

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



What's on in November in Tring Church

Services at Tring Church

Sunday 5th November

8am Holy Communion traditional language

10am Communion with craft activity **

4pm All Souls service

Saturday 11th November

11am Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial

Sunday 12th November

8am Holy Communion traditional language**

10am Short Worship for all

10.45am Remembrance Service outside at the War Memorial

3pm Piano and More concert

Sunday 19th November

8am Holy Communion traditional language

10am Communion with craft activity **

Sunday 26th November

8am Holy Communion traditional language

10am Communion with craft activity **

** Streamed service on our website and YouTube

Mid-week Services in Tring

9.15am Tuesdays

Holy Communion

10am Thursdays

Holy Communion in traditional language

Lots more going on



Mondays 3.30pm - 5pm

Youth Café in term time Toast, chat etc for secondary school kids

Food Bank

Monday to Friday

10am - 12noon.

Drop-off donations and collect food



Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm

Craft and a Cuppa

Drop in for chat, cuppa and bring a craft to do if you would like to

Social Coffee

Fridays, Saturdays

10am - 12 noon,

and after Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday services



Piano & more series Sunday November 12th



3pm for an hour's concert of music followed by refreshments.

Free but collection for church and piano expenses

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

Night sky wonder



At this time of year, when the evenings draw in earlier, it sometimes feels as if the nights are darker too. Often, when I am out walking the dog or wandering home from work after

a meeting, I find myself lifting my eyes to look up at the stars and pondering the significance of the beautiful sight shining down upon me. I can recall many occasions when I have gazed up at the vastness of this twinkling canvas of illuminations stretching across the sky and simply thought, 'WOW'!

The Bible says in Psalm 19:1-2 that, night and day, the skies proclaim the work of God's hands. I have always been a fan of the sky and the way it reflects so vividly the awesome beauty of God's creation. I am certainly no astronomer, but particularly at times when I'm situated in places that have less light pollution interrupting the definition (such as on camping trips or at the coast), the vastness of the universe spread out before me can truly stir my heart to praise. However small I might feel in its midst, the knowledge that God who gave each star its place, is interested in me and my fleeting existence (even despite my lack of 'wonderfulness'), is simply mind-blowing (Psalm 8:3-4).

Science tells us that not all of the stars we see are even still in existence today, and the light they shine remains simply as a slow fading afterglow in our sight thanks to the relativity of time in space. However, even this I find can trigger reflection in me about the brevity of our individual lives and the impermanence of our personal history in the whole scheme of things throughout eternity. None of us knows when our own particular light to the world may come to an

end, and this begs the question, at each twist and turn of our journey, what legacy will we leave to bring light to others that remain beyond us?

Many a time a smile has spread across my face as I have gazed up into the darkness focusing on a few bright pinpricks of light penetrating the shadows; and then, as my eyes have adjusted, I've become more and more aware of just how many little lights are actually present and sparkling against the blackness surrounding me. The reminder of how light penetrates darkness in these moments has inspired hope in me at times when difficulties in my life have felt like they are crowding in around me, and it is hard to see the positives in the mix. Through the simplicity of a starlit sky, I can encounter the peace that passes all understanding which only Jesus can provide shining down on me as I offer up my struggles to him in prayer (Philippians 4:6-7).

When I was a teenager, I remember coming across a song written by a Christian guy called Andy Flannagan

called 'Stars'. When I saw him perform it live once, he shared how he had become inspired by the thought that the stars we see in the sky each night are in fact millions of years old, and so have witnessed history in the making far beyond our lifetime. This made him reflect on the significance of some of the things that the 'stars had seen' including the happenings we read of in Scripture. I have found myself provoked by his suggestion to consider what biblical stories come to mind when I am out in the evening, and allow myself to be prompted by the stars to ask God what he might want to speak to me about through the meaningful historic scenes that come to mind.

Perhaps you find other forms of inspiration as you stargaze, a sense of closeness to those you love who are far away, looking up at the same stars you are seeing from their location; or simply receiving comfort from the thought that those twinkling lights might represent generations who've gone before. Perhaps at some point during this season,

you might take a brief moment to go outside or look out of the window (with your lights off inside), and with God's help, ponder what the stars might convey to you. I am not a believer in any kind of astrology, but in my experience, God does sometimes speak to us through the wonder and beauty of his created world. Take time to look again at this familiar night-time scene and consider its divine riches.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once asked what we would do if the stars only came out once every thousand years. 'No one would sleep that night of course...' (he concluded) 'we would be ecstatic, delirious, made rapturous by the glory of God. Instead, the stars come out every night and we watch television.'

Ruth Egan
High Street Baptist Church

Our doors will be open at the
Christmas Festival
Saturday 25 November 3:30-8:30pm
HIGH STREET BAPTIST
CHURCH



Quiet space
Refreshments and Children's craft
Light a candle to remember a loved one

Notes from the belltower

By the time you are reading this page, the summer will have been a sweet, distant memory, as the earth tilts away from the sun in this hemisphere and the shadows of autumn lengthen on the sundial. A delightful summer memory remains in my mind of sitting on an old wooden bench in a Cambridge country garden, sipping Lapsang souchong to the soporific sound of bees buzzing on lavender as the scent of roses wafts around me on a gentle breeze... then, clear and pure, I heard the sound of distant church bells. Time out of mind, they have been rung here by many generations of bellringers since the 16th century.

Timor mortis conturbat me [the fear of death disturbs me] is a thought that is common to the sons and daughters of men; and the conundrum is, how to respond?

Yet it's difficult to ignore when the tenor bell lifts its solemn, powerful voice in mourning for a dear departed. 'To die, to sleep, to sleep, perchance to dream – ay, there's the rub, for in this sleep of death what dreams may come...' as Hamlet puts it, and where may consolation be found but in the sure and certain hope of all our bright tomorrows with those we love?

The Tring ringers' outing on the 9 September was a memorable occasion. We had a whole day outing to six bell towers around our area. Our first tower was Toddington St George. How different it felt from the familiar Tring tower, the bells sounding so light and fresh in a very pretty church with a spacious bell-ringing room.

The second tower we came to was at Woburn St Mary, the very impressive Abbey church with its awe-inspiring Gothic revival architecture of high soaring pointed arches, that looked both delicate and solid at the same time. It had a large spacious bell tower, with long-pull heavy bells that gave a rousing dignified sound. It houses a 55cwt bell cast in the Whitechapel bell foundry in 1868.

Of particular beauty in the church is the brilliantly coloured stained-glass window. Installed in 1930, it depicts St Francis of Assisi standing among fifty-eight birds and flowers, all of which were to be found in Woburn Park at that time, and the words 'St Francis of Assisi whose work was in the hospitals and whose delight was in the birds'.

The next tower we visited was in Husborne Crawley St James, which had a smaller tower and lighter, thinner

sounding bells with a long pull, where everyone said the tenor bell was difficult and deep set by comparison to others. Robert Churchill is remembered in the Tower for having rung there for sixty years: a worthy feat indeed!

After this we all retired to a convenient pub for much-needed sustenance and recuperation and, having regained our energies, we set off in the burning heat of the day to Ampthill St Andrew, to the most compact of the ringing rooms we visited, and then on to the second to last tower in Maulden St Mary, to be greeted by a very friendly ringing master with the welcome news that the tower has air conditioning, very much appreciated in the sweltering heat of that day!

Last of all we came to light and airy Barton Le Clay with only a few steps up to a bright tower, and with its big stained-glass window commemorating one Emma Tewson in 1904 by her husband and children, depicting a sweet-faced gentle angel, arms outstretched to receive the dear departed.

All in all, a very memorable day.

Johanna Morgan
Tring belltower

Tring u3a



Live, laugh, learn: simply the u3a

Fancy trying something new, sharing your knowledge, learning new skills, or just socialising in convivial surroundings? Take your pick. Join the 450+ members of Tring u3a and make new friends. How many other groups in Tring can boast that many members, I wonder?

I have been involved with the Tring u3a since 2011, three years after its formation. I have watched the membership grow (and shrink during Covid-19) and grow slowly again. I started by joining a German group and then a Book Reading Group, which I now co-ordinate. I won't say lead because, as a self-help group, all the other members can quite easily get on without me – and they do if I am not able to attend!

So, what really is Tring u3a? The standard answer is that it is a self-help, self-managed group of older people (no longer in full time work) sharing in their love of learning in a wide range of interests.

Don't be put off by the name – highly academic it is not! There are no diplomas or grades. 'Live, laugh, learn' is our motto, and we all do. Not everyone is a natural leader, but everyone can come along and enjoy the company and stimulation of learning in a friendly social situation. A few enthusiastic volunteers run our groups, and it would be great (but not essential) to get a few more. Learning and socialising are equally important; and when teas are drunk and biscuits are eaten, you can take turns with the washing up!

There are, at the time of writing, over thirty interest groups running. These range from Architecture to Walking, with Table Tennis, Patchwork, History, Science and Technology, Discussion, Music

Appreciation among others, thrown into the mix. Visit our website for more info www.tringu3a.org.uk. Then there are events and group visits; monthly coffee mornings, talks, a luncheon group and theatre trips – something for everyone, in fact.

Would you like more information? Come along to the Tring u3a December Social at the Victoria Hall on Thursday 14 December at 10.00am. There is a small display of all our groups and some entertainment as well. Refreshments are available and Group Leaders will be there to answer your questions. I will be there, too, doing my best as a volunteer.

If you can't wait that long, why not come to a coffee morning or monthly meeting to see what we're all about?

Vicky Baldock
Tring u3a
and St Cross,
Wilstone



C S Lewis, 1898-1963



'And then the change happened between starting 'Mere Christianity' by CS Lewis and finishing it. I don't know quite how or at what point but I started that book thinking, I'm

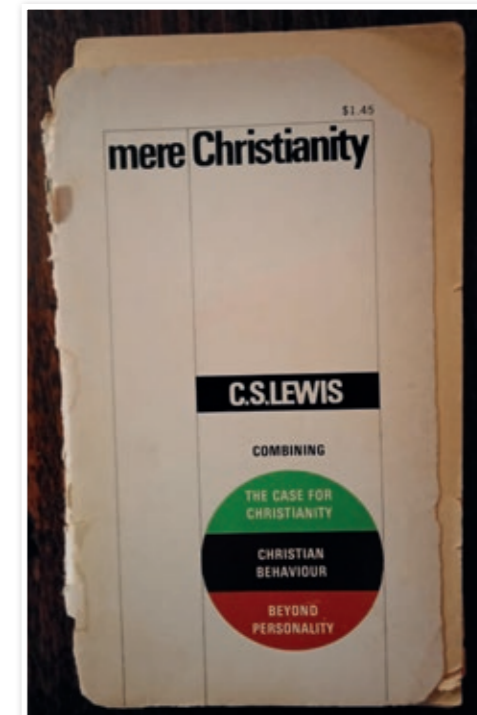
interested in this from a non-believing perspective, and finishing it, thinking, I believe. And all I can say, is, you know, I'm no better as a person now than then.' This was Danny Kruger, an up-and-coming (and rather right-wing) young Tory MP, speaking on The Sacred Podcast in May 2022.

I was intrigued by this experience, learning of it sixty years on from the death of C S Lewis, and 125 years from his birth. Lewis's books clearly have an enduring appeal. 'Mere Christianity' was published in 1952, but based on a series of BBC radio talks given during the Second World War. Lewis has certainly been the most influential Christian writer for me. As a youngster I never read books about Christianity. Why would I need to? I sang in the choir on Sunday mornings (and evenings), I was a regular Sunday School pupil and endured 'RE' or later 'Scripture' lessons at school. It was only at university, when my new evangelical friends explained to me that I couldn't be a (proper) Christian because (as I saw it) I failed to recite the correct formula, that I felt I needed to be a bit more coherent in my understanding and expressions of belief. Lewis's writing was like a miraculous discovery for me: so down-to-earth, measured and quietly cogent. It



was, however, uncompromising; 'Either this man was (and is) the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.' ('Mere Christianity', Macmillan 1960, page 56) My copy of 'Mere Christianity' is rather dog-eared now, literally falling apart. It has been joined by about a dozen other books written by C S Lewis. I should have bought more of them in hardback form. The Parish book group benefited from studying several C S Lewis books, including 'The Problem of Pain' and 'The Four Loves'. I would have hesitated to recommend 'Mere Christianity' to a modern reader; Lewis' attitudes in a number of areas, not least the role and standing of women, are now distinctly dated. And yet his writing still seems to have appeal to young people. He has a strong following in the US (look up the C S Lewis Foundation on your favourite search engine).

Lewis gained prominence when his Narnia stories were turned into films ('The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe', and so on); also, by the making of 'Shadowlands' (itself now thirty years old), a film about Lewis' romance with and marriage to Joy Davidman. Anthony Hopkins portrayed Lewis. The film also reformed my image of Lewis. Up to then I always knew him as C S Lewis (he was actually known as Jack), and imagined a rather austere gentleman (a sort of moderate Jacob Rees-Mogg). What



I encountered in the film, and latterly online, was a real human being, a bit tubby, a man who enjoyed a pipe and a beer. I should have realised that, to write as he did, he was bound to be, in lots of ways, just an ordinary person.

John Whiteman
Tring Team

Piano & more series

An hour of music on Sunday afternoons

Aidan Cham Cello
Alex Cham Cello
Anna Le Hair Piano

A Piano & More Young Artists concert

to include works by Bach and Messiaen

Sunday 12th November
at 3pm

followed by tea and refreshments

Tring Parish Church HP23 5AE

Free admission, with retiring collection

For further details see:

piano-and-more.org.uk
or Google "Piano and more, Tring"



Sell out day for Rennie's Winslow Cider at Tring Apple Day!



Tring's historic smallholding – featured in the Times and on Countryfile – hosted its annual Apple Day on

Sunday 1 October and, for the first time in its history, cider was available for sampling and buying! Rennie's Winslow Cider was a star of the show, selling out its award-winning dry and medium ciders, and doing a roaring trade in mulled cider on tap (it came 2nd in the 2017 Hereford International Cider Competition, gold medal and 1st at the 2018 British Cider Championships at the Royal Bath and West Show, beating 600 entries, and bronze in 2019).

Visitors were interested to learn about the social enterprise that donates 100% of its profits to charity, set up in memory of two teenagers: when a group of young

friends were dealt the tragic blow of the death of one – followed by another – of their number, the group decided to work together on a community project. One of the group suggested using the market town's spare apples somehow – and Rennie's Winslow Cider was born.

Since those early days, Youth Concern has received a staggering £29,623 to date from sales of Rennie's Winslow Cider. The money has helped the charity be here, and respond to Aylesbury Vale's vulnerable 13-25-year-olds when they need us most, whether that's with mental health, relationships, accommodation, education, training or employment.

If you'd like to try the cider, it's stocked at the Winslow Farm Deli, North Marston Shop, Quainton Village Shop, is on draught at The George, Winslow, and



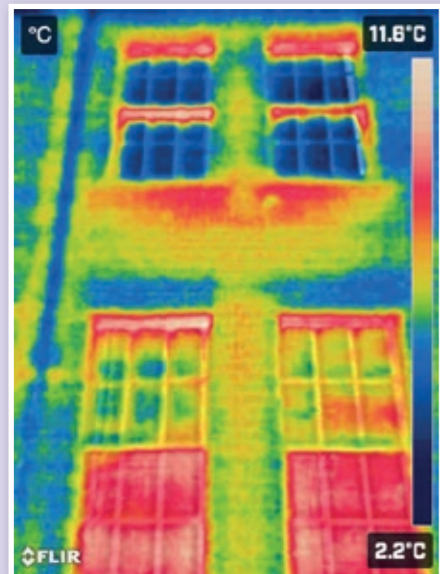
is sold at the Winslow Farmers Market on the first Sunday of every month (except January). Find out more at Rennies Winslow Cider (facebook.com).

Hannah Asquith, High Street Baptist Church and Youth Concern

Are you worried about your energy bills?



If so, would you like to see thermal images of your home? This could help you find out where your home is losing the most heat, to target heat-saving measures such as insulation and reduce your energy bills and carbon footprint.



What is it? All objects emit infra-red radiation. A thermal imaging camera will measure this and process it into a multi-coloured image in which the colours vary according to the surface temperature.

Sustainable Tring (formerly Tring in Transition), supported by a Green Community Grant from Dacorum Borough Council, is offering a thermal imaging service for homes in Tring and surrounding villages. The objective is to help reduce our home energy use and carbon footprint.

The service is carried out by a team of trained volunteers. It is not a professional heat loss assessment, and no fees are charged, but a voluntary donation to Sustainable Tring of £25 is welcomed. This supports us to help more people reduce their energy bills. For best results the images are taken when it is dark, when the temperature outside is lower than 10 degrees and it is not wet or windy.

Bookings for the coming winter, starting in January 2024 will be on a first come, first served basis, with priority given to those struggling with their bills. The service will be limited according to the capacity of the team. You can

search online for 'Dacorum Home Energy' for energy-saving ideas to get ready for the winter.



If you are interested in this service or would like to get involved as a volunteer, point your phone camera at this QR code for a questionnaire or contact energy@sustainabletring.org.uk.

**Anna Hirst
Sustainable Tring
Volunteer**



You are invited to an
**Evening of Worship for the
KING OF KINGS**



12th November at 7pm

NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH,

New Road, Tring HP23 5EX

Led by Inspiring Local

Worship leaders

Josh & Florrie

Bishop-Hall



No Booking required.

To hold grudges – or to forgive?



Do you lend your possessions freely? Do you lend money to family or to friends? Does it hurt if someone forgets to give back what they have borrowed?

The English word for forgiveness, which has been pretty much the same since old English, is a direct translation of the Latin – per donare – which has become the word 'pardon' in our language. It means to give completely – without reservation. The Greek word for forgive means to let go, to release, which is what forgiveness is – letting go of pain and grudges and anger. I think it is one of the most difficult things that a human being can do – it is why the advice is to lend only what you don't mind losing, so that you are not hurt by losing something that really matters to you.

Of course, for most of us, it is not the loss of possessions that really hurts us – it is the actions of others: friends who are mean to us; partners who cheat. Forgiving them can be really difficult. It takes time and can leave us bearing grudges. One of the fears is that if you do not forgive, then you are left with anger and resentment which can eat you up. Forgiveness brings a benefit to the one

doing the forgiving; it does not necessarily mean that you forget what has happened, but it is about the letting go.

One story that lives with us is that of a vicar, Julie Nicholson, whose daughter was killed in the July 2005 terrorist bombings in London. She stopped being a priest because she could not forgive the bombers. She felt she could not stand up in church and speak of forgiveness and new beginnings when she could not forgive the men who had killed her daughter. There are some incredible people and organisations that work on issues of forgiveness, particularly between countries or communities – South Africa and Northern Ireland being good examples.

Jesus was asked how often we should forgive those who wrong us. Should it be as much as seven times? Jesus said seventy times seven – it was not intended as a precise number but rather meaning it is always better to forgive and to go on forgiving, for as long as it takes. God the Father forgives us all that we have done wrong; God asks us then to forgive others with the same generosity (though unlike God, we are not perfect and it doesn't come easily).

What do you think forgiveness is? Forgiveness does not approve of a wrongful act; it does not mean it is easily forgotten; it is not saying that it doesn't matter if it happens again. It is about how

we live our lives, what we let influence and change us for the worse; whether we hold on to anger or not. Forgiveness is something we need to think about before we get to the point of needing to put it into practice.

Forgiveness should be part of the Christian life, because that is what makes us better people. Our relationships will be better if we learn to forgive, if we practise it, if we make it part of our everyday lives. That includes forgiving ourselves as well as forgiving others; it includes modelling it. Don't hold on – don't hold grudges – don't punish yourself. Take control of the wrongs done to you and choose positive, honest actions in response – because that is what has been shown to us by our God.

*God of all, we come to offer you
the best of ourselves:
to take hold of mercy and let go
of fear,
to take hold of generosity and to
let go of resentment,
to take hold of forgiveness and to
let go of sin,
to take hold of gratitude and to let
go of grudge,
to take hold of all your very self,
in Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen.*

**Jane Banister,
Tring Team**

Father Henry James Hardy, 'apostle of Hertfordshire'



When looking through some paperwork, a friend found an old edition of our Corpus Christi magazine, dated winter 1999. It was entitled 'The Building of a Church' and was laying out the reasons why we needed a larger church.

This led us back to thinking about who built our first church: Father Henry Hardy. Briefly, this is his story.

The original Corpus Christi Church was built between 1910 and 1911 by Father Henry Hardy. He was the son of an Anglican vicar who numbered among his ancestors the Captain Hardy in whose arms Nelson died at the battle of Trafalgar. After studying at Oxford, he was ordained in the Church of England and served in several London parishes until his conversion to Catholicism and

subsequent ordination in 1878.

After this his apostleship to Hertfordshire began.

He is credited with building churches in Harrow, Rickmansworth, Boxmoor, Berkhamsted and lastly, Tring. Tring was his last new parish, and it is believed to be the last church to be built in Tring as the present church is the first to be built since that date.

In fact, the Mass was first celebrated in the Victoria Hall on the last Sunday of the month by Father Hardy, who travelled from Boxmoor between the years 1896 and 1911 when the church was opened (although he continued to travel from Boxmoor until the bungalow was built). He moved in and became the first resident priest for Corpus Christi.

The original church held around fifty people and remained virtually unchanged until the early 90s when it was realised that we needed to extend and, in effect, rebuild a new church which was planned to hold 200 people.

But it would cost!

By April 1998, £200,000 was raised by efforts both inside and outside the parish and by donations from many other parishes, especially Berkhamsted, who generously gifted us £10,000. Much fundraising continued and, when all was finished, in the year 2000 the church was rededicated and consecrated by Bishop James O'Brien on 18 January at 8.00pm.

We acknowledge the contribution of all concerned with the construction of our beautiful church: The Architect, Anthony De La Rue; Surveyor, Chris Fanning; Builder, E. W. Rayment & Co Ltd; Stone Mason, Martin Duncan Jones; Quantity Surveyor, David Partnerships, Aiden O'Gara; Structural Engineer, Robert Tucker.

Tricia Apps
Corpus Christi

We are shaped by our worship



Presiding at an 8.00am Book of Common Prayer communion service in Tring and standing at the altar, I was aware of all the priests who have gone before

me, not least the late Reverend Janet Ridgway. Janet was only ordained priest in 1994 (I was ordained in 1998) but Janet's journey to ordination had begun much earlier. Indeed, she started training for ministry in 1983, was licensed deaconess in 1986, ordained deacon in 1987 and in 1994 was in the first group of women to be ordained priest at St Albans Abbey. As I reflected on this, I was quickly made angry to remember that the Church of England is still consecrating bishops who refuse to acknowledge female priests which, after so many years of amazing ministry, I find utterly mind-boggling. It also made me wrestle once again with the Book of Common Prayer.

Tring Team Parish is committed to being inclusive, and we strive to use inclusive language where possible. We are shaped by our worship. On one Sunday of the month, we use a simple communion service. Far from dumbing down, this is an attempt to use everyday language in our worship. It is a challenge to say what we believe without using churchy language. I find the simple communion really helpful as it makes me think more deeply about the words we are using. If we are shaped by our worship, it seems really important that we use language that we understand.

However, there remains a great poetry about Cranmer's prayer book, even if we don't use many of the words he used any more. What is more challenging is that his words are hardly inclusive in modern terms. I am not worried that he doesn't refer to 'mother God'; it is more that he just doesn't refer to women at all. Take the 'comfortable' words for example: 'This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners', 1 Timothy 1:15.

All men jars. I know that 'men' means 'men and women' but it doesn't say that. It would seem that the easiest thing to do would be to inclusivise the language. We could just swap 'men' for 'people'. My problem, though, is where do I stop? I think I am happier using the Prayer Book exactly as it is written (which is why you always get the full commandments with me) rather than tinkering at the edges. It isn't just the archaic language which gets to me, it is some of the theology which is implied that makes me uncomfortable.

For example, look at the absolution at Morning and Evening Prayer: 'Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness, and live; and hath given power, and commandment, to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins: He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.'

I always struggle with this when I think of the life and times of Cranmer. Reformation England was a place of high passion and dubious religious practice.

Torture and martyrdom were part and parcel of the church with both reformers and traditionalists being equally bad. There was a deeply held belief that it was the church's duty to prevent people from slipping into heresy. It was (to them) morally acceptable to torture someone to help them recant from their heretical beliefs. It was also safer to put them to death straight afterwards so that they didn't die as a heretic. This is exactly what happened to Cranmer. He was tortured, recanted, and burnt at the stake. On the day of his execution, he preached a sermon and unexpectedly ended it by renouncing his recantations and asking that hand which had signed them be burnt first. He was dragged from the pulpit and burnt with Ridley and Latimer and thrust his 'unworthy hand' into the hearts of the flame. On that basis I find it deeply odd to pray to the God 'who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness, and live'. Quite simply this is not my theology, and indeed much of the theology espoused in the prayer book is of its era.

Cranmer was a progressive; he was forward looking. I think he'd be amazed we are still using his prayer book. I am fairly sure that he would have embraced women's ministry. Using his prayer book links me to those who have gone before, but I am wondering whether maybe we should start thinking about abandoning it. Don't worry, 8.00 o'clockers, it is mainly a wondering, not a plan, but I think Cranmer would approve if we did.

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

Church choirs



When Ian joined the choir at St Oswald's, Croxley Green, aged 7, he sat on a chair at the end of the choir stalls for six months. The original organ at the church had to

be pumped and the members of the choir took it in turn to use the pump, Ian included.

Ian then moved to Tring and it was suggested that females should or could join the choir at St Peter & St Paul's. Shock to the males! After leaving Tring Guides, I joined the sopranos and

eventually thought I rather liked singing harmony, so joined the altos. One evensong I sat next to a bass singing with much gusto. My brother, who was also a bass in the choir, used to talk to this bass, telling me he was called Ian. Having had a boyfriend in the church choir, I didn't want to go down that road again... but six years later, I was married to that bass gentleman!

One outing we had as a choir was to Cambridge and went to evensong at Kings College. The highlight was that we married in the parish church.

Forty-eight years ago we moved to Biggleswade and joined the parish church there. We are still here. Our

choir mistress used to take her summer holiday Monday to Thursday so that she didn't miss choir practice or Sunday services!

Over the years we have thoroughly liked our time in the choir. We have seen various weddings, trying to keep a straight face when one bride's bouquet lit up on the couple's exit through the church.

Members have gone for various reasons, but we are lucky that we have a choir of sixteen who enjoy making church music. Long may it last!

Rosamund Drakes
formerly St Peter & St Paul

Ear Ache?
Blocked Ears?
Sore or Itchy Ears ?
Call Maria on
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Domiciliary Wax Removal

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

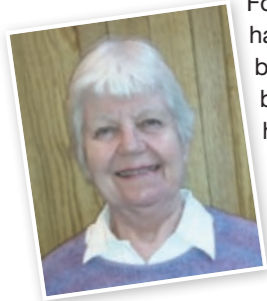
Visit our website and view the sales catalogues with accompanying illustrations, you will find us at www.tringmarketauctions.co.uk

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Thinking about silence



For a long time, I have had a small book by my bedside which I have never fully read until recently. It is 'Letter to a hostage' by Antoine de Saint-Exupery.

Yes, he's the same person who wrote 'The Little Prince'. Saint-Exupery wrote it during WWII when he was in Portugal waiting for a passage to the United States as an escapee from occupied France. He reflects on many things about life, more than I can write about here, but one passage particularly caught my imagination. Saint-Exupery was a pilot who spent three years in the Sahara and was, in his own words, 'gripped by its spell'.

The passage that made me think was about the silences experienced in the desert. He talks of 'The silence of peace, when the tribes are reconciled' and goes on to say 'There is the silence of the noon, when the sun suspends all thought and movement. There is the false silence when the north wind has dropped, and the appearance of insects announces

the eastern storm, carrier of sand. There is silence of intrigue, when one knows that a distant tribe is brooding. There is a silence of mystery, when the Arabs join up in their intricate cabals. There is a tense silence when the messenger is slow to return. A sharp silence when, at night, you hold your breath and listen. A melancholic silence when you remember those you love.'

Pause here and read over the passage again. Does it make you think?

It is possible to think of examples of silences of mystery and intrigue on a national or global scale: our news is full of them. Who will win an election? What will be the next move in a war...? etc.

This passage also seems to touch so many moments of life. I can think of the 'silence of peace' when standing still in the beech wood, no wind, no pressures of the day, just beauty all around. 'The false silence' is held in those dark, heavy clouds before a thunderstorm, and 'the silence of intrigue' hangs in the air when you have expressed a view that you know may be controversial, but you do not know how people will get back to you. For me a 'tense silence' is when you are waiting to hear exam results, or if a member of your family has had the baby

yet, or what your medical results are. A 'sharp silence' is sitting by the bed of someone you love who is ill, longing to make them better. I can recall the nights of sitting by a poorly child, holding my breath to hear their breathing. I am sure you can think of examples yourself of silences in your life.

The idea of silence is an intriguing one. We talk about 'breaking the silence' when, for example, there is a family disagreement and you long to rectify the matter, but you are only one half of the situation – should we make the first move?

All of these occasions I have mentioned are moments for prayer. We talk about creating silence for prayer or meditation. We talk about holding silence in our hearts so that God may speak to us. For me, the silence of a moment involves a meeting of myself with God; often a spontaneous reaction – joy, care, trust arises, and prayer is in that moment. Many of the silences that Saint-Exupery mentions are moments in life, and, I think, the more we are aware of these moments, the richer life can be. I wonder what you think.

Jill Smith
St Peter & St Paul

Samuel Seabury, 14 November



Much of my time as an undergraduate was spent in the second largest granite building in the world (El Escorial is larger). Several times a day, I passed a memorial commemorating the consecration of the first Anglican Bishop in North America, but it never once dawned on me as odd that it should have happened in Scotland!

Samuel Seabury was born in Connecticut in 1729. When Samuel was 12, his father (also Samuel Seabury) travelled to England to be ordained deacon and priest. At that time the Anglican church in the British Colonies came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London. It is said that one third of ordinands were captured by pirates or shipwrecked, one third died of smallpox and only one third made it both ways!

Samuel graduated in theology from Yale in 1748 but, being too young to be ordained, he went to Scotland where



he studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh. In 1753, in London, he was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Lincoln and, two days later, priest by the Bishop of Carlisle. He returned to America, where he married and had five children.

After the declaration of American Independence in 1776, it was important for the church in the United States to have their own bishop, and the clergy of Connecticut elected to have Samuel as their bishop. Samuel crossed again to England to be consecrated. However, no English bishop would participate

on the grounds that, as an American citizen, he could not take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown (despite him having served as chaplain to the King's American Regiment through most of the War of Independence).

After a year of frustration, Samuel appealed to the Episcopal Church of Scotland which, because of its origins in the non-Juror bishops of 1689 (those bishops who, having sworn allegiance to James Stuart, would not during his lifetime recognise the authority of William III) were less constrained about requiring allegiance to the English Crown.

In Aberdeen, on 14 November 1784, Samuel was consecrated by the bishop, the Bishop Coadjutor of Aberdeen and the Bishop of Ross and Caithness. A letter was sent from the bishops of Scotland recording the deed of consecration and desiring that the Episcopal Church in Connecticut be in full communion with the Episcopal Church in Scotland. This was the beginning of what we now call the Anglican Communion.

Linzi James, St Peter & St Paul

In the beginning

As soon as I heard of the Loving Earth Project, a picture of the solar system 'sprang' into my mind and also the Bible verse, 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein' from Psalm 24:1, King James Version.

Gill Barber
St Martha's Methodist Church



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

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What was a Geography teacher doing unloading a lorry load of beef or an English teacher taking part in an army training exercise?

Why was a manager from the Automobile Association teaching a group of Year 11 pupils? Or a personal manager shadowing a pupil for a morning?

Well, they were taking part in a scheme to create understanding across groups that had misunderstood and mistrusted each other for a long time. Typically, Industry and Education then saw the downsides in each other. ('All you want is industry fodder' and 'Young people don't have the basic skills needed for work.'). So we gave these teachers and managers an unfamiliar task set in the opposite sector and then asked them to explore their discoveries with their opposite numbers. We found having to explain themselves in cross-sector groups led to bridges of understanding and trust.



When Janet and I took part in a pioneering study tour in the Holy Land in 2007, we came across one organisation whose way of building relationships between Israelis and Palestinians at grass-roots level used this kind of approach. Musalaha had discovered the practice of taking young adults into the neutral territory of the Jordanian desert and inviting pairs from the two communities to control and ride a camel together. This challenge required some real communication between a rider and the person holding the camel's reins. In this way relationships formed that would transform attitudes whereas previously they would have avoided any contact. This approach became a trademark way for Musalaha to build many grass-roots groups for over thirty years.

In the light of this you will, I think,

be able to see my previous *Comment* articles in a wider perspective and why I have chosen to link up with Musalaha over the last sixteen years. Maybe this also hints at why Musalaha might be attractive to us in Tring, both personally and as a community. More on this in coming months.

Colin Briant
High Street Baptist Church

An Opportunity

The BBC's "Who do you think you are?" also features people who cross boundaries to discover new perspectives. "The Holy Land and Us – Our Untold Story", is co-presented by Rob Rinder and Sarah Agha, using a similar approach. It features the narratives of two British families, one Israeli, the other Palestinian. The current generations trace their families' history back to 1948 to reveal hitherto unknown but significant personal stories. I would like to explore these presentations in a group in Tring, probably in the New Year, using iPlayer. If you are interested please contact me: colin.briant@hotmail.com

Repair Café



Held on the third Saturday of every month from 10.30am to 1.00pm in High Street Baptist Hall, we deal with twenty or thirty items each month, fixing electrical goods, furniture, clothes, garden tools, etc. Goods are saved from landfill and

a culture of 'fixing rather than binning,' is reinforced. We raise about £150 each session, which covers our costs and allows us to fund Sustainable Tring activities, as well as giving to local charities. Customers like to watch and learn from our great team of friendly repairers, stop for a coffee and have a chat. Come and see!
Jan Rook
High Street Baptist Church



Things made new



When I was a child, I lived in Sunbury-on-Thames, about eleven miles from London. It's why my dad and his younger siblings were buried in the ruins of their house in November 1940 because there was a munitions factory just down the road. My dad told the story of the bombing and their subsequent astonishing rescue as if it were commonplace, as it was for his generation.

I thought I was brought up in the country, but to return now is to drive in a very busy place, and all the haunts I used to know have been covered in houses or new roads. One of my childhood playgrounds was an old bomb crater about 300m from my home across a relatively busy road. I suppose I was 9 or 10. We would make camps or dens in it and my parents had no idea where I was. I would come home when I was hungry and no questions were asked, as far as I can remember. I would never have allowed my children to play in such a place! Now that bomb crater, deep in trees and undergrowth, has been transformed into a beautiful public green space, with walks and rose gardens.

In September this year, my third son, the Parkrun son, somehow persuaded me it would be a good idea to go with

him to Leavesden Country Park and 'walk' the 5k Parkrun. I still don't know why I did it and am even more surprised I didn't have a heart attack, as walking beside runners who are 'lapping' you, does make you, or at least me, walk faster than is comfortable – this was no leisurely stroll. When I was within 50m of the finishing line, I felt compelled to run, though running is not something I do in my normal day-to-day, as people were cheering me on as if I were a real athlete (very embarrassing in the circumstances!). I came 96th out of 97...

While I was waiting to start this unlooked-for early morning of exercise, I read the board describing the history of the place. I discovered that there used to be a hospital there for people with mental illnesses called the 'Asylum for Idiots and Imbeciles'. It was opened in 1870 (as you can tell from all the words in its name, none of which we would use today in that context) and closed in 1985. I suppose I wouldn't be mentioning it all except that, in my early 20s, I used to visit that hospital with a group of women from the church I then attended in Hemel Hempstead. It must have been in the years immediately before its closure (not soon enough). We would talk to the patients and sing with them, especially at Christmas, when we sang Christmas carols. Whenever I hear the song 'I'm forever blowing bubbles...' I am transported back to those evenings as one lady there would always strike up the

song at the drop of a hat. I can smell that ward; I can see again the huge size of it with what must have been fifty or more women crammed into it. I remember one older woman, in particular, whose 'mental illness' was that she had had a child without being married. The child was taken away; then she was consigned to a lifetime in that awful institution. She was as sane as you or I. Lest you think I am some kind of saint, I can tell you that those women I went with certainly were; I dreaded those Thursday evenings. I just knew that giving up a few hours of my time for those women, who would have exchanged their lives for mine given the opportunity, was the right thing to do.

Now that terrible institution is also transformed into a beautiful green space and the echoes of that past time unheard by those enjoying sporting activities or running (or walking!) across fields or woodland in lycra.

Bad things transformed into good; words that we no longer think appropriate replaced as we replace questionable values; judgements made about behaviours not approved of, and power over individuals misused, replaced by acceptance, compassion and support.

It's November, and the wars of the last century are still rightly remembered... so that we don't forget and repeat the mistakes of the past.

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul

Parish registers

Funerals

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

Rev Ian Ogilvie

What did the early church believe?



This may sound a strange question, but the earliest Gospel, that of Mark, was probably not written until around AD70 about thirty-five years after the death of Jesus.

In the first years of the early church, there were no Gospels. Many of the early Gentile churches were founded by Paul between around AD45-55 when he also wrote his letters, and the Jewish churches by Peter and the other apostles from around AD35 onwards. None of these early churches had the Gospels to refer to; they were founded by direct preaching.

Peter's letters were later than those of Paul (around AD62) and were probably written from Rome. John's letters were written much later, around AD100 and the Gospel of John around the same time. The letter of James was also probably written around AD100. Peter and Paul's letters predate the Gospels, whilst James and John's letters were probably produced around the same time.

This means that the teaching in the early churches was derived from the testimony and letters of Paul, Peter and the other apostles. Some major

concepts that are in the Gospels are missing from these letters – the Virgin birth being one, despite being predicted in the Old Testament (Isaiah 7:14 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel'). It would seem that the early theology of the Church consisted of the facts that Jesus, fully God, came to earth to be fully man, his death enabled forgiveness of sins, he was resurrected and ascended into heaven from whence he would return to judge the world. The early church believed that this return would come soon. In the meantime, believers were given the Holy Spirit to help them live life in Christ. Paul's theology was union with Christ through faith and God's grace. Peter's theology is based on the persecution being suffered by the church, as Christ suffered. Suffering was to be expected, but Jesus would soon return.

Stories about the life of Jesus must have been told in the early churches but there is no evidence of any written documents until the Gospel of Mark. The only non-Gospel detail of an event in Jesus' life, other than birth, crucifixion resurrection and ascension, is in the details of the Last Supper written by Paul.

The message of the early church was a simple one: Believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, do not follow the temptations of the world but 'lead a



tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity' (1 Timothy 2:2); live by the Spirit which is in you and given to you as a result of your faith and God's grace; Jesus is returning soon to judge the world. It was this simple message that brought about the spread of the church throughout the Mediterranean region before the Gospels were written. The Gospels were written for an established church to give more detail of Jesus' life and teachings.

In this modern world it seems that this original message has been modified by the many complexities of our various denominations. In many ways, the original simple message that changed the world has changed into a complex message that can be difficult to understand, let alone live by. I cannot see how this has benefited the church. Perhaps our preaching and witness should revert to the original simplicity.

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

Poem of the month

November is often seen as the month of the dead – All Souls and All Saints Days and Remembrance Day – so here is an intensely sad poem about grief and bereavement.

Kipling wrote this poem for Jack Cornwell, the 16-year-old youngest recipient of the Victoria Cross; he stayed at his post and died at the Battle of Jutland in 1916. It was published as a prelude to a story in his book 'Sea Warfare'. Kipling's own son, John, was also killed in the First World War, and the poem vividly describes the grief of all parents who lost their sons in war. It takes the form of an imaginary conversation between a parent and an unknown listener – Heaven or heaven, possibly? The imagery is nautical and the repetition of phrases aptly echoes the ebb and flow of tides and sea winds. It has been set to music and was the basis for a stage play and screen adaptation

about how grief affected Kipling after the death of his only son.

(Joseph) Rudyard Kipling was born in 1865 in Mumbai where his father was a Professor of Art. He is very well known for his fiction, novels, short stories, poetry and stories for children. He was also an accomplished artist, providing his own illustrations for his 'Just So Stories'. He met his wife on a visit to America and together they had three children, of whom only one survived into adulthood – his grief at their loss affected him deeply. He was one of the most popular writers in the UK and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. His gift for words, together with his powers of observation and an acute ear for sounds contributed, to his huge reputation as a writer, though

My Boy Jack

"Have you news of my boy Jack?"

Not this tide.

"When d'you think that he'll come back?"

Not with this wind blowing, and this tide.

"Has anyone else had word of him?"

Not this tide.

For what is sunk will hardly swim,

Not with this wind blowing, and this tide.

"Oh dear, what comfort can I find?"

None this tide,

Nor any tide,

Except he did not shame his kind –

Not even with that wind blowing, and that tide.

Then hold your head up all the more,

This tide,

And every tide;

Because he was the son you bore,

And gave to that wind blowing and that tide!

Rudyard Kipling, 1916

he later fell out of favour for his imperialist and supposed racist ideas. He died in 1936 and his ashes were interred in Westminster Abbey.

Kate Banister, St Julian's, St Albans

Tweet of the month



I am writing this on Shetland where I am for my autumn holiday. This year the lead up to the holiday was very exciting too. It started on 5 September, when I went to Filey Brigg

in Yorkshire and saw a Brown Booby (think small chocolate-brown Gannet-like bird from warmer climes), a bird I had missed in Cornwall in 2019. Then on 21 September I went to Pembrokeshire and saw a Magnolia Warbler (an American Warbler), a bird I had missed on a day trip to the Isles of Scilly on 29 September 1981 – when I was still a teenager!

In birdwatching circles, the experience of going to see a bird and missing it is known as ‘dipping’. I am not sure why, but it does seem to capture the essence of this experience rather well. Over the decades I have ‘dipped’ on quite a few birds in various places – both in this country and abroad. How painful this experience is depends on how much I wanted to see the bird and how much trouble I went to trying to see it. As dips go the Brown Booby in 2019 and the Magnolia Warbler in 1981 ranked pretty

highly so I was really pleased to see them this September and in easier circumstances.

After travelling for a couple of days I arrived on Shetland on 25 September and fortunately the forecast rough ferry crossing wasn't that bad. My friends and I saw a couple of good birds and settled into our cottage for the next three weeks. The next day we walked around the village we were staying in and received news about a Blackburnian Warbler (another American Warbler), a beautiful bird and one I chose not to go to see on the Isles of Scilly last year after a great time on Shetland. So, I was delighted at the chance to see it and, after a nervous hour and a quarter spent searching, I did see this beautiful avian marvel.

My final excellent bird this September was one I saw first in Canada in 1986 and then on Lundy Island on 7 November 1987 so it was not a new bird for me. It is an American Thrush called Veery and this is the twelfth time it has turned up in Britain. It first turned up in 1970 (I was too young to see that one), and the one I saw in 1987 was the second. Since



then, most of them have turned up in Scotland and this is the fourth on Shetland.

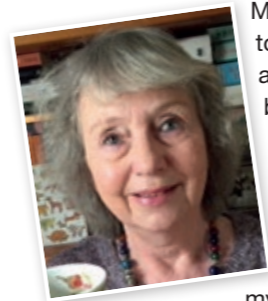
Unlike the American Warblers, which are actually not the same family as our warblers and are more closely related to our

Buntings, American thrushes are closely related to our thrushes. The Veery is probably named onomatopoeically as its name apparently does resemble its call. Its scientific name is *Catharus fuscescens*. *Catharus* is derived from the ancient Greek word, *katharós*, and means ‘pure’ or ‘clean’. *Fuscescens* is the Latin word for ‘turning dark’, although this seems wrong given the lovely tawny-brown upperparts this bird normally sports. The excellent views of this sometimes-skulking bird, coupled with the almost thirty-six-year gap since I saw my last one, made this bird just as special as the new birds I saw and was a fitting finale to the month.

It doesn't take much to link a bird with a family that means ‘pure’ and ‘clean’ to our Saviour, who was the embodiment of spiritual purity and cleanliness and a shining example to us all.

Roy Hargreaves, St Peter & St Paul

Give God time



Michelle Grace touched on what a Retreat was before she went on sabbatical. But did you think: what's the point? I can say prayers at home, read my Bible, worship

on a Sunday and in the week and go to the many church activities and events on offer. I can spend time with fellow Christians... so what benefit would a Retreat give?

The simple truth, for me, is that giving that dedicated time to God, where it's just between you and him, means that our Heavenly Father can minister to us, to me, as an individual, and I can experience him in a way which is not always possible in my normal everyday life. Give God the time and he will use it to bless you.

A retreat can be for a day, as we've enjoyed recently at the lovely little church at Puttenham, or it can be longer: maybe a few days or even a whole week.

‘Like a child, confide in God, your father.’ (Anon)

However short or long that time is, it will not be wasted either by you or by God.

For the past ten years, since 2013, I have been taking myself each year (apart from the Covid-19 years) to Stanton House, a Christian Retreat centre, situated in a small village four miles from Oxford, but in a different world. As soon as you turn into the drive lined with mature trees, see the sheep grazing in the meadows and the house surrounded by well-tended gardens, there's a sense of peace and of being in an oasis of quiet calm.

As you cross the threshold, you are welcomed, and there's an overwhelming knowledge that this is, and has long been, a house of prayer, a place set apart for God's children to experience his love, healing, grace and blessing. It's not a house of silence, but of tranquillity and stability, a place for rest, renewal and a ‘dwelling place to wait on the Lord and find peace for your soul... an oasis of calm for the weary’. (Stanton House <https://www.stantonhouse.org.uk>)

I stayed at Stanton that very first time in 2013 prompted by an extremely challenging and troublesome problem; over those ten years, life has thrown up

all kinds of situations and difficulties. Each time, I have known God's grace as he has ministered to me in often quite unexpected ways. I have been enriched, encouraged and enabled through those years to grow and deepen my understanding, knowledge and awareness of God's protection, guidance and healing powers. There have been times when my faith

‘Like a child, confide in God, your father.’

has been challenged by the new and different; other times when I have been reminded of the familiar, affirmed in the well-known promises of comfort, assurance and hope. I always keep a journal which is good to write at the time and good to look back on over the years. Sometimes I'll paint or draw, write poetry, read a book from the Stanton library – on my last visit, I found a helpful book: ‘The Promise of Blessing’ which thoughtfully led me through my favourite Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6.

Some Retreats are organised where you are guided through the time, or given the freedom just to ‘be present’ and be still, wait and listen. Sit by the stream, stroll through the trees, rest in the Prayer Cabin, enjoy the views, relax and retreat to your own room – the luxury of time without anyone asking you for anything, however much you love them, and of bringing all those worries and questions to the Lord and importantly, leaving them with him: it's so very valuable.

This summer, I had an unexpected opportunity to stay at Stanton House, taking the last place at very short notice on the guided retreat, ‘Making Space’. It was very special to go back there and be welcomed, as always, by the small team who look after everyone and the house so kindly. As we found in our day Retreat at Puttenham, our spiritual director led a little group from very different backgrounds sensitively and gently with thoughtful sessions, combining activities to do alone and time for personal reflection and prayer. Meals were shared with

good conversations flowing across the table; it's always interesting to hear what God is doing in other people's lives and what they are seeking from him at this time. It is indeed a blessing to have that quality time with people of faith who are also seeking to hear from God.

It may be that having someone of faith and commitment to prayer to talk and pray with us privately is what we need. A Retreat offers that space and that person and a blessing which you will take back home.

In 2017, I wrote these words: ‘When you have no place to go, the only place to go is into the arms of Jesus’ and taking a Retreat, be it short or long, is absolutely a good place to go to rest in those caring arms.

We are all travelling on a journey, where there are joys and troubles, pitfalls, stumbling blocks and sometimes, maybe often, simply questions (not always simple ones). We don't always have answers, we try to make sense of life, we seek to trust and believe in the God who cares for us and we are thankful for the light of Jesus Christ which is never overcome as it shines into those dark corners.

I encourage you to try a Retreat. Taking the time out to give God the chance to heal, direct and bless is, I find, essential in my faith journey. It could be true for you, too.

**Sue Yeomans
St John the Baptist, Aldbury**

A prayer written on a quiet day retreat at the Quaker Meeting House, Jordans. July 2011

*In the silence, O Lord, meet me
In the silence, O Lord, call me
In the silence, O Lord, still me
In the silence, Lord, may I find you
In the silence, Lord, may I hear you
In the silence, Lord, may I know you.*

*Cease the noise of the world around me
Clear my mind of thoughts without you
Calm my heart of fears, known to you.*

*As the gentle wind falls on me,
May your love and spirit flow through me
As the silence craved becomes your space
I become renewed, your child, through your grace.*

Amen.

TRING TEAM PARISH
Living God's Love

All Souls Services in Tring Parish

Sunday 29th October
6pm All Souls Service Aldbury

Tuesday 31st October
10am All Souls Service Wilstone
5pm “Hot Dogs and Prayers”
at Long Marston

Sunday 5th November
4pm All Souls Service Tring

You are invited to come and remember those who have died.

You may wish to bring a sprig of rosemary or a flower to lay on the altar.

You are also invited to add names to a list of the departed which will be in each of the Churches or email huw@tringteamparish.org.uk.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

TRING TEAM PARISH

Saturday 11th November - Armistice Day
11am Act of Remembrance outside at Tring War Memorial

12th November - Remembrance Sunday
10.45am Service of Remembrance outside at Tring War Memorial

10.50am Act of Remembrance outside at Long Marston War Memorial

10.50am Act of Remembrance outside at Wilstone War Memorial

10.50am Service of Remembrance inside Aldbury Church.

All Welcome.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

Hymns and beer in Saxony



Carole and I were attracted to a venture organised by McCabe Pilgrimages, with whom we had travelled before to the Holy Land and other destinations at the eastern

end of the Mediterranean Sea. This pilgrimage, last September, was called 'Sounds of Saxony' and was based in Dresden and Leipzig in the area of the former German Democratic Republic, set up by the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the former republic has been thoroughly integrated as part of Germany. Our interest lay in examining more closely its rich musical, religious, architectural and historical heritage.

When booking the tour we did not know that our leader would be the Reverend Canon Dr Gordon Giles, Canon Chancellor of Rochester Cathedral, who is an expert on church music and an editor of 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' and the 'Revised English Hymnal'. The latter is due out this month. He is also a regular columnist in CMQ (Church Music Quarterly), published by the RSCM

(The Royal School of Church Music), to which the Tring Church Choir is affiliated. This led to numerous lively discussions over beer (and wine) about such things as the merits of updating old hymns and inclusion of new ones, and some controversial claims of 'wokery'. Incidentally, Canon Giles strongly advised that changing words to reflect modern English usage often did not involve being 'woke': for example, updating 'men' to 'all' could be perfectly acceptable.

The tour was full of a sometimes exhausting variety of experiences, so I shall concentrate on just a few of the church-related ones. In Dresden the church of most interest, and a major tourist attraction, was the glorious



Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady). Built in the early 18th century to a baroque Lutheran design, it was destroyed by forces of the Allies by bombing in February 1945. After German reunification, the church was rebuilt to its original design with the works completed in 2005, an astonishing achievement. It is now a symbol of reconciliation and forgiveness, signified by the placing of a Coventry Cross of Nails on the altar.

The Lutheran element is reflected in the square

footprint of the church, with each door being architecturally equal in importance, and the circular design of the interior with the altar, pulpit and font, and the multiple galleries, all being underneath the great 298-foot-high dome. The important elements can be seen by each member of the congregation. All this signifies is that there is no hierarchy before God. The fascias of the galleries are painted in pastel shades and all the windows are large and clear, giving an impression of light and well-being. By contrast, the sanctuary area comprises an ornate baroque display of Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. To the left of Christ are statues of Moses and St Paul, and to the right, statues of Aaron and not St Peter but the Apostle Philip, according to our guide. Peter is there lurking behind the other sleeping disciples, not yet qualified for sainthood.

Our leader had come with plenty of music for impromptu singing. In the middle of the Frauenkirche we sang the 4-part Passion Chorale 'O sacred head, sore wounded' to H L Hassler's secular melody of 1601 as harmonised by Johann Sebastian Bach. This famous melody was used by Bach in a number of his works, notably the St Matthew Passion. It was a moving experience and our singing seemed to be appreciated by the other visitors.

Dresden is the capital of the State of Saxony and historically was the residence of the prince-electors with numerous impressive official buildings reflecting their power and prestige. Destroyed by the World War II bombing, these have now mostly been successfully rebuilt. Leipzig, by contrast, has been a major centre of trade for centuries and is the larger of the two cities. However, Leipzig can also rival Dresden in its musical heritage with most of the greatest composers of the 18th and 19th centuries in the central European tradition living or studying for periods in the city. We visited the apartments of the families of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Robert Schumann, now museums. The Mendelssohn apartment was particularly impressive and we attended the weekly Sunday morning concert, listening to Tchaikovsky's great elegiac Piano Trio in A minor in the room used by Mendelssohn for his own concerts.

Probably the greatest composer with a lengthy association with Leipzig is J S Bach, who was cantor of the Thomaskirche (St Thomas' Church) from 1723 to his death in 1750. We attended the Friday performance of motets (anthems) and the Saturday performance of motets and a Bach cantata for the 14th Sunday after Trinity by its famous choir. The motets included a beautiful setting of 'Ubi caritas' by the present-day Welsh composer Paul Mealor, whose Welsh Kyrie was sung by Sir Bryn Terfel



at the coronation of King Charles III. The Bach cantata was sung from the west gallery by the choir with three soloists, accompanied by instrumentalists from the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the church organ. The large church was full on both occasions.

We also had an excursion to Halle in the neighbouring state of Saxony-Anhalt to visit the birthplace of George Frederick Handel and its museum, and the nearby church (another Frauenkirche) where he was baptised. In the church we sang the hymn 'Thine be the glory, risen conquering son' to the tune Maccabaeus,

taken from Handel's oratorio of that name.

As for the beer, Carole and I enjoyed the local Saxony brews, especially in one of the pub-restaurants, which had its own micro-brewery. As we were leaving we noticed a large bell called the Johannes-Glocke, which was struck on the hour. It was engraved 'Frauenkirche' but we did not have the time to discover its exact provenance. Still, it seemed to confirm a harmonious relationship between the church and beer. This is something well supported in the Tring Team!

Martin Wells
St Peter & St Paul



Beer and hymns



I have never been to Greenbelt (Jane went in her sabbatical and very much enjoyed the variety of speakers) but the concept of beer and hymns was shamelessly stolen from them. On 1 October, members and friends of Tring Team Parish were once more grateful to Jane and Richard Shardlow for their support to enable us to enjoy Harvest with a true celebration. Is it about the beer or the hymns?

I think it is the hymns – but the beer certainly makes hymn-singing all the

more enjoyable. Whilst there is a strong Christian tradition of abstinence, there is also a great tradition of beer-making, especially through monasteries.

In the 6th century St Benedict, who wrote the first rule for monastic life, emphasised that monks should earn their living and so many monasteries sold beer; but also in line with their obligation to provide hospitality, beer was safer to drink than water, so it was served to visitors. It was monks in the Middle Ages who added hops to beer to extend its life. Good people these monks! Beer was obviously so much a part of the culture of the country, that when the prayer book translated the story of the Wedding at Cana in Galilee,

they couldn't imagine barrels of wine: instead, they tell us how many firkins it was.

There wasn't any plain chant or polyphonic singing on that Sunday evening in October, but we celebrated the barley harvest, raised money for the Bishop's Harvest appeal and enjoyed rejoicing together in All Saints' Church, Long Marston. My dad's side of the family were northern non-conformists and my great aunt Nellie always reminded us that she had signed the pledge. My mum's side of the family all worked for Youngs Brewery in London.

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

Your first Christmas alone



As we head towards Christmas, there are those who want to ignore the festivities for a variety of reasons: some because they face this Christmas without a special loved one or friend, having had them pass away in the last year. Being bereaved, with all the painful emotions we experience, is an understandable reason to want to keep a low profile when everyone else seems to be getting excited.

The White Christmas service, which is a first for New Mill Baptist this year, is one I have taken many times in my previous church. The aim is to have a

short service, with others who have also experienced grief in the last year or so. I'd hope it's a safe space where tears won't feel so uncomfortable as everyone else would understand.

Whilst carols will be sung, there is time to remember your loved one, placing a named ornament on a tree, or lighting a candle in their memory.

Whichever denomination or church you go to, know you'd be welcome for this special service. It starts at 3.00pm, will finish before 4.00pm and there will be light refreshments afterwards in the hall.

Jackie Buie
New Mill Baptist Church

'White Christmas'

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



10th December
3.00pm
New Mill Baptist Church

Richard Dawkins' worst nightmare?



Your editor and I recently attended a book launch in St Martin's in the Field, in London's Trafalgar Square on one of those sweltering hot and humid evenings we had in September.

The South African launch of the same book will take place shortly at Pretoria Rugby Club, hopefully not just after an RSA triumph over one of the home nations in the Rugby World Cup.

The book, 'Coming to Faith Through Dawkins: 12 Essays on the Pathway From New Atheism to Christianity', details how twelve people: male and female; philosophers, artists, historians, engineers, scientists; atheists and sceptics; from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures – have found that Richard Dawkins' writings actually spurred them to think more deeply about Christianity through to the point of commitment. Dawkins made them ask the question: Is there a God or isn't there – search for the evidence, examine it and look for the truth because it is crucial to know the answer to this question. Then trust that evidence and commit yourself to whatever the answer is. What they found when looking for answers was that Dawkins' arguments were flawed and they were disappointed and disillusioned with his own attempts to analyse the evidence in the way a good scientist should.

Those of you of a certain vintage will recall how David Jenkins, Bishop of Durham from 1984 to 1994, was reported or misreported as describing the Resurrection as 'not a juggling trick with bones'. This and his other public pronouncements caused a number of people to reconsider their faith and led to

some fruitful 'water cooler' discussions in offices up and down the country. The book is edited by Dr Denis Alexander, a retired Immunologist from Cambridge, and Prof Alister McGrath, a former Oxford atheist biochemist turned clergyman and theologian.

Richard Dawkins is an academic evolutionary biologist and writer of some excellent popular books on biology. When he turns his hand to writing about faith, however, he shows himself to be a poor philosopher and theologian. He has written a number of books, perhaps the most famous being 'The God Delusion' of 2006. In 'The God Delusion', Dawkins argues that a supernatural creator, God, almost certainly does not exist, and that belief in a personal God qualifies as a delusion, which he defines as a persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence.

One repeated comment that Dawkins frequently makes is that the science of astronomy can predict the timing of celestial events down to a millisecond. This is completely true; but then I lug my very heavy telescope out onto the patio, leave it to cool for an hour and return when the sky gets dark, to find that the science of meteorology has let down the science of astronomy by incorrectly predicting a clear night sky (again). This happened again just this week. The idea that science always gives us the correct answer is just plainly wrong. It makes science interesting: there is still plenty to discover, calculate or comprehend.

I am still enjoying the book, but one of the best articles so far is that by Peter Byrom, who studied Drama and Theatre at the University of Kent at Canterbury and who was also at the book launch to speak about the book and his faith. Peter grew up in a Christian home but very quickly shed his faith when he left home for university only to rediscover it later. In

his essay he goes beyond my statement above that science is not infallible to say that science is incapable of actually deciding on some questions. He gives a number of examples, of which here are just three:

Moral questions

Science is incapable of shedding any light on moral questions. While science can tell us what would be a good poison with which to poison your grandma, it cannot tell you if it is right or wrong to poison your grandma. (For the avoidance of doubt, it is wrong!) Dawkins has himself acknowledged that attempts at 'evolutionary ethics' have not come to a happy ending.

Aesthetic truths

Science cannot answer questions about aesthetic truths, those which relate to beauty. Is Beethoven a better composer than Bach? Did Jane Austin write better novels than Jeffrey Archer? (For the avoidance of doubt, Jane Austin is the better writer.)

Only science is evidence-based

Science cannot prove the statement 'you should only believe what can be proved by science'. To believe is a question of faith, not of evidence, not of logic, not of measurement.

The book is a collection of narratives of lives changed by searching for the truth, looking for evidence to prove or disprove God's existence and acting on what they found. William Lane Craig, a Christian philosopher who is always worth reading, writes on the back of the book: 'This is a novel book: real-life stories of people who actually come to faith, not in spite of but through Richard Dawkins. It must be his own worst nightmare!'

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team

WI CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

Victoria Hall

18 November 2023

10.00-12.30

Raffle ★ Cakes ★ Bulbs

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ALL WELCOME!

See you later...

I have learned a few things about grief.

It is not a temporary feeling but rather an eternal one with many changing seasons. Grief hurts in places that are hard to point to because the pain in your heart overflows into every other crevice that exists inside of your body.

Sometimes grief longs to be held

and pushes you away at the same time. It runs both for freedom and for shelter. It wants to heal but without letting go. Grief lands on your chest whenever and however and wherever it chooses. It is not bound by space or time or distance and I can guarantee you that it will always find a way to come to the surface.

Grief lays its weary head down and waits for rain, for sun, for wild winds, for peace – oh precious, precious peace. Grief reminds us that death is not a goodbye, but the longest and hardest 'See you later'.

Ullie-Kaye
Supplied by Margaret Oram
St Peter & St Paul

'I am the Door'



After being told that Jesus is the Light of the World (John 9) we move on in John 10 to hear that he is the door or gate to the sheepfold and that the one who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep is a thief and a bandit.

The original Greek word is usually translated 'door', but in English we would normally use the word 'gate' when referring to the place where sheep are kept. If we watch 'One Man and his Dog' on television we do not expect the dog to drive the sheep through a 'door'! Further, the word 'fold' is used of the open courtyard in front of the house where the sheep were kept for the night – so commentators tell us. (For further information about the practicalities of keeping sheep, consult the Rector of Tring rather than his father-in-law, the present writer!)

We are told, too, that the sheep are known by name and that they only answer to the shepherd's voice and will not follow a stranger. This teaching is referred to as 'a figure of speech', which the hearers of Jesus do not understand (John 10:6) so he goes on to tell them that he is the gate and explains that he is the gate through which whoever enters will be saved and receive life. He contrasts himself as the giver of life with the thief who steals, kills and destroys. All this leads on to the more famous and familiar title of the Good Shepherd (to be considered later). The emphasis on Christ as the door is to make the point that he (and he alone) is the means of access to the spiritual fold, to the life eternal.

If we stop to think about it, it is strange that we are told 'all who came

before me are thieves and robbers'. After all, John 1 tells us that John the Baptist came before Jesus and reference is made there to the law given through Moses. Our first instinct is to say the characters of the Old Testament – Abraham, Moses, Elijah, David, Isaiah and all the prophets – are those who have gone before him; but, clearly, this is not the case. The harshness of the language, thieves, brigands (or bandits), makes clear that other sorts of leader are being described. The references seem to be those in Israel's more recent history who collaborated with foreign rulers. In the books of the Maccabees, we read of such people and of those who favoured abandoning Jewish laws and customs in favour of Greek ways. Or, nearer Jesus's time, there are those who rebelled against Roman rule and claimed to be heaven-sent or, indeed, the true Messiah. Acts 5 mentions Theudas who 'claimed to be somebody' and Judas, the Galilean, described as a 'false leader'. So, there is rather strong language used against those who claim to be leaders but are not. The gate keeper is the only one whom the sheep will follow. This is not understood by Christ's hearers. So, Jesus has to make it clear – he is the gate and it is only through him that abundant life can come. It is a clear either/or situation – the gateway to life or the gateway for the thief who kills and destroys.

All this is part of the continuing conflict with the Pharisees and Sadducees. By the time the fourth Gospel was written, relationships had hardened between those who followed Jesus and those who rejected him. Sometimes in the Gospel the 'Jews' is used in a way that causes us to forget Jesus and all his followers were Jews. In view of hardened attitudes, the fourth Gospel emphasises Jesus as the gate as opposed to the

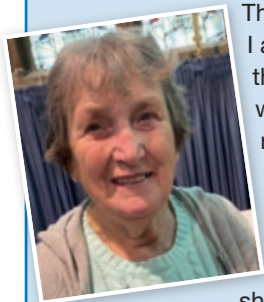
thieves and bandits.

Jesus is then the Gate through which all who wish to be saved must pass. Of course, it is not unfamiliar language. For example, Psalm 118:20 tells us 'This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it' – a verse applied to Jesus very early in the life of the Christian church. Possibly Jesus had this psalm in mind when we read in the same psalm 'the stone which the builder rejected has become the chief corner stone'. Later on, this psalm was taken to refer to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Perhaps here we may note similar language used in Matthew 7:17 where Jesus refers to the narrow door or gate that leads to salvation. Here the word used means 'door' rather than 'gate' but the idea is similar. John's Gospel does not suggest the door or gate is narrow, yet there is a certain exclusivity expressed – only one door, only a narrow one.

Readers of this article are no doubt familiar with these titles of Jesus and probably find them helpful, even inspiring – light, door, shepherd and so on. Yet we can make these things a little more challenging! We are taught Jesus is the Son of God, the one through whom we come to the Father. We must indeed enter through THE GATE, that is Jesus, the son of Mary. Yet in this modern world we are more aware than ever of inclusivity, of the needs of a multi-faith society, of a secular society and so on. So, what about other faiths? What about unbelievers? What about the uncommitted or doubtful? Is Jesus the only gateway to the Father? What about those who refuse to enter? What about those who are in ignorance? We believe for ourselves, but also, it is only God who judges, not us!

Martin Banister
St Albans Cathedral

To be or not to be driving my car



That is the question I asked myself in the spring. The car was old and would need money spent on it and, being in my 80s, was my concentration as good as it should be?

I decided to give up my car and I am so pleased with my decision.

I am walking so much more and enjoying our beautiful scenery and birdsong. I save money from petrol, car servicing, maintenance and parking fees, so I can now afford the occasional taxi.

I am so pleased with my free bus pass for out-of-town journeys and I find

people are so kind with offering lifts. It was definitely the right decision for me and, in a small way, I am helping the environment.

Beryl Poll
St Peter & St Paul

The NAAFI wreath

Year after year, Beth Scraggs has attended the Remembrance Day service and wreath-laying afterwards outside the Parish Church in Tring – and among all those who are represented there, the NAAFI have always been absent.

Beth was 18 when she decided to volunteer to serve in the war, to support the country and the war effort. So,



having decided that the NAAFI (the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) was the service she wanted to apply for, she went for her interview at the headquarters opposite the Imperial War Museum.

'They accepted me and I was told I would get my posting, but it could be anywhere that they needed

me,' said Beth. 'I was called up on 23 August 1943, starting my duties at Stoutham Barracks near Guildford.'

Beth is soon to celebrate her 99th birthday. This year's wreath-laying outside the Parish Church will be different. Beth will be laying her own wreath to



commemorate the part played by the NAAFI in WWII.

The Editor

TRING CHARITIES
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MILLENNIUM EDUCATION FOUNDATION



Are you hoping to go to University or College in 2023, but are concerned that financial resources might not match up to the requirements?

Are you under the age of 22? Have you lived in Aldbury, Long Marston, Marsworth, Pitstone, Puttenham, Tring, Wigginton or Wilstone for at least three years?

To see if you would be eligible for a grant, apply to Tring Charities' Millennium Education Foundation for information and an application form.

Website details:
www.tringcharities.co.uk/education
Telephone: Elaine Winter, Secretary to the Trustees 01442 827913
Email: info@tringcharities.co.uk

Please note that the closing date is 15 November 2023 to lodge a completed application for grants payable from Autumn the following year.

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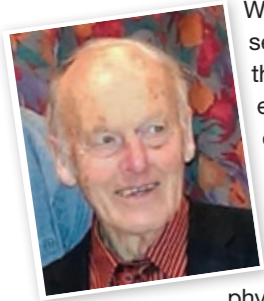
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We will remember them



War: the word itself sends shudders through our minds especially as all of us are living through a time of war on the continent, and although not physically involved,

we can get emotionally moved by all the suffering and destruction that is going on in Ukraine and now also in the Middle East.

But usually a call to 'remember them' is linked mostly to the two World Wars and the lesser wars that have occurred since then. What does it mean to 'remember them'? For some it could mean remembering a member of their family or a friend who fought, suffered or even died in a conflict. Mostly, however, it should remind us of the tremendous cost for many to overcome an aggressor to enable all of us to live in freedom.

War is something which the vast majority of people in the world do not want, whether it is a personal feud with another person, a domestic or community disagreement or a call to defend their country when many are 'called to arms' conscripted to fight for king and country and to defend our own loved ones so that we can live in the way we always have – even if that is imperfect. We fear invasion of our territory and loss of freedom, yet would prefer not to be involved.

War is bloodthirsty and senseless. When an armistice is called, we ask why could they not have sat around a table and talked, because the conflict has achieved nothing except sheer misery and death for many. It certainly brings out qualities of courage, endurance and bravery in some when faced with overwhelming situations. Some acts are known and rewarded but I am quite sure that there were far more occasions of extreme bravery and self-sacrifice that were never known about, never



witnessed and had no recognition. For a man to go 'over the top' knowing he will face a hail of bullets – well, we cannot even enter into that unless we ourselves had faced it. Imagine dragging a badly wounded comrade through no-man's land, through shell holes and what extreme courage and devotion it takes. Many who lay suffering in indescribable agony and facing almost certain death must have thought, 'Is this is what my life has been for – to die far from home in extreme pain?'

My own remembrances are based on reading and re-reading my father's own personal account from his memoirs written after he survived the First World War. These were only discovered some time after his death in 1957. Here was a man, quiet, humble, kind and compassionate, living a simple life as a Post Office sorter, who became caught up in so many death-defying situations that it makes the reader wonder how he ever endured it or survived. As a committed Christian, he knew that God had a plan for his life, but many Christians were killed then and in every war. This raises an interesting subject to debate. (I thank God for his survival as, later, I was given a life and can thank God for all his blessings to me).

I have been given permission to include some excerpts from his book, 'Walter's War', which my daughter put together from his three books of very neat handwriting (which I still have). He and many others had to endure so much: having to advance with bayonet fixed and gun blazing – totally foreign to their nature, for king and country, family and friends and for the cause of freedom; shells falling all day long on the trenches they were in; trenches two feet deep in water and mud; burying bodies, some of his comrades and those he worked with as a sorter (he was in the Post Office Rifles); long marches with heavy packs of ammunition etc; lack of sleep making it almost impossible to stay awake on guard duty; rats everywhere; lice in all clothing; danger of frostbite in extreme cold weather; mud so deep that some had to be hauled out; facing not just bullets but barbed wire when in no-man's-land; going without food and water in prolonged battle; hearing screams of agony from fallen comrades and being unable to help; when in enemy trenches, having to walk over piles of dead bodies; and many more.



'It was 4am on Monday, 16th March when the German guns started and for the first time we experienced the full fury of a modern bombardment. All day they pelted us mercilessly, never pausing for a moment. The shells were falling three or four at a time all around us. Of our platoon of ten three were wounded in about ten minutes. Our barricade began to go in places. We went higher up the trench then back again. All we could do was crouch down. It was a great strain. The shells must have been what they called "coal boxes" for each explosion was enveloped in thick, black smoke. FOR 18 HOURS WE ENDURED THIS.'

'From Festubert we were to go up the infamous "Yellow Road" to the trenches. The Germans were heavily shelling that road. This road was only about 200 yards long but shells were falling thick and fast to cut off reinforcements. We went forward at a sharp pace. Shells shrieked over our heads and fell beyond the road. At last, when we were about 25 yards from the barricade a shell came crashing right in the middle of us. It seemed to me that it came right at me and the explosion was deafening and demoralising. When I got up I heard men crying out. The Captain in front of me was never seen again. We somehow got to the front line to relieve the Canadians, but found ourselves in a perilous position for the Germans were not only in front of us but actually in the same trench! After 48 hours we were relieved having been under strain and uncertainty every minute. The sights we had seen were enough to unnerve anybody. Of food and drink we had scarcely anything.'

The Daily Express published a long article about this battle – 'Postal workers and the public all over the country will learn with a thrill of pride of the gallantry at the front of the Post Office Rifles, 8th London,

those fearless fighters of Festubert fame. No fewer than three D.C.M.s were awarded to this fearless Territorial unit.' Another highly dangerous incident occurred at the top of a slag heap in the dark and rain when his Platoon came, literally within touching distance of Germans. Later, for four nights they had to stay on guard lying on the slag in pitch darkness from 8.00pm to 5.30am. It was almost beyond human endurance to stay awake.

My dad was also in the Battle of Loos; Vimy Ridge; Bullecourt (where he won the Military Medal; the Hindenburg Line; 3rd Battle of Ypres, but, as the Germans were launching a 'Final Assault' in March 1918, he was wounded and taken prisoner.

'Taking a stretcher back to what I thought was the Field Dressing Station a bullet flicked by very close to our heads. As we crawled along more bullets flicked very close. This happened several times. It was remarkable we were not hit for the firing was at close range. We managed to get to some tall grass. Volleys of bullets made it even more remarkable we were not riddled. One bullet went through the base of my helmet leaving a small hole on one side and a jagged hole on the other yet somehow missing my head. With the crash I put my hands to my head to hold my head together when another bullet tore my hand open.'

The Germans advanced with bayonets drawn and took him prisoner. He was taken finally to East Prussia to work in a coal mine. He, and about 400 other prisoners from France, Belgium and Russia, had no experience of mining and dreaded going half a mile down into the bowels of the earth, having to stoop and do very heavy work under a bullying German whose language they didn't understand. They also had nothing to do when returned to the surface, covered with coal dust. Fights would break out for use of showers. There were no letters from home. In fact, his mother and family had been told he was 'reported missing' which was a great worry for them. He had three quite serious injuries while down the mine but still had to keep working.

'There came a time when, seeing the men passing their time aimlessly away, the words – "Sheep without a shepherd" came to me with such force and remained with me in a striking way and I resolved to have a Sunday evening service. I felt very incompetent and unworthy to attempt such a thing but the words of Jesus "Sheep without a shepherd" kept running through my mind.'

Permission was given and my father put a notice up. He had a New Testament which he carried throughout the war (which I still have) and a prayer book with hymns. It had to be held in the shower

room where there was just one light and a loud hissing noise. Forty men turned up and a violinist offered to play the hymns which Dad read out.

'I think I spoke a few words. If ever anything was attempted with a feeling of unfitness and inadequacy surely it was this service and several more which were held. But surely that very feeling of weakness was my greatest strength for I could place no dependence on myself or others.'

At length the Armistice came but, for a time, it made no difference; eventually he was taken to the Dutch border, then from Rotterdam to Great Yarmouth, then by coaches to Ripon, the demobilisation centre and so, by train, to King's Cross which was near his home. What a welcome back that must have been, although he never mentions it.

I know that war has changed over the centuries from bows and arrows, spears and swords to dynamite, guns and shells, tanks, planes and ships, but modern war now is so sophisticated that you can lose your life when miles away from the action as civilians died in the Blitz and many merchant ships were sunk.

The atom bomb brought an end to the war in the Far East, but such a weapon still hangs as a threat to all life on the globe.

John Young
Akeman Street Baptist Church

Letter from Orkney

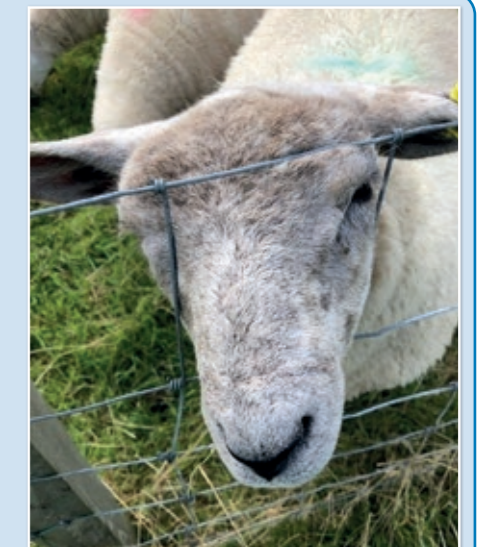


To those folk with inordinate amounts of patience and fortitude who are still reading the scribbles of these exiles who left Tring six years ago, we salute you for your endurance. To those who have no idea who we are, have no interest in what we're up to here in the far north, and therefore don't read it – I don't blame you.

To continue: we have waved goodbye to our last summer visitors. It is always a joy to showcase Orkney to people experiencing it for the first time. These days I usually drive and Mac gives a running commentary on everything from the neolithic archaeology, landscape and wildlife here to expressing his views on cruise liners (see October Comment) as well

as commenting on everything else that is wrong in the world today. It's always good to see your home with the fresh eyes of a visitor and appreciate anew what we have here.

As the days get shorter and the shadows grow longer, it is a magical time of year with amazing light, and, of course, the aurora borealis season has started, evident in the dark skies. Apparently, it's going to be a good season for the 'merrie dancers'. This time of year also signals that it's a time of livestock movement, and the sheep in our front paddock are about to be taken to market. These sheep are owned by a friend and include Jimbo – a caddy lamb who was bottle-fed when his mum rejected him after he escaped one night. He is a very affectionate and friendly soul. Note to self: never get to know or name a sheep who is destined for market. Too late. This is, of course, all part of the farming life and, apart



from the punishingly hard work and long hours, a main reason why I could never be a farmer. Having lived next to a farm for the last few years, I have the greatest respect for what they do, whether it's livestock or arable. This is all part of the rhythm of life whether it's here or in Hertfordshire.

Carrie Dodge
Milestone Church, Dounby

November reflections



This article is a follow-up to my earlier one, 'Thanking St Paul', published in the January 2023 edition of *Comment*. As I explained in that article, we had gone to

Italy in 2022 to give thanks to St Paul at the basilica in Rome where he is buried, for his intercession with God which we believe led to my recovery from serious illness in November 2020.

After visiting Rome, we headed for Venice and, on the day after arriving, found ourselves in St Mark's Square bemused by the crowds of people next to the basilica. My first thoughts were that we should not join the long queue wanting to go into the basilica but should instead seek out somewhere quieter. However, my wife wanted to see inside and so we enquired what time the Masses were. We learned that there was a Mass being said at that moment so we made our way to the side entrance (where we were allowed in without queuing) and joined the congregation. At the end of the Mass, at my wife's instigation (I would not have been so



bold), we followed the priest as he left the altar and asked cheekily if we might book a Mass intention for the following day. He readily agreed and told us to follow him into the sacristy (the priest's changing room) where we attended to the necessary paperwork. The intention was for the deceased members of our families and for our deceased friends. After all, November is the month when we especially remember the dead, and in our church at Corpus Christi, Tring,

there is always a November 'dead list' placed before the altar, containing names of all those the parishioners wish to pray for. Most Catholics (but not most Protestants) believe that by praying for the dead we can shorten their time in purgatory. Catholics believe most people end up there when they die if they are not entirely without blemish (and no one is entirely without sin) and if they are not wholly bad. They will spend time there to account, Catholics believe, for their sins. They will be

aware of Heaven and long to enter, but will be unable to do so until they have been punished sufficiently and are then judged fit to enter.

The following day we made our way again to St Mark's Basilica and waited there for Mass to begin. We had arrived at the church earlier than expected and, while we waited, I looked around and admired the mosaics in the floor, the marble columns and the beautiful paintings on the walls. The altar server appeared shortly before the Mass began and opened the metal gates leading to the sanctuary. Ahead of us on the altar of this chapel in the basilica was the beautiful icon of the Blessed Virgin Nicopeia. To one side of us the rest of the church was roped off and here the tourists mingled, took photographs and walked around. To me the rope separating us seemed like the barrier I supposed might exist between purgatory (where the tourists were) and heaven (which lay in front of us). The gates to Heaven (the sanctuary where we believe God is present in the tabernacle) had been opened prior to the Mass and we now waited for the judge of our souls (here in the basilica represented by the priest) to enter. Towards the end of the Mass, when Holy Communion was distributed, it seemed to me that this was symbolic of those who had been judged worthy being allowed to enter the eternal kingdom.

'Food is Heaven' is the title of a poem by the Korean poet, Kim Chia Ha and the third verse goes like this: Food is heaven / As we eat / God enters us / Food is heaven.



On leaving the church I was struck by the many tourists standing around, taking selfies with their phones, sitting around the square indulging in their expensive coffees (12 Euros each in St Mark's Square!) or looking in the shops (where a handbag can cost as much as



4,000 Euros), coveting what they wanted now but could not take with them to the next world. These people seemed to me to be those who had not yet heard of Christ and were instead turning their attention to the temporary delights of this world. These were the people I thought

for whom we have responsibility to help and pray for so they might learn how to change their lives, to turn away from the temporary delights, and to find their way to God and his everlasting kingdom.

Michael Demidecki
Corpus Christi Church

The first Dorset COP



I was among over 200 people who attended the first Dorset COP held on 9 September at the Corn Exchange in Dorchester.

COPs – Conference of the Parties – are normally held in grand cities and are international events. However, the Dorset COP, which took over a year to prepare for, was held to allow a number of community-based groups from across the county to raise awareness of the need to act locally in the face of climate change.

There was an excellent mix of

environmental campaigns and a number of workshops and presentations took place in the course of the day. I took part in a workshop where we looked at how a small town might look in the future: 'Developing a vision of a net zero county'. There was also an interesting presentation from several people who are running eco-friendly businesses.

The day started with a short video of Chris Packham commending the initiative and wishing everyone well – this can be seen if you go to Dorset COP using a search engine, where you can also see more information about what the day offered.

Tobias Ellwood, MP for East Bournemouth came, the only MP, I think,

who accepted the COP's invitation to attend. He showed interest and commitment to working towards climate change and was willing to engage with some attendees when challenged.

I did not stay for the whole time, finding it rather overwhelming, but full of admiration for people who are working hard to spur Councils to show political will and leadership, so that a greener, cleaner, more resilient and bio-diverse county can emerge for future generations.

Margaret Whiting
formerly St Peter & St Paul and
Tring Justice & Peace Group

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



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Funeral hymns



I have been to far too many funerals in the last few years. The deaths of elderly family members and friends in our church family have meant singing many hymns chosen

by the deceased or by their families. It always stirs an interest in me – probably as, somewhere in my peripheral consciousness, I am imagining my own funeral and thinking about what I would choose. (I try not to think about what people will say about me!)

My husband, so determined is he to bypass all doubt, has already compiled a list of his hymns: 'My Song is Love Unknown', 'Love Divine' to the tune Blauenwern, 'Guide me, O thou Great Redeemer' in 4-part harmony; and readings (Romans 8:31-39 and John 14:1-14) which include the poem that should on no account be read ('Death is nothing at all')! He would like instead Alfred Lord Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar' and 'Even such is time' by Frances Drake. Look them up – they are good! His intro music would be Barry's 'I was glad' and going out Bryn Terfel singing 'Calon Lân' in Welsh – yes, he is proud of his Welsh heritage.

Perhaps the most interesting funeral I have been to in that regard was that of Victoria MacDonald years ago. She knew death was approaching and had planned her funeral meticulously. Among her hymns she had 'Bless the Lord, all my soul (Ten thousand reasons)' which raised the roof in St Peter & St Paul's with those rejoicing with her – she was now in her father's house where there are many rooms – and there was a place prepared for her.

Someone from St Martha's Methodist Church said they wanted 'Abide with Me' for memories of being on the football terraces!

When Sheila Whitehead died, I was asked what her favourite hymn had been – not because I knew her better than her husband, but because some years ago (2016-2017 to be precise), *Comment* recorded monthly the favourite hymns people had sent to me. Her funeral hymns were: 'The Lord's my Shepherd', 'Inspired by love and anger' (a hymn about social justice and God wanting us

to walk in the footsteps of Jesus as we live our lives) and 'Love Divine'.

If you haven't thought about your funeral yet and can bear to do so, do write to me or email comment.magazine@gmail.com with your choice and why you would like those hymns or readings. Here are the first few in the boxes we prepared beforehand in true 'Blue Peter' style...

The Editor

Hymns for my funeral

'Love Divine' to the tune of Blauenwern because it's very joyous and uplifting and it's very well known so everyone will sing it lustily and it will raise the roof and make everyone smile. In G major – no higher! 'Lord of all Hopefulness', because, again, it's well known and enjoyable to sing, and the words and tune together are like a consoling hug. In E flat major, which is somehow a comforting key, comfortable to sing in. 'Abide with me' because it's so peaceful and comforting. We sang it at my grandmother's funeral – I was very close to her and so it would be lovely to have it at mine as well. In D major – just somehow the right key to make it quiet and calm.

Anna LeHair
St Peter & St Paul

'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' I chose for my mother's funeral and then for my husband's. I want it, too. I like the words and feel they have a depth of true meaning. 'Tell out my soul' is a personal favourite. I love the tune and I love the Magnificat. For me that is one of the highlights at Evensong.

Christine Rutter
St Mary's, Puttenham

'When a knight won his spurs', as it reminds me of the beautiful Christian seeds sown in my life by my Sunday School teachers and primary school assemblies and my daughter's

wedding. 'Fight the Good Fight', as it was the first hymn at my husband's funeral. The original words are so powerful and desperately needed in this world. 'Lord of the Dance' will be my final hymn.

Gill Barber
St Martha's Methodist Church

I haven't decided on hymns yet, but one possibility I have had in mind for some time is Stuart Townend's version of the 23rd psalm, 'The Lord's my shepherd'. This is a popular lively version and good to sing by choir and congregation. It was also chosen for Barry Child's funeral – what a splendid occasion!

Martin Wells
St Peter & St Paul

'Lord of All Hopefulness' as a hymn for everyone to sing and 'God be in My Head' for people to listen to. This is very special as it was sung at my wedding and is very suitable for both. I would also like people to listen to the Gaelic Blessing for its feeling of peace. For my incoming music I would like part of Vaughan Williams' 'Dives and Lazarus' and I have already prepared a disc with upland sounds, river and some bird song. For the leaving music, I would like the Gloria from 'Misa Criolla' by Ramirez, an Argentinian folk composer, for its cheerfulness and message of hope.

Anon
St Martha's Methodist Church

Funeral music



I wonder who among the younger generation knows what 45s, 78s, even LPs, were.

When I was a teenager, my record collection amounted to

a totally random handful of items, ranging from Cliff Richard ('Living Doll'), through 'Ball, Barber and Bilk' to Prokofiev's 'Classical Symphony', all of which I played over and over again on a Danette record-player. But my favourite piece was Bach's 'Magnificat', which I had been given as a birthday present. And my favourite movement

is the wonderful alto/tenor duet 'Et Misericordia' ('And His mercy is on them that fear him').

Seeing that by this point I am going to be needing all the mercy I can get, this is the music I would nominate for my funeral.

Carole Wells, St Peter & St Paul

The final journey home



When we are young and full of life, we don't often dwell on our latter years and our final journey home. Well, I didn't for sure: I was far too busy enjoying my life, going here

and there and making the most of every opportunity that came my way.

But it is a sobering thought when (and I have been blessed with the three score years and 10 plus some) suddenly the reality that there are far more years behind me than lie ahead dawns. For my final departure, which hopefully will not be for a few more years yet, I have thought about the following hymns.

My first choice would be Mission Praise 760, 'Trust and obey'.

*When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word,
what a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.*

*Trust and obey,
for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus,
but to trust and obey.*

This hymn for me just about sums up the Christian's life path. I had a good example from my parents and wider family and was brought up in a Christian household, visiting the local parish church on Sunday mornings and then being sent off to the next town on the bus to attend the Baptist Church afternoon Sunday School, as my mother was

brought up in a non-conformist home. Very often I would also visit an evening service when back at home. So Sundays were very full, but as I look back, I am grateful for my Christian grounding... it has stood me in good stead for the rest of my life.

We were never promised an easy journey through life but we were promised that Jesus would walk with us every step of our way, if we only, 'Hold fast to him and trust and obey'.

This would be very closely followed by Mission Praise 201, 'Guide me, Oh thou great Jehovah'. This is my prayer that God will guide me and support me every step of my daily walk. I am weak and easily tempted, so I really need God's help to keep me true to his calling for the rest of my days.

Valerie Carr
New Mill Baptist Church

Funerals as celebrations



I think the most interesting music at a Funeral or Service of Thanksgiving is that which is chosen to personally represent the person whose life is being remembered, not necessarily hymns.

The exit music we chose for my dad was 'Colonel Bogey', as he had served

in the army. A lovely lady, who spent her final years in Wilstone, originally came from east London, and she chose, 'Wish Me Luck as you Wave Me Goodbye' as the closing piece of music at her funeral service, a brilliant reflection of her approach to life. At the end of the cremation service for my aunt, the family had chosen Edith Piaf singing, 'Je ne regrette rien', another inspired choice.

For my mum it was easy, as she had written down exactly what she

wanted, and despite her love of all types of music, all her choices were hymns, including 'Morning has broken' and 'How great thou art'. The service concluded with 'You shall go out with joy'. All the hymns reflected not just her faith but her love of the natural world, and her belief that a life should be celebrated not mourned.

Alison Cockerill
St Cross, Wilstone

Crossing to Canaan's side



Now we no longer have evening services, our beautiful evening hymns are sadly falling out of the repertoire of our congregations.

I once heard someone say that she thought the evening services were a rehearsal for her funeral. Evensong certainly has that feeling, which is perhaps why it has fallen out of favour.

It was wonderful that the Queen chose 'Abide with Me' and 'The Day Thou Gavest Lord is ended' for her funeral. I

remember being at an evening service when our son was living in Canada in around 2001-3 and singing the verse: 'The sun that bids us rest is waking / Our brethren 'neath the western sky...' I suddenly thought of William in Canada. I had never considered that line before.

I love these evening hymns: 'Lead Kindly Light amid the encircling gloom' by Cardinal Newman, 'The duteous day now closeth' by Robert Bridges, 'Jerusalem the Golden' is a beautiful hymn for a funeral – being a hymn about Heaven, 'Glory to Thee, my God this night' to the tune of Tallis' Canon, 'Saviour again to Thy dear name we raise...'

But the problem with all the above

hymns is that they are really no longer known by many people. I love the sound of congregational singing, so, for a good sing, I would choose as follows: 'Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah', with the last verse about treading the verge of Jordan and crossing to Canaan's side (Heaven); 'As with gladness men of old' with the verses about bringing our ransomed souls to the place where we need no star to guide and the heavenly country needing no created light: 'Thou its light its joy its crown / Thou its sun which goes not down.... Topped with David Wilcocks' descant it would be lovely!

Rosemary Berdinner
St Martha's Methodist Church

In memory of Revd Janet Elizabeth Ridgway

Born in 1940, Janet passed away peacefully at Watford General Hospital on Thursday 11 September, aged 83.

Janet was born in Buxton, Derbyshire, the only child of Sidney and May Gibson. Born during World War II, her experiences from that time shaped the rest of her life. Many prisoners of war were sent to Buxton to work in the quarry. As Sidney was a dental surgeon, some of the prisoners came to him for dental treatment, one of whom was Willy Baumann. Willy became friends with the Gibson family and was like a brother to Janet; it was a friendship that they kept until Willy passed away many years later.

It is probably at least in part due to this friendship that, in 1950, the Gibson family had a 'holiday of a lifetime' to France, Switzerland and Germany'.



Although Janet was only 10 at this time and did not speak more than a few words of German, it's clear that the experiences and friendships that she formed during that holiday further increased her love for Germany.

In 1960 Janet moved to Dusseldorf and had been working there for two years when the death of her father prompted her return to England. It was at this time, when Janet was working at the Austrian Embassy in London, that she met Michael Ridgway. They married in 1963 and set up home in Harrow. Their daughter Jennifer was born in 1965 and son Adam in 1967.

Throughout the rest of her life, Janet was incredibly proud of her family. She loved to gather everyone together to catch up on what was happening, share good times and strengthen the family bonds.

The family moved to Barleycombe, Aldbury, in 1968. Janet and Micky were

enthusiastic about their involvement in all aspects of village life. She was an active member of St John the Baptist Church: as her involvement in the church grew, she was encouraged to explore ministry. Her training with the Diocese of St Albans began in 1983 and in 1986 was licensed as a deaconess. She was then ordained a deacon in 1987. In 1994 Janet was in the first group of women to be ordained as priest at St Albans Abbey.

Through her work as a priest, Janet found a role in the community that she loved. She demonstrated her passion for inclusion by welcoming everyone and keeping in touch with those that her life touched. She sought ways to help people feel they belonged, which brought many into the church and the wider community of Aldbury.

Janet greatly enjoyed her involvement in the Team Parish link with Pskov and became a close friend of Father Pavel. She made several trips to Pskov, one of which was a road trip with the group that drove a minibus as a gift for the church community.

Janet was a Mothers' Union diocesan Trustee and Vice President from 2007 - 2012. As well as the Tring Branch Leader for over three years, she had been Deanery Chairman and Deanery Chaplain.

Sadly, Janet's husband Michael passed away in 2004. Barleycombe



remained her home for as long as possible, until she moved to Berkhamsted in 2022. Shortly after leaving Aldbury, Janet was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, a condition she was frustrated by but accepting of. However, over the next ten months, Janet became increasingly frail and it was only three days before she passed away that she was diagnosed with cancer, which ultimately caused her death.

Until the end of her life, Janet sought to build connections with all those she met. Having travelled the world through her working life and on holidays, she brought extensive knowledge and skill when building friendships. When talking about her life, it was these relationships she looked back most fondly on. Many who knew her described her fondly as a force of nature.

Janet is survived by her two children, Jennifer and Adam, their partners and four grandchildren.

The family would like to collect your memories of Janet. Please email your memories to jennywalsh65@gmail.com

Adam Ridgway



Remembering Barry Child

Barry's DIY Eulogy

1. Why did Barry move to Tring?
2. What were his first impressions of Vivianne?
3. How many years has he played in the Panto Band?
4. What was his proudest brass band moment?
5. When was the Volvo Amazon last driven?
6. Who played Tubby the Tuba in 1992?
7. How long did he work for Kodak?
8. Has he ever not finished a kebab?
9. When did he start Child Associates IT repairs?
10. How do you spell the country below Kazakhstan on the map?



The heart of the gospel



St Paul has the ability to frustrate and amaze in equal measure. Sometimes his writing is almost impenetrable, and in the pastoral epistles can seem downright misogynistic. However, he also has an amazing liberating theology and, at his best, his writing cannot be bettered. Cliched as it is, his treatise on love in 1 Corinthians stands the test of time, but one of my favourite of his passages is found in the letter to the Romans. It has been adapted into a blessing. It could easily stand as the heart of the gospel:

*Go forth into the world in peace;
be of good courage;
hold fast that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted;
support the weak;
help the afflicted;
honour everyone;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.*

**Huw Bellis
Tring Team**



1. 1972. Barry, Bridget, Pat and Keith moved to Tring, as Keith's job at Kodak moved to Hemel Hempstead. They went to visit a Kodak friend in Millview Rd who said "next door is for sale". Sold.

2. 1976. Barry and Vivianne met at a Tring School Band summer day workshop. Barry put Vivianne's sandwiches on a high shelf that she couldn't reach so she threw orange juice all over his new cheesecloth shirt.

3. 1978. The 1st Chuckles panto was Aladdin at the Victoria Hall. In the Spring of 1977 Session 2 (the panto band) played at Stoke Mandeville Hospital and Jimmy Saville autographed Barry's tuba case. 45 years later, having worked with many legendary musical directors, he played for Uncle Tony in the 2022 rendition of Dick Whittington. The most commonly heard phrase in the Child household is "panto song!".

4. 1986. Barry played for lots of bands in lots of places, but he was especially proud of playing with Hanwell Band at the Queen Elizabeth Hall for the London Brass Band Festival.

5. 1987. Barry and Vivianne married in this church on 20th June. At 4.30pm, just as Rev John Payne Cook asked if there was 'any just cause or impediment' a storm started, and the rain hammered onto the roof. We couldn't have the bells as they were being re-hung, so we're very grateful that the bellringers could ring today. This day was the last day that Barry's Volvo Amazon was driven, although it's now being restored ready for the 2024 Tring Carnival.

6. 1992. Barry was a very good tuba player but very modest. He played the solo part in Tubby the Tuba with Hemel Hempstead Orchestra and to embarrass him, the brass and percussion section presented him with a huge number of pot plants.

7. 1994. Barry started work at Kodak in 1976 and stayed for 22 years. Doing lots of different jobs he had a great time, working with some wonderful people. In 1994 he was excited to travel to Moscow for a month. They flew with B.A. because Kodak forbade any of their employees to fly with Aeroflot. They were also told to take their own bath plug.

8. 1998. Zoey was born. After nine hours at the hospital, Barry arrived home to fifteen phone messages from his mother asking what on earth was going on. He always claimed it was the only time in his life that he couldn't finish a kebab.

9. 2001. Peter was born. Barry started Child Associates as Tring's I.T. Mr Fixit. His first job saw him come back with a bottle of wine as payment and, to be honest, he never got much better at invoicing. Vivianne was forever being stopped in the street and told 'Barry fixed our computer but never sent a bill'. However, this was probably Barry's perfect job. He was happy being helpful and loved to fix things that others would have thrown away.

10. 2015. Wearing steel-toe capped trainers and carrying a huge bag of tools, Barry joined the church Habitat for Humanity team that went to Kyrgyzstan to help build a house for a local family. Barry was proud to be part of this team. Peter is still cross that he was too young to go. All his life, Barry was a volunteer, never happier than fixing things or cooking things or making things. Please come to the after-show-party where you can get to see some of his creations and maybe even take one home!

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

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August

Some of those lost to our community since last November

Dorothy Walsh
Spencer Harris
Moira Hargreaves
Sandra Thorne
Grace Hodge
Betty Aston
June Honey
Sheila Whitehead
Barry Child
Janet Ridgway
Ian Ogilvie

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.



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