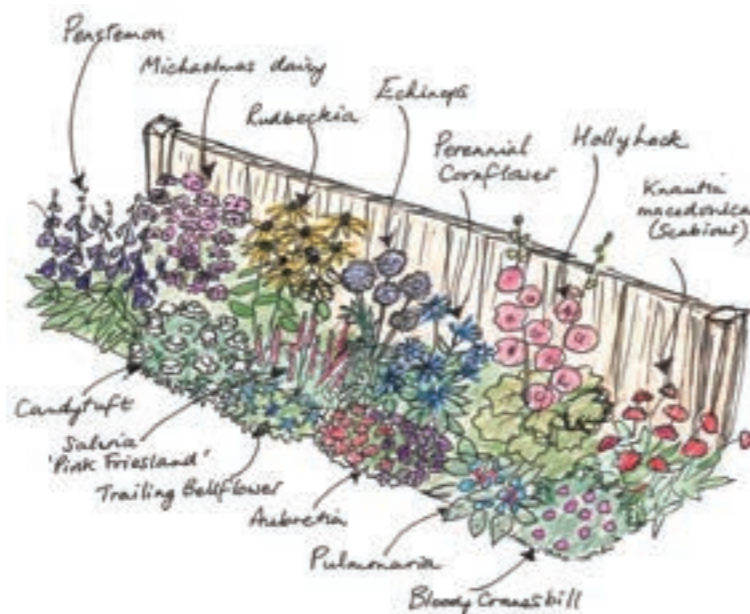


have Tring and the surrounding area recognised as a bee town.

Email Justice & Peace Group secretary Michael at michaeldemidecki@gmail.com, or share your activity on Facebook @justiceandpeacetring.org or Instagram #maketringabeetown #actionforinsects



Plant your own nectar flowerbed



- This plan is for a bed 3m x 1.5m
- To fill a larger plot, plant up in groups of 3 or 5
- Single plants will take longer to fill the space
- For a more 'instant' effect, plant 3 of each plant
- Different varieties may be different colours or sizes - check before you buy
- Single flowers are more attractive to pollinators than double ones

Good sources of information:

- www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines
- www.bumblebeeconservation.org/gardeningadvice/
- www.wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects
- www.naturehood.uk/why-naturehood/early-bumblebee
- www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-grow-wild-patch
- www.edenproject.com/learn/for-everyone/how-to-create-a-wildflower-meadow-in-your-garden



Virtual trip to Peru



In these days of lockdown I've been thinking back over some of the wonderful holidays I've been lucky enough to have, one of the most spectacular

being a visit to South

America. It's an acknowledged fact that no one's interested in someone else's holiday, but in the hope that this might prove to be the exception to the rule and add a little colour to lockdown life, here is a very personal account of the trip.

Peru was the first country on our itinerary and we flew via Miami to Lima, where we were to spend a couple of days. We were told that though it is 'hazy' during seven months of the year, it never rains in Lima and there are no shops selling raincoats or umbrellas. Anyone seen with one is taken as a tourist and a target for pickpockets. However, during our stay it did quite a good imitation!

On a tour of the city we were given a very interesting history of it. Pizarro founded Lima and there are a lot of statues and memorials of him, but none anywhere else in Peru! What are supposedly his remains are in a glass coffin in the cathedral. We visited a monastery and the archaeological museum, where there was fabric and pottery on display and the Maid of the Andes, Juanita, who had recently been found perfectly preserved in a block of ice. She was a human sacrifice and scientists were working on her DNA to discover the origin of the people before the Spanish invasion.

We were lucky enough to see a black street-vendor, now very rare, walking along carrying his sweetmeats on his head. They used to walk along the streets at the same time every day, so people knew what time it was.

Demonstration of blow-pipe

On our third day we flew over the Andes to Iquitos, which is only accessible by air or water, where we embarked on a boat for a trip along the Amazon. It was much wider than I'd imagined! We spent the night in a chalet listening to jungle noises all around us – trees rustling, cheep, squawks and hums! The next morning we walked through the jungle to a native village where we were given a demonstration of a blow-pipe, which

is used for hunting monkeys, birds and rodents. We were told there are sixty-seven tribes living along the Amazon and some of them are dangerous.

We sailed back to Iquitos to our hotel for the night, which was disturbed by loud demonstrations with drums against the President, the Japanese Fujimori, and in the morning we had to get up at 3.15am in time to catch the plane to Cusco, the capital of the Inca empire. There is a very narrow window of time when you can fly there due to the strong winds, so dawn was breaking as we flew over the Andes, staining the snow bright pink. We were warned to move very slowly when we left the plane as we were 11,000 feet above sea level, and advised to rest in our hotel rooms for a while. We were also warned to be careful opening tubes such as toothpaste as the contents were liable to stream out as soon as you took the top off! Some Indians (as we then called them) came on to the coach and sold us bottles of water and brightly coloured sun-hats.

Cusco

In the hotel foyer there was a constant supply of coca tea (maté de coca) which is a precaution against sorche or altitude sickness, and we were advised to help ourselves to a small cup every time we passed through the foyer. It must have worked, for I never got it!

After a couple of hours' sleep (from 10.00am to 12 noon!) we had lunch (grilled guinea pig!) and set off on a city tour, visiting the Sun Temple which has a lot of original Inca stonework. There were shrines around the courtyard dedicated to the sun, moon and stars.

The Incas thought gold was the sweat of the sun and silver the tears of the moon. Afterwards we drove around the surrounding area, stopping to feed llamas on the way.

The next day we again started very early – 4.30am – to catch the train to Machu Picchu. There was frost on the ground and the attendants wore overcoats and gloves, as did the Peruvian

passengers. As we approached Machu Picchu the mountains became more and more wooded and there were a lot of prehistoric plants such as horsetail and giant tree ferns. Apart from the Inca Trail, the only way to reach Machu Picchu is by train.

Machu Picchu

After leaving the train we had a hair-raising twenty-five minute drive as the bus snaked its way up precipitous slopes with a sheer drop on either side. We left our bags at the hotel and set off to explore Machu Picchu, which was totally amazing. When Hiram Bingham discovered the site in 1911 it was almost completely covered in vegetation except for the round tower. It was later discovered that the tower was positioned so as to give accurate dating of the winter solstice on 21 June and they reckon the Incas could judge the seasons and plant their crops accordingly.

After an early lunch the next day, we caught the train back. It was dark by the time we reached Cusco and returned to our hotel. There was a notice by the lift reading, 'Do not use escalator in event of earthquake' which wasn't very reassuring!

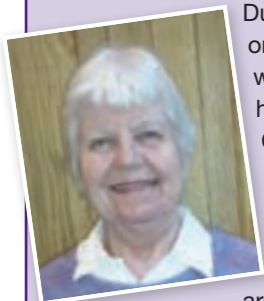
The following day we caught the train to Juliaca, a ten-hour journey, and after that we had a fifty-minute bus ride to Puno! We were exhausted by the time we reached our hotel, but still had to be up again at 5.30am.

Just before going down for breakfast I pulled back my curtains and had my first view of Lake Titicaca which, since it was the last place we visited in Peru, I'll describe in the next instalment!

**Anthea Fraser
St Peter & St Paul**



Thinking about Coventry



During the past year, one or two people writing in *Comment* have mentioned Coventry Cathedral. I thought I might add my experiences around the time of

the consecration of the building which has meant so much to me and been a basis of reflection in subsequent years.

I went to school in Warwick. Our headmistress was friends with Cuthbert Bardsley, the then bishop of Coventry. He sometimes came into school to talk to us in assembly. We were kept up-to-date in school and through the local and diocesan press about the decisions and developments of the new cathedral.

The schools in the area saved up to buy one of the amazing vertical windows which greet you in a blaze of colour as you return to your seat after going to the altar for communion. I still have the commemorative bookmark we were all presented with, which marks the place of my daily readings in my copy of The New English Bible.

Everything about the building was exciting, the gracefully engineered narrow columns supporting a vast roof, the beautifully engraved enormous west window enabling you to see 'through a glass darkly' the glories inside. These include the Sutherland tapestry of Christ in glory, a life-size man between his feet.

So much of the building reflects its era. Within touching distance of the second World War which brought so much destruction to the old cathedral and to Coventry itself, it was at a turning of the tide, an opening up of our ways of worship and of looking at the world. Here is a cathedral that reached out to the city with its 'Chapel of industry' – clear glass windows to see the activities of the up and coming industries; not the traditional ribbon-making now, but car manufacturing and telecommunication firms. The 'Chapel of unity', circular to encourage equality, not just aiming to embrace different faiths but different races, for this was a time when immigrants were coming into the city to work in the factories.

It was a time when our liturgy was changing. I have already mentioned The New English Bible, but we were on the verge of having Series A and B of the daily offices and the Eucharist. Yet in the stonework of the new cathedral are carved the words of comfort from the 1662 prayer book, 'Come unto me all ye who travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you'.

Some of the artists involved had been official war artists, but here they had the opportunity to produce works of glory – Sutherland's tapestry, which, if



you study it, brings ideas from classical art into the modern day, the baptistry window by John Piper, a blaze of joyful colour. Young artists like Elizabeth Frink were involved. Yes, this is a forward-looking cathedral!

The building is crowned with a delicate 'fleche' which is topped with a cross. In those days we didn't have a car, so being determined to watch the fleche being sited on the roof by helicopter, we dragged our mother out of bed to catch an early bus in time to see the pilot attempt to position the fleche. The winds were too high on the first attempt and we had to watch later. Interestingly, a year or so ago at a family funeral in the Potteries, I was talking to a cousin who works for the local media in Coventry. The previous week he had interviewed the pilot of the helicopter who had told him that it was a tricky job to do.

Not only did we not have a car, but we didn't have TV either, so on the day of the consecration, when all the schools had a day off to celebrate, we were invited round to the home of one of our teachers to see the service (in black and white, of course). For a fortnight afterwards there were special services for schools, Sunday schools etc, and a celebration of music including Britten's 'War Requiem' which Martin Wells has mentioned in a previous article. It was difficult to book tickets, but I did manage to see Yehudi Menuhin playing Bach partitas. These are memories I treasure. I don't suppose I will ever see another cathedral fitted with its spire!

Whatever you think of Coventry Cathedral (some like it and some don't) it was built with enthusiasm and hope at a time when the country was making good after the devastation of the second world war. The work of the cathedral has been directed to healing relationships in the world. I wonder now, as we work our way through the impact of coronavirus, which, in a different way has devastated some businesses, brought sadness and strain to families and has dictated a change in our way of worship, if we can find a way forward in healing and hope as they did in Coventry so many years ago. I like to think so!

Jill Smith, St Peter & St Paul

Useful contacts

TRING TEAM PARISH

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

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

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

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

Diocesan Lay Minister
Mike Watkin
01442 890407

Parish Co-ordinators
Roy Hargreaves
01442 823624
roy.hargreaves@btinternet.com

John Whiteman
01442 826314
john@tringteamparish.org.uk

Church Wardens
Chris Hoare (Tring)
01442 822915

Ian Matthews (Tring)
01442 823327

Jane Brown (Aldbury)
01442 851396

Ray Willmore (Aldbury)
01442 825723

Christine Rutter (Puttenham)
01296 668337

Ken Martin (Wilstone)
01442 822894

Rev Jane Banister
(Long Marston)
01442 822170

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

Janet Goodyer
pewsheets@tringteamparish.org.uk

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

Hall Secretary
Barbara Ancombe
01442 828325
Bandb33@talktalk.net

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

ST MARTHA'S METHODIST CHURCH
Minister
Rev Rachael Hawkins
01442 866324
rachael.hawkins@methodist.org.uk

Senior Steward
Rosemary Berdinner
01442 822305

AKEMAN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
Minister
Rev David Williams
01442 827881

Administrator
Emma Nash
01442 827881

CORPUS CHRISTI ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
Parish Priest
Father David Burke
01442 863845
davidburke@rcdow.org.uk
www.berkotring.org.uk

HIGH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
Ministers
Joe Egan 07521 513493
joe@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
Ruth Egan 07521 513494
ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

Assistant Minister
Kevin Rogers
km_rogers@outlook.com

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

NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH
Minister
Vacancy

JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP
affiliated to
Churches Together in Tring

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

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

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Tring Parish

@revhuw

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

Distribution
Barbara Ancombe
01442 828325
bandb33@talktalk.net

Treasurer
Chris Hoare
01442 822915

Advertising
Sue Mayhew
0845 8681333

Design
Kev Holt, Ginger Promo

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

Crossword puzzle answers From page 16

ACROSS

1. ERRATA
5. REPLAY
8. LAMENTATIONS
9. TRIBAL
11. ETCH
14. ONCE UPON A TIME
15. DECK
16. ELDERS
18. STAINED GLASS
20. STITCH
21. DAWDLE

DOWN

2. REARRANGE
3. AGE
4. ANTELOPE
5. RITE
6. PROTESTED
7. ASS
10. BREAKFAST
12. COMPRISAL
13. UNHEEDED
17. INCH
18. SIT
19. LAW

OPEN DAYS 2020/21 - VIRTUAL

Tring Park will be holding an Open Day in October 2020 for entry in September 2021. This year due to social distancing guidelines we will be offering a virtual open day and then bookings for individual site tours.

Visit our next Virtual Open Day October 2020 and get a feeling for what it would be like to be a pupil at our school. We'll help you explore our school and its facilities from wherever in the world you are. Please visit tringpark.com to book your open day virtual tour.



About our virtual open day:

Here are some of the things you can expect from our virtual open days:

- Explore the range of courses available by watching presentations from our teaching staff
- See our pupils in both vocational and academic lessons
- We will also have general information talks on a range of topics including boarding accommodation, and our Admissions process
- Talks from our current Head Boy and Head Girl and a range of our pupils telling you, in their own words, what they love about Tring Park School
- Take a virtual school tour to see the classrooms, the boarding areas, the canteen and common rooms

TringPark 
School for the Performing Arts

www.tringpark.com

info@tringpark.com
or tel. 01442 824255

Tring Park is a registered charity No. 1040330

Individual tours 22nd / 23rd October

We're currently planning to run a number of individual school tours during our autumn half-term, and bookings will open 1st September through our website. We'll be ready to help you explore our school in person on 22nd or 23rd October. We do strongly recommend you also book for the virtual open day

Once you've booked your slot, if anything changes, we'll keep you updated by email

Please note entry can take place at any age apart from the second year of GCSE and the second year of A Levels.