

# COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



# High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



For details about our services, prayer meetings and special events visit our website.



**Morning worship**  
Worshipping together in our building and at home

**Sundays 10.30am**

zoom  
Meeting ID: 978 9592 0392 Password: highstreet



Coffee for a cause  
Tuesdays 10am-12 Noon

Fairtrade tea, coffee and homemade cake.  
Proceeds toward BMS World Mission.

**Games Afternoon**  
Wednesdays 2 - 4pm  
High Street Baptist Church, Tring

**Baby Group**  
Tuesdays 10.30am - 12 Noon

For new born and non-movers

**Tots**  
Wednesdays 9.30 - 11.30am  
Indoor fun for toddlers

**Junior Church**  
Sundays 10.30am

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

[www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk](http://www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk)

tringbaptistchurch High Street Baptist Church

## The God who leads us into all truth



I first visited the Tring area in the summer holidays of 1989, the summer in the middle of my sixth form years. A friend, Chas, and I decided to walk the

Ridgeway path. We backpacked from Ivinghoe Beacon to Avebury, camping alongside the path. I love the fact that, from many parts of our parish, we can see the iconic Ridgeway Tree (and, of course, Ridgeway has to be the best beer in the world) but, if truth be told, the path is quite dull until one reaches the neolithic sites around Avebury. These hold a fascination for me as visible signs of the spiritual life of our country from thousands of years ago.

During my recent sabbatical, there were a few days between Jane's surgery for breast cancer and the beginning of her chemotherapy when Jane had no imminent hospital trips, so I went to camp in Wiltshire again (in a bit more luxury now) and was re-captivated by the West Kennet Long Barrow. Fortunately, I had no children with me to roll their eyes.

Human remains were interred here between 3670 and 3635BC, but it is



a relatively small number of people, maybe fewer than forty. The site was only used for a short period, but for the next 1000 years or so, it seemed to be a site of significant religious significance. There is a temptation to think that it was therefore ancestor worship and that religions always have a tendency to look backwards. Some archaeologists muse that the family buried here might well have been immigrants who brought agriculture to the area and that the significance is that this marks the beginnings of a transition from a hunter-gatherer culture to pastoralists. I like the idea that the religious significance is not

that it is harking back to old times but instead the acknowledgement of a new (and better) way of life.

There is always a danger with religion and churches that we become inherently conservative. We believe in an unchanging God outside the vagaries of human fashions, a God who is the same yesterday, today and for ever. If God does not change, then nor should the church. However, this same God is the God who promises to lead us into all truth. The unchanging God leads us forwards into new and different ways of living. Are our churches dusty museums or symbols of progress?

**Huw Bellis, Tring Team**



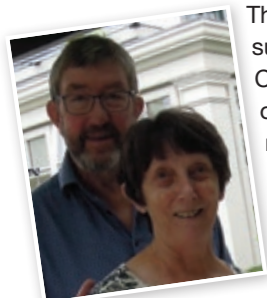
**9.30 - 11am**  
Saturday 9 Sept  
Saturday 14 Oct

**WHO LET THE DADS OUT?**

Join the fun!  
£3 suggested donation  
Suitable for children 0-10yrs

At High Street Baptist Church

# Children's Society Garden Day 2023



The Garden Day for supporters of the Children's Society on 1 July was a really enjoyable relaxed occasion blessed by sunny weather. Huge thanks to all who organised, donated

and supported the cause; you raised the wonderful sum of £2179.18 for the society and we had lots of fun. Thanks also to Charlie Greenwood for the music. Even in tough times, Tring still has a very generous heart. Thank you all.

**Prue & Grahame Senior**  
**St Peter & St Paul**



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



I have always tended towards rule-keeping rather than rebelling – but do have a rather more lax approach to conventions. Every church is different, of course, but we tend

not to stand up and heckle the vicar in St Peter & St Paul's Church, though I have in the past shaken my head vehemently at something I considered wrong spoken from the person in the front and refused to sing parts of hymns or songs with dubious theology.

The Bishop of St Albans, the Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith, came to preach in

June and I loved his message so much I almost forgot myself and clapped. I told him afterwards and he said he would have loved that! So why don't we show our appreciation in 'normal' ways rather than being restrained by the convention of polite and distant smiling in the Anglican church?

Strangely, a couple of weeks later, I realised that a new convention had grown up. We DO clap a new baby or child brought for thanksgiving to welcome them in to the church; we DO clap and sing to a person in the congregation who admits to a birthday that day or week; we DO clap our talented organist, Cliff Brown, who often plays something wonderful at the end of each service; we even clapped at the

end of Jane Banister's sermon which had been one filled with emotion as she celebrated and reflected on twenty-five years in the ordained ministry. We know how to show our appreciation – and sometimes burst with the need to do it! Would you feel comfortable if this became a more regular occurrence? What do other Tring and village churches do?

I know that in other church traditions members of the congregation might murmur 'Amen' or make other supportive sounds from the floor. I think there is something we staid Anglicans might learn from our Christian brothers and sisters elsewhere in the church!

**Annette Reynolds**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

TRING CHARITIES  
(Registered Charity No 207805)

## ALMSHOUSES IN TRING

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

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

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

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

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

# A happy summer wedding

We were extremely lucky on Friday 7 July, when our daughter, Lucy Smith, married Robert Deason at St Peter & St Paul's Church, Tring, as the sun shone. It also meant that Lucy's wish of being able to walk to the church from our home was granted. The church holds many family memories for John and me, including our own marriage ceremony thirty-seven years ago on 5 July 1986 by Revd Ralph Seymour. John has lived in Tring all his life, as has Lucy, who attended Grove Road Primary and Tring Schools. Rob and his family are from Cranfield, Bedfordshire.



the hands that even when wrinkled and aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.'

The Smith family would like to thank Revd Michelle and Janet for their hard work and the joyous service; the organist, Cliff Brown; the Tring Bellringers; Tom Green & Liam Dunachie from The Blue Lion Band for the entrance music (a slowed-down piano version of 'I'll Be There For You'); the florist, Kimberley from The Flower Boutique, Woburn; the photographers, Terri & Lori; bride's dress, White Lace and Butterflies in Great Missenden; hair, bridal hair design by Lorraine Newark; make up, bridal makeup by Juliet Cunnington; suits, Fogarty Formal Hire, Leighton Buzzard; and lastly, but by no means least, our friends and family who came to help make the day special and

memorable.

Please remember that 'Happy marriages begin when we marry the ones we love, and they blossom when we love the ones we marry'.

**Lynne Smith**  
**Mother of the bride**



The joyful and upbeat service was conducted by Revd Michelle Grace, assisted by Janet Goodyer. In Michelle's address, she related the up and downs of married life to a Toblerone, which – little did she know – is my husband's favourite chocolate bar! We had the hymns 'Lord of All Hopefulness' and 'Give Me Joy in My Heart', with the biblical reading from I Corinthians 13:1-7 whilst the other reading was 'The Blessing of the Hands' by Revd Daniel L. Harris which is simply beautiful and very apt for a wedding. The final paragraph reads: 'And lastly, these are



# My Polish heritage



Having a Polish father, I have for a long while now taken an interest in this side of my family history. I only wish I had done this sooner while my father

was still alive as there have since been so many questions I would have liked to have asked him.

One such question was answered recently, though, due to some researches my brother-in-law had made online. He discovered (which came as news to me) the whereabouts of the grave of one of my Polish uncles, Michal Demidecki-Demidowicz, about whom I previously knew only that he had died in the war in 1920 at the age of 17. But which war and why so young? I was soon to learn where he had died and why.

It turns out that my uncle had left home, much against the will of his parents, to join the Polish army in the defence of Poland from the Russians who were attacking in 1920. He joined a cavalry regiment of Polish lancers. One painting we have in our home (a family heirloom) shows two such lancers chasing three Russian Bolsheviks in the snow and I like to think that these lancers could have been from the same regiment that my uncle joined (but as yet I do not know whether this is the case).



The original memorial

In August 1920 Michal was sent to the front with others from his regiment. After a three-day stay there, he took part in a cover fight and in a horse charge near the village of Zembrow to the east of Warsaw, the fight being a preliminary one to the main Battle of Warsaw. He was severely wounded in the stomach and died on 7 August 1920.

All this was reported online because one of the inhabitants of Zembrow had suggested that Michal's memorial in a state of disrepair in the cemetery there, which had been erected by Michal's mother, and which had been cared for by generations of students and teachers of the school in Zembrow, be restored. This suggestion was taken up by the parish priest of the town's Holy Saviour Parish Church, Fr Dr Piotr Arbaszewski and the parish community. The base of the memorial with its inscription was left and, through local fundraising and with financial support given by the Institute of National Remembrance, a splendid new memorial – an angel with a cross – was commissioned and erected.

When all was ready, a ceremony was arranged at which the new memorial was consecrated. This took place on 5 September 2021 when unfortunately, because of recent ill health and the Covid-19 pandemic, we could not visit as a family. But in May 2023 my wife and I did visit Zembrow together with my sister and her son. We met there with Father Arbaszewski and, after Mass in the Holy Saviour Church, visited the cemetery and the grave of my uncle. We were shown the field where Michal died and were told he had in fact tried to help a comrade injured in the fight and that this was when he had been killed. We were shown photographs of the consecration ceremony which, as can be seen, was a magnificent occasion with soldiers on horseback from the regiment, re-enactment groups, the Bishop, scouts, church parishioners and others attending. I wish I could have been there!



Painting by Jerzy Kossak 1938

We were subsequently sent a moving description of Michal's death published in a book from 1926 called 'Abroad and at Home: One School Survival' and I would just quote from this as follows (please bear in mind this is an online translation from the original Polish so the English is not the best):

"To the village a unit of greedy, looting hands fell suddenly and larger forces, batteries and machine guns stood near the forest. Suddenly, at the turn of the road, by the windmill on the hill towards the village ran, small, because numbering only twenty-two heads, the armed forces appeared. That's our boys sitting tight on horses, with rifles in their hands, their saddles shining silver in the sun. The horses are moving faster and faster. As long as ye fly, our little soldiers, and there are enemies there... and for a few of you there is surely death. The soldiers rushed them. This small bunch – all volunteers from the 201<sup>st</sup> company of chevaulegers – all young boys, who on the call of the Chief that the homeland is in danger, threw down books, holidays or other work to go and... defend. And they



Fundraising for the restoration

wanted to defend so much that, after less than two weeks of training, they were standing at the station.

'... And pride is rising in the chests of these young people. Yesterday late in the evening they came straight from the barracks, and today they were sent to the first battle, the first baptism of fire, to dislodge the Bolsheviks from the village of Zembrow, at least for a short time, to make a diversion there, and meanwhile the regiment is able to maintain a more convenient position.



The new memorial

'And they went: young cheeks flying on horses, young blood pulsating. In the rhythm of the awakening battle, hearts flooded with the heat of enthusiasm. They rush like crazy in a tight line. Not much time has passed before the battle begins. Unequal forces, but impetus, bravado and enthusiasm turns crazy numbers. The Bolsheviks are retreating, more and more violently embraced by fear. But then – the forest begins to breathe fire. It is not the brave who wind up like old soldiers with contempt for death in their souls. New enemy troops are pouring out of the forest, and ours are still the same handful. The order to retreat is given, task accomplished, time needed spent. For now, it's hard to understand the order; it's still an effort, and the village will be free, the dizzying wind of victory is already blowing over souls.

"Go back," the command echoes loudly again, and the detachment, miraculously still intact despite the flying bullets and the chatter of rifles, retreats obediently.

"Suddenly one of the soldiers falls off the horse with a shattered leg. A fair-

haired soldier with a white and pink face riding beside him, jumps off the horse in a flash, picks up his friend, binds the wound and helps him on, and then one bullet, two, three reaches him, hits his stomach hard and knocks him to the ground. Hearing the moan, the two closest horses

turn, hold back and run towards the lying man; to pick him up, to bandage him. Blood gushes from the wounds, the insides are horribly torn. "Leave me alone," the boy soldier pleads weakly, "run away... death is certain here... tell your parents that I am wounded"... the words are repeated intermittently, "get away sooner... I beseech you, leave me".

"The boy jumps up with the last of his strength, seizes his rifle and, kneeling on one knee, shoots at the approaching men. Their fury seizes them, the butts raised above his head are flying towards him... but... is it the sight of a young, almost childish face, or the fearless bravery of a soldier who, swimming in his own blood, is still ready to defend himself? Something holds back the cruel hand and awakens human feelings in hard souls..."

So, what was the Battle of Warsaw in 1920 all about and why was there fighting going on after WWI had ended? I obtained the answer from episode 3 of 'The invention of Poland', broadcast on Radio 4 on 11 April 2022. Well, the WWI which ended here on 11 November 1918 did not end in eastern Europe. The Germans had withdrawn but the soviet army started to set up soviet republics in Belarus and Lithuania and at the beginning of 1920 Lenin made plans to go into Poland and, if possible, to go as far as Germany.



Consecration of the new memorial

From there he and others felt they could launch world revolution. They got as far as the gates of Warsaw but then followed one of the key moments in Polish 20<sup>th</sup> century history, called in Poland 'The Miracle of the Vistula'. General Pilsudski outmanoeuvred the Russians and there was then the last great cavalry battle of all time. Against great odds, the Polish army won and hundreds of re-enactments now take place in Poland at the end of August each year. Indeed, this has been referred to as the defining moment of 20<sup>th</sup> century European history because a line was drawn then against the advance of communism.

No wonder now that Poland is so supportive of Ukraine in its war against the Russian invaders. It has faced such aggression itself in the past and has no wish to have Russia at its gates once again!

**Michael Demidecki-Demidowicz, Corpus Christi Church, Tring**  
My surname is pronounced 'Demidetski' but here even I anglicise it sometimes for convenience!



Our family by the new memorial with Fr Dr Piotr Arbaszewski

# Children and church



Since the earliest Christian services were in 'house churches', it seems reasonable to assume that children would have witnessed them. The early churches baptised babies. In Acts 2:38-39 'Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children."' The passage seems to indicate that children should be baptised. Irenaeus around AD190 and Hippolytus around AD215 confirm this. Some children were baptised soon after birth. Infant baptism did not become the norm until around AD220 when Tertullian records this in conjunction with the appointing of 'Godparents' to supervise the spiritual upbringing of the child, but there is then no record of them having to come to church until they attained the 'age of reason' when they could understand a

service – probably around the age of 8. At this age they could become catechumens and receive instruction prior to becoming confirmed. Once they had been confirmed, they were treated as adults in the church.

This situation continued until the Reformation. Martin Luther supported infant baptism in the section on infant baptism in his Large Catechism. Luther argues that infant baptism is God-pleasing because persons so baptized were reborn and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Calvin also supported infant baptism saying, 'If in Christ we have a perfect pattern of all the grace which God bestows on all his children, in this instance we have a proof that the age of this infancy is not incapable of receiving sanctification.' Later reformers founded the Anabaptists in 1525 who believed that those baptised as infants had to be rebaptised as adults. There was violent disagreement between the two sides and many Anabaptists were persecuted.

About seventy years later, the Baptist Church movement was founded.

Whether there was a belief in infant or adult baptism, young children were still not normally coming to church for the service, although this was not forbidden. They received a religious education when they became catechumens, in both Catholic and Reformed Churches, but this education was solely religious in nature and did not include the three R's 'Reading, Riting and Rithmetic'. It was usually held at some time other than the Sunday service.

Very few children went to school until around 1870 when formal schools



or Junior Church. The origin of Children's Ministries or Junior Church is very difficult to determine. You could call the education of catechumens a Children's Ministry, but it was not worship.

Children's Ministries seem to have started in individual churches of most denominations as a local initiative from about 1900. This varies in individual churches, with some having the children leave for part of the service for a Children's or Junior Church, some believing strongly that children should stay for the whole service and providing Family Services only, and some making no real provision for children as they have

few. Some churches have paid Children's and Youth Workers, some just have volunteers. Some churches only have Family Workers as they do not believe in separation of children and adults. As far as I can see, all denominations have central resources for children's, youth and family worship but it is up to individual churches to decide what they want to provide. In Tring facilities vary in each church from areas in a church where children can play, to a Children's Liturgy on a Sunday.

**John Allan, High Street Baptist Church**

## High Street Baptist Church

We run our **Baby Group** on a Tuesday morning 10.30am-12 noon. This is for newborns and non-movers. We have around fifteen carers plus babies every week.

On Wednesdays 9.30-11.30am is **Tots**, our toddler group, for those aged 1 till they start school. We average thirty carers plus fifty kids each week.

Our **Sunday Junior Church** (10.30am) has approximately fifteen to twenty children.

## Akeman Street Baptist Church

**ABC Preschool:** Mondays 9.20am – 12.20pm

**Explorers 3.5 - 6yrs:** Mondays 3.45pm to 4.45pm

**ABC Preschool:** Tuesdays 9.20am – 12.20pm

**ABC Preschool:** Wednesdays 9.20am – 12.20pm

**Fish Club 5-10yrs:** Wednesdays 6.00pm-7.00pm

**ABC Preschool:** Thursdays 9.20am to 12.20pm

**Younger Wayfinders yrs 6-9:** Fridays 7.30pm - 9.30pm

**Older Wayfinders yr 10 up:** Fridays 7.45pm - 10.00pm

# Worshipping the King of kings in New Mill



I reflect back over the last few months and I feel such gratitude that God has led us forward at New Mill Baptist Church.

In June we had a team come to help us reach out to our community. They all came from the USA and are part of an 'Arise Outreach' which is organised by Amnos Ministries. The aim for us was to pray around the streets of New Mill and then knock on doors to try to engage in conversation. We managed to knock on 197 doors and, although lots of people were out, we left some literature about the church and our desire to be supportive to them.

The following weekend we had our Sunday evening worship night led by Josh and Florrie Bishop Hall. We had people come from various local churches, and God met with us as we worshipped the King of kings. We have another similar event on 17 September at 7.00pm. Whichever church you worship in, know you would be most

welcome to attend this event.

Our Community Café took a break over the summer and we used the time to give our kitchen and toilets a face lift. With the support of our local community, the funds were raised to enable us to do this. By the beginning of September, our Community Café will be open again on

a Thursday from 11.30-1.30. You can have a 3-course meal or salad, or baked potatoes or just soup and a dessert. It's run on a donation basis so that no one is unable to join us. Do come along.

On Sundays we continue to meet at 10.30am and we are currently looking at how John in his Gospel wrote about how Jesus used the 'I am' sayings to explain who he was, and why he had come to live among us.

In September we are going to be focused on some key passages in Acts.



This will overlap with the mid-week small groups which will have some time to consider how we can learn from the experiences of the early church. These small groups are about how to grow as disciples, as well as growing as a community of God's people. If you'd like more information, please call me on 07549 432582.

**Jackie Buie**  
New Mill Baptist Church



You are invited to an  
**Evening of Worship for the  
KING OF KINGS**  
**17th Sept at 7pm**



**NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH,**

New Road, Tring HP23 5EX

Led by Inspiring Local

Worship leaders

Josh & Florrie

Bishop-Hall



No Booking required.

# On being ordinary



I am not a patient person; my satisfaction comes from getting things done, and I have a very low level of tolerance for things which distract from that. I'm not good in committees, as I get bored and frustrated at the lack of focus on results. So Paula Gooder's book, 'Everyday God', about finding God in the ordinary patterns of life, was not an obvious one for me to enjoy and find rewarding. While it seemed a logical choice for the Parish Book Group, in the midst of Ordinary Time in the church's calendar, I didn't have high expectations (and was consoled by the knowledge that it is quite a short book by our recent standards). I've also not been that keen on the label 'Ordinary Time', preferring the previous description of Trinity to characterise the Sundays between Trinity itself (in early summer) and Advent (at the end of November). However, Paula Gooder is an engaging and down-to-earth writer, with a crisp style and a breadth and depth of

biblical knowledge. She presents well (see her on e.g. YouTube) and doesn't fit the traditional dry stereotype of a theologian and scholar. Early on in the book Paula Gooder explains that the concept of Ordinary Time originates in the opening up of the Roman Catholic church in the late 1960s ('Vatican II'), and has the meaning of being ordered rather than bland. She uses the theme of ordinary to select and expound more than 30 passages from the Bible to show how ordinary people and situations can be the cause of extraordinary outcomes. She tells of the steadfast love shown by Ruth, the resilience of Rizpah, the constancy of Mary Magdalene (much maligned by church tradition, she argues). She also tells of an everyday God, to be found in silence as much as in a loud noise, more impressed with justice than with grand worship festivals. Paula Gooder expounds the characterisation of the kingdom of heaven as being like a mustard seed, explaining that mustard is actually a pervasive and persistent weed; once it's there you struggle to get rid of it. Her argument is that 'God both calls us as we are and sends us to do



things which we would say are far beyond us. God both loves ordinariness and at the same time summons us to extraordinariness.' Other members of the Book Group valued Paula Gooder's approach to 'ordinary' things, and especially appreciated learning about unsung heroes from both the Old and New Testaments.

In September the Parish Book Group meets on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>, when David Holloway will be sharing his thoughts on Poetry and Faith. Get in touch to find out more.

**John Whiteman**  
**Tring Team**

# 'We think you'd be good at funerals...'



The words above spoken to me by Huw Bellis and Jo Wetherall back in 2009 were designed to get me to formalise my somewhat haphazard involvement with worship and pastoral work in Tring Team Parish. A bit of a back-handed compliment perhaps, but it worked and it started me on a journey that I give thanks for every day.

## Back to school

The starting point was to go forward to a ministerial selection board at a weekend conference and after forty-odd years of running my own businesses, this did not seem too enticing. However, it was just the first of many hurdles ahead and it turned out to be an enjoyable process. I was wary enough to navigate the sticky questions of PC relevance (the 'Woke Police' were active even then) and offered a place on the Ministry Training Course run by ERM and Cambridge. So, after forty years or so operating in the global strategic marketing business, I went back to school. I loved it. The relaxation of spending time reading, writing and wrestling with theoretical and real-world issues to produce cogent arguments that would meet the rigorous academic standards was a wondrous new world for me to explore. The tutorials and workshops were a great opportunity to engage with insoluble problems and find ways round them.

The Lecturers were a hugely varied group representing every strand of opinion in our marvellously broad church and they really did their best to engage us in issues that almost always had more than 'one right answer'. It was exhilarating.

## A fellowship of pilgrims

Perhaps the most fulfilling aspect of those three years was the way in which a group of twelve disparate people who had never met each other before came together and ended up as firm friends. We could not have been more different in our backgrounds or opinions but we formed a bond that has stood the test of time. All these years later we still all meet every couple of months or so to break bread, share experiences and strengthen our resolve. Together we are stronger and

it is our differences – despite our shared faith – that makes us so. When any of us has a problem, we tend to check it out with our fellows which somehow gives us the strength to respond appropriately in a balanced way.

## Licensed to minister...

After three years of intensive training, we were all licensed together in St Albans Abbey and let loose on the real world of parish life. Next June will be the ten-year anniversary of that and, every time we meet as a group, we give thanks for the support we have enjoyed together and in our own church communities. I well recall how humbled Prue and I were to see so many of our community from Tring in the Abbey and what a wonderful celebration we all enjoyed afterwards back in Tring at the Olive Limes.

## Back to reality

Since that long period of preparation, I have been engaged in the reality of ministry and everyday parish life and I can honestly say that I have enjoyed every moment of it. Traditionally the role of licensed minister is to 'preach and teach' and I do a fair bit of that, but the changing nature of our church and its relationship with the Woke World out there has brought new needs to the fore. That process of change was accelerated by the Covid-19/lockdown years and the new caution and isolation of individuals that have sadly continued.

Many of the small services that I have been asked to do have been in Care Homes and individual houses. I have come to realise that small groups gathering together to share their faith and discuss the common human journey with God and with each other are more than ever building blocks of church communities. Fellowship and faith are good companions.

We are fortunate in the Tring Team Parish that whilst we have one big central church in St Peter & St Paul we also have four smaller churches, each of which has its own distinct identity and way of doing things. It is a privilege to become engaged with these communities and gradually taken into their confidence as we explore faith and life together in the reality of our challenging times.

Attendance in churches may have declined and the church sometimes can seem out of step with current social thinking and realities, but the need individuals feel for engagement with

a loving God, whatever they call him, seems to me just as strong as ever. We just have to respond appropriately. Perhaps Covid-19 and its isolating aftermath has given us some new opportunities. Surely the role of our churches and church groups in caring for the lost, lonely and disadvantaged has never been more appropriate.

Welcoming hospitality and warm good company can be at the heart of what we do; in a world increasingly filled with lonely people, that presents us with a great opportunity. Homer described someone who 'Lived in a house by the side of the road and was a friend to man'. That is what we aspire to be; surely the times when we merge hospitality and fellowship with worship and spiritual fulfilment are some of our finest moments. Which brings me back to the beginning...

## 'You'd be good at funerals...'

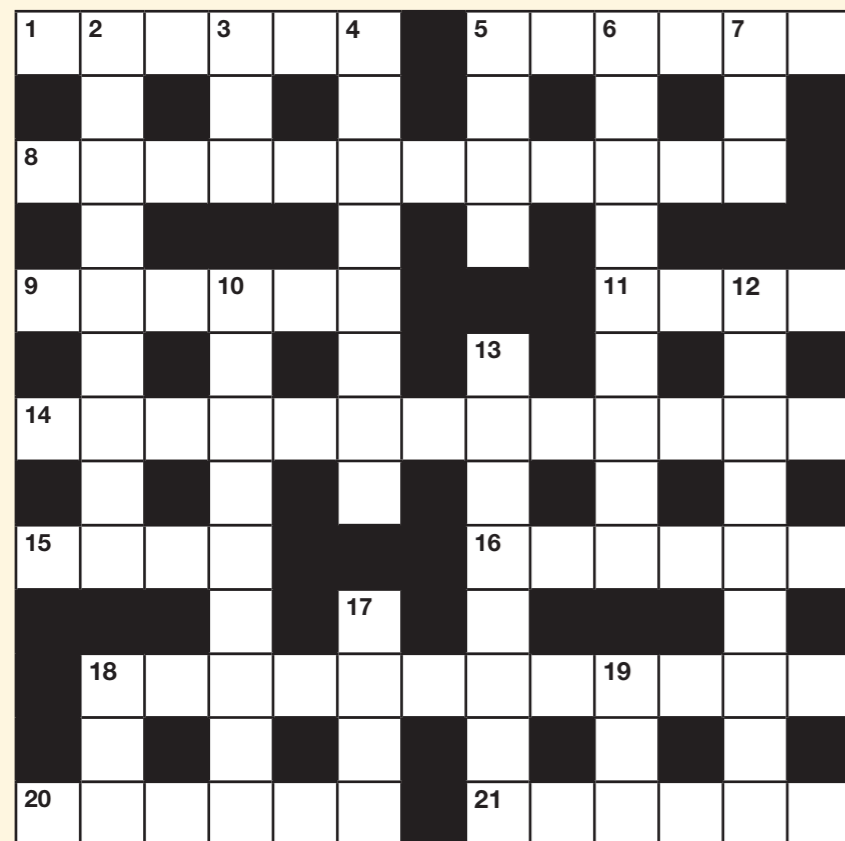
Everybody dies. Everybody in our country can ask to have a funeral in one of our churches. Perhaps surprisingly, many people who do not attend church from one year to the next choose to do so. The main reason they give for doing so according to a recent survey is because they 'want it done properly'. That means that they think we know how to do it properly – and we do. I have done many funerals over the last years and every one has been special, individual and a privilege to be asked to take. The passage from life to death and what lies beyond is a time when people can forget their differences, set aside their arguments and come together in celebration. They can set aside pretence and regret and embrace the fact that someone who was once loved and loving has now moved into a new beginning. They can do that with respect, with celebration and thanksgiving in beautiful buildings that echo with centuries of prayer and with music and words that reflect the life and character of the individual to whom they are saying 'Godspeed'. And we can help them.

There is often a great atmosphere of HOPE in funerals.

I will finish with an extract from a recent Book 'That Was The Church That Was': 'The English God appeared to be dead, but it wasn't true. He was just regenerating... whatever we call Him, or Her, or Them'.

**Grahame Senior**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

# Crossword



## ACROSS

1. Very brave (6)
5. Pope's envoy (6)
8. Up to date (13)
9. Colour worn by a dignitary (6)
11. Small measure (4)
14. Prayers (13)
15. The Honourable '....' (4)
16. e.g: A rat (6)
18. Continued diligence (12)
20. Composer (6)
21. Voice of choir youngsters (6)

## DOWN

2. Wonderful preaching (9)
3. Not there (3)
4. Trade (8)
5. Search (4)
6. Rewarded (9)
7. Attempt (3)
10. Chosen as best (9)
12. Pertaining to church rules (9)
13. Hungry (8)
17. Church greeting (4)
18. Vegetable (3)
19. Expert (3)

# 'I am the Bread of Life'



Here is the first 'I am' saying of Jesus, following on from the introduction in the July/August edition of *Comment*.

Chapter 6 of John's

Gospel starts with the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the only miracle which is described in all four Gospels. John dates it 'near the Passover'. The timing is significant – a festival with a shared meal to commemorate the escape from Egypt. This miracle also provokes some to identify Jesus as the prophet who is to come into the world. Some want to take him by force and make him king. Jesus withdraws but later joins his disciples walking on the lake. The disciples are frightened but he calms their fears with the word 'It is I' or 'I am. Is this a plain matter of identification of the man Jesus; or a title implying divinity?

When all are gathered together Jesus tells his hearers to work for food that endures to eternal life. They want a sign, a proof, and look back to the manna in the wilderness. 'He gave them bread from heaven.' This develops into the teaching that Jesus is the Bread of Life. So, we come to the first great 'I am'. But in doing so we have been reminded of the context from which it comes and the need to see how such an idea did not come out of the blue but is located in the context of history. This part of why 'I am the Bread of Life' is, perhaps, the most complicated of the sayings with its several layers of meaning. It has connections to the past with a number of Old Testament themes and, at the same time, points forward to the Last Supper and the Institution of

the Eucharist. This title first occurs in the Fourth Gospel after the Feeding of the Five Thousand miracle and its position in the Fourth Gospel shows how bread as a food for the body becomes food also for the soul, the whole person.

At first, of course, the crowds fail to understand the symbolism and take Christ's words in a purely materialistic sense. So, Jesus leads them, and indeed us, to the deeper spiritual meaning. Bread was a figure of this in the same way as when the Book of Proverbs (ch 9) personifies Wisdom as a lady who invites people to 'Come, eat of my bread', meaning 'Listen, and digest my teaching'. So, here in John after the Feeding miracle Jesus' words can be understood of his teaching, but also sacramentally as in 'the bread which we break, is it not a sharing of the body of Christ? (I Corinthians 10)

The Fourth Gospel does not tell us explicitly about the institution of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday at the Last Supper. The commandment (mandatum) which gives its name to this day, is to 'Love one another as I have loved you' rather than 'Do this in memory of me'. This command of love is given in the Last Supper discourses which include other 'I am' sayings (to be discussed later). Yet John's Gospel talks more of Jesus as the Bread of Life than do the other evangelists. All this means that John 6 may be said to take the place of the Last Supper, so to speak. Further, there is a looking back to manna in the wilderness which was only for the time being and, in contrast now, there is 'the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread.' These words are surely to be taken as the equivalent to 'This is my body' in accounts of the Last Supper

given by Paul, Mark, Matthew and Luke. In other words, John tells us far more about the bread of life, the body of Christ, than other New Testament writers. For those interested in the exact wording, there is the problem that in Aramaic, the language of Jesus, there are not separate words for body and flesh. So perhaps when John uses the word 'flesh' instead of body, he may be closer to the actual words Jesus used at the Last Supper.

It has been said 'while the Synoptic Gospels record the institution of the Eucharist, it is John who explains what the Eucharist is for Christians'. This all means 'I am the Bread of Life' has a range of meanings but all point to our need for Christ – his person and teachings – for our own lives. Perhaps, too, we should note some disciples were perplexed by Christ's words, finding them harsh and hard to accept. They could not accept the idea of his descending from heaven, nor the idea that the one who eats of him lives for ever. Indeed, as well as those who find it difficult both to believe and understand, there have been, and still are, great differences among Christians about how fully to grasp that Jesus is the bread of life and how this affects belief and worship. In part, this can be seen in the names we use for worship, namely Holy Communion, Lord's Supper, Mass, Eucharist; and the way we obey the command to 'do this in memory of me'. It also influences the way in which we approach and receive the Bread of Life, and the way we share in the 'sacred feast in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion is renewed, our minds are filled with grace and the pledge of future glory is given us'.

**Martin Banister**  
*St Alban's Cathedral*

## Parish registers

### Baptisms

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

- Vivienne Ditte Masal Ok**
- Sophia Alice Georgina Srokowski**
- Sienna Wpyski**

### Funerals

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

- John Edward Cyster 90**
- Grace Hannah Hodge 97**
- Sheila Savage**
- Terrence Tyrrell 65**
- June Honey**
- Paul David Huggett 50**
- James Duncan Lockyer 8**

# Notes from the belltower

On 10 June, the Tring bellringers hosted the District Bellringing meeting, which meant that our rudimentary ringers (and our more accomplished ringers) got the chance to ring with those with better, more advanced skills and so be able to ring Cambridge, Yorkshire, London and Steadman, using all eight bells in an ear-catching message to the surprise of Saturday afternoon passers-by in the street: 'Lovely bells!'

After ringing we had Evensong: if ringing provides food for the mind, Evensong provides it for the soul. The language used is finely honed to convey the height and depth of the mystery of the love of God to humankind, the weight and power of the theology expressed in fine simplicity, to make a

deep imprint in memory that endures. It's designed to resonate with all, so for example, each can feel comforted by the mercy that defends us from all the perils and dangers of this night.

After Evensong, we provided for the sustenance of the body with a nice selection of sandwiches and cakes, while everyone chatted and exchanged news and views; the gentle hum of conversation filled the hall in an agreeable way.

One advantage of bellringing is that it's a good workout for muscles of the body that are designed to move weight, lift and pull. So, it should have been no surprise really, that when I went to trim my high beech hedge for the first cut of the season with an electric



hedge trimmer, how much easier it felt holding that machine high overhead, sweeping it to and fro. Whenever I use a hedge trimmer, I remember a tragic and cautionary accident, way back, that happened to an orthopaedic surgeon who, cutting his hedge one day, accidentally and horrifically amputated three of his fingers with the blade. He just misjudged it, and never worked as a surgeon again.

**Johanna Morgan, Tring belltower**

# Fare thee well, Mr Anderson!



This year marks the end of an era at Tring Park School. Stefan Anderson has retired, having joined us as Principal in 2002. Prior to joining us, he was Director of Music at The King's

School, Canterbury. A number of events were held in the summer term to wish him well, including a staff BBQ during the very hot spell in June and a glorious Gala in July. The Gala was particularly poignant as a number of alumni from throughout his time as Principal attended, including Lily James. Our Pastoral Department came

up with an unbearably wonderful way of saying goodbye to Mr Anderson: a beautiful bespoke bear was made using recycled old uniform.



performances supporting various good causes including our local hospices. Over the last two decades our site has been used increasingly during the holidays for filming that makes 'spot my school' a great pastime when the films are released.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Anderson for all his support. I could write so much. However, I think that this example is sufficient. In 2016, I was wondering if we needed to look again at how we managed the oversight of the pupils' progress and wellbeing at each key stage, in line with other schools.

I advanced this view to Mr Anderson and was blessed with the role of Head of Lower School. I am so grateful to be in a positive school culture, under his leadership, that permits that sort of reflection, re-evaluation, action and change.

**Sarah Bell**  
*Tring Park School*



During his tenure, our school has taken on a new name, changing from the Arts Educational School to Tring Park School for the Performing Arts. We have grown and developed in many ways over the last twenty-one years. The school won the BBC School Choir of the Year twice and launched the careers of many. A new performance strand, the Commercial Music Course, was born and has grown, celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. We have also welcomed Matthew Bourne as a patron and expanded our holiday and associate classes. Our role in the community has developed also, with our Musical Theatre charity

# Michael and all angels, 29 September



I really hope that, if there's an entrance exam at the pearly gates, I don't get a question on the hierarchies of the angels. Seraphim and cherubim appear in the Old Testament and thrones, dominions and principalities are named in the Epistles, but I'm pretty sure there are at least a couple of other 'choirs' I've forgotten and I'm very hazy about who ranks where.

The archangels are easier to manage because we know their names: Michael,

Gabriel and Raphael. Whenever a mighty deed is required, Michael is sent, the great warrior angel, head of the celestial army, who kills the dragon in the Revelation to John. His name means 'who is like God' and is often pictured wearing armour and trampling the devil underfoot.

Gabriel is the archetype archangel, for he is the steadfast messenger. In the Old Testament he foretold the coming of the Messiah to Daniel, and in Luke he heralds the advent of both John the Baptist and the Christ. As the archangel associated with the incarnation, Gabriel is often depicted as the angel of mercy who weighs souls at the day of judgement. His

name means 'strength of God'.

Raphael (meaning 'healing of God') appears only in the apocryphal Book of Tobit where, after healing Tobit's blindness and his daughter-in-law's demon possession, he reveals himself as an angel. The denouement, 'I am Raphael, one of the seven', leaves us speculating about the other four.

The Orthodox Church venerates the other four as Uriel (light of God), Selaphiel (prayer of God), Jegudiel (glorifier of God) and Barachiel (lightening of God), names which come from Jewish tradition.

**Linzi James, St Peter & St Paul**

From left to right: Michael, Gabriel and Raphael



## Foodbank news

I am writing on behalf of DENS to thank you for your kind donations given in support of our Foodbank service over the last year April 2022 – March 2023. You donated 2,137 kg. Your donation has enabled us to continue offering emergency food parcels to local people, supporting them through crisis.

I've been the Foodbank Coordinator at DENS for six years now. My role is to manage the donations coming into the Foodbank, ensuring we have enough of each type of item for everyone who needs an emergency food parcel. Many parents in our community depend on free school meals to help feed their children, and across the lengthy summer break lots of families turned to our Foodbank to keep their cupboards and fridges from going empty.

The range of services DENS provides helps homeless people make positive changes to their lives, learn new skills and build their confidence and ultimately assist people to move on into independent living.

Weekly, the Foodbank provides food to the DENS Elms Hostel, which accommodates forty-four residents, and to the Day Centre who have provided 2,045 meals throughout the year. Last year we provided 9,798 people, of whom 4,016 were children, with emergency food parcels. This is a 56% increase on the previous year.

DENS has recently launched the Financial Empowerment Programme to support people with things like budgeting skills and managing benefits. Run in partnership with other local

charities, this initiative aims to help people make sustainable choices and equip them with knowledge so they are less likely to rely on our Foodbank to see them through.

We're doing our best to provide a range of support to families facing food poverty, but we can only continue to be there for our community with your help. Please continue to donate to ensure local people have food on the table every day. Your contribution enables DENS services to provide vital support to those most in need.

If you would like to know more about our services visit [www.dens.org.uk](http://www.dens.org.uk).

Thank you once again for your support.  
**Michelle Woodall**  
**DENS Foodbank Co-ordinator**

# Loving Earth Project



The Loving Earth Project is a national textile project, started by a few Quakers. The project grew, particularly during lockdown, and has generated a national collection

of over 400 textile panels; it has held many exhibitions around the country, and beyond. The project sought to celebrate some of the wonderful things threatened by growing environmental breakdown: people, places, creatures and other things we love. It offers people a way to engage creatively and constructively with these issues, without being overwhelmed. The project continues to grow as more communities hear about it and choose to engage by either creating their own panels or holding an exhibition.

Tring's Loving Earth Project was launched during The Great Big Green Week in June. A group of us gathered together to learn more about the project and get started on the design of our panels. We pondered these four questions and took time to respond to them as a springboard for designing our textile panel:

- Think about something, someone or somewhere that you love.
- How will climate change and environmental breakdown affect them?
- What action is needed to reduce the risk of harm?
- What could you do to help?

During the afternoon we also listened to Sue Hampton – a local Quaker and activist who feels passionately about the climate crisis and who shared how her Christian faith has informed her lifestyle and action.

Since that Saturday afternoon have been sewing, crocheting, knitting and getting creative to produce textile panels. We

## LOVING EARTH PROJECT

A response to creation care through textiles

9-22 September 2023

The Exhibition

Free

St Peter and St Paul's Church



Tring Library

An exhibition of textile panels created in response to the climate crisis.

See locally made panels and a selection from the national collection.

Further information [www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk](http://www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk)

## Exhibition Venues

### LOVING EARTH PROJECT

A response to creation care through textiles

#### Tring Library

Monday 9.30am – 6pm  
Tuesday 1pm – 6pm  
Thursday 1pm – 6pm  
Friday 9.30am – 6pm  
Saturday 9.30am – 4pm



#### St Peter and St Paul's Church

Open daily 9am - mid afternoon. Tea and coffee are available  
10am – 12 Noon on Fridays and Saturdays.

9-22 September 2023

are very pleased to be showing these panels, along with some from the national collection, in September. Each panel is accompanied by a brief text by the maker to explain something about what they have created.

At the time of writing, climate issues are dominating the headlines (again). In Phoenix, USA temperatures have soared above 43°C for nearly a month. Wildfires are sweeping through Greece and Turkey. July 2023 has been the hottest the planet has been for 120,000 years – when sea levels were around 8m higher than today, and hippos were found in Britain. The destruction and threat to the natural world and life (in all its forms) can feel overwhelming. I have found focusing on my own panel to be therapeutic and meditative. Thinking about insects and the tiniest of God's creatures offers me a sense of perspective and focus to keep on keeping on, no matter how small and helpless we feel.

I do hope you will take time to visit Tring's Loving Earth exhibition which is showing at Tring Library and St Peter & St Paul's Church from 9 to 22 September. Enjoy the wonderful creations and read the stories behind them.

**Polly Eaton**  
**High Street Baptist Church**



# Threads through creation



If you were to ask someone on the street what Bible stories and passages they knew, I suspect you would get a range of responses, but also a number in

common. I think the story of creation would be one of those. If you were then to ask people in churches what they thought about the story of creation, I suspect there would again be a range of responses.

Personally, I find no conflict between the account of creation and the current scientific theories that we have for how the world began and for how life began on this big planet of ours. For me, they are asking different questions – the scientists are asking ‘How?’ and ‘When?’, whilst for me, the story of creation (or more accurately stories, there are two different accounts) is asking ‘Why?’ I recognize, however, that we don’t get a clear-cut answer, but instead pictures and ideas and concepts to reflect on which give us insight, for example, into the greatness of God, into the relationship between humans and the world, into the goodness of the world.

St Albans Abbey recently hosted an exhibition called ‘Threads through creation’ by Jacqui Parkinson, a collection of twelve panels which used textiles to reflect on the stories of creation. The first eight depict the seven days of creation from Genesis 1 (the first is when the earth is ‘formless and empty’ and there is just God). The rest depicted the garden of Eden, its two trees and the decision that Adam and Eve took and its consequences. They were pieces of art that certainly made me reflect. Three thoughts that have remained with me were:

## The presence of God in everything

In the first panel, the artist depicted God as a spiral. She writes how she spent weeks thinking about how to convey God as one, but also as three. She eventually decided on a spiral of three strands. Spirals can then be seen in different ways throughout the panels as the world is gradually created, sometimes in the background, in the quilting, sometimes as more of a feature of the picture. It was

a lovely way to quietly remind us all that God is in everything and every part of his world.

## The wonder of water

It may sound strange, but when I think about God separating the water on the second day, I’ve always thought about lakes and seas, but the panel depicted rain and snow, mists and waterfalls. Water is part of our lives in so many ways. I began to reflect on the water cycle and the wonder of water constantly changing, keeping our world alive. God didn’t just create a world and that was it, so many aspects were thought about to ensure that it was a world that could maintain itself. All of which led me to praise God for his care and concern for every bit of his creation. Down the the side of the panel were snowflakes. You will remember that every snowflake is unique, yet another reminder of God’s concern for each part of his creation.



## On the seventh day God rested

I’d never thought about it before, but the notes for this panel asked why God rested. Do we believe that God is exhausted and in need of a rest? I don’t think that would be part of my image of God. The artist suggests instead, that God took time to sit back and enjoy what he had made. In the biblical account after each day, it tells us that ‘God saw that it was good’. It made me reflect on how there is something important about enjoying what God has given us and that that is the example that God gives us. So often we can get caught up with the everyday tasks, distracted by our anxieties and concerns. God is concerned about those too, but it’s also important to take time to be thankful, to enjoy the wonder of what is around us and not take it for granted. In depicting the day of rest, the artist includes symbols from each of the six days of creation. At the centre of it all is a spiral and over the top of it is a cross, a reminder that ‘Jesus will come one day



as the “rest” we need from the ravages of a fallen world’, an interesting link.

As we continue to think about our impact on the world as humans, our need to care for creation, they were panels that reminded me of the value of our world, the wonder and beauty of it and



the greatness of our loving God who created it: something I hope we all have opportunity to do during this season of creation.

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



## People struggling in Tring



We are currently still living in a 'cost-of-living crisis' – I would say that I was tightening my belt, but I sold it during the austerity years.

As someone in my early 30s, it does feel like the majority of my adult life has been spent going from one economic crisis to the next. I find myself saying to my nephews: 'In my day, we called it a credit crunch!' In their heads, I'm harking back to a war-time era, with food rations, people struggling to heat their homes, houses in poor conditions... but that's not from the 1940s – it's from now.

Last winter, I went round to my Grandpa's house. Despite it being incredibly cold outside – and he being 92 – he was sitting indoors without the heating on, as it was, in his words, 'too expensive'. I really struggle with the idea of this being a first-world country with a big economy, but also being a country with people who, even in their 90s do not feel comfortable enough financially to live... well, comfortably. It hurt, seeing my Grandpa like that. It really, really hurt.

My mum was born at home in the 60s, in a freezing cold house, as my grandparents couldn't afford the

heating. Sixty years later, and my Grandpa has gone from decades of being able to afford to heat that very same house, to suddenly worrying about it. That's not a man who has poorly managed his money, or is buying too many avocados, or spending too much on his Netflix subscription; it's a man who has always saved well, been sensible with his money, yet in his 90s finds himself in a world where we are told that things like food and heating are suddenly luxury items. For what it's worth, my Grandpa doesn't have Netflix. There are very few episodes of 'Countdown' on there, and they are probably the ones hosted by Anne Robinson anyway.

I sometimes wonder whether it has always been like this, and whether it will always remain like this. The recession, the credit crunch, austerity, the cost-of-living crisis... they just feel like buzzwords used to excuse the fact that plenty of normal people are struggling to get by, while the rich people at the top get wealthier and wealthier: because people living in poverty isn't a new thing. I'm someone who has grown up seeing my parents always worrying about money; debating whether to put £5 or £10 in a birthday card; deciding whether they could afford to go out for a meal with their friends or not. Any shouting match between them when I was a kid would inevitably be about

money. I genuinely think if my parents were given £50k today, then they might never have an argument again... well, at least until Dad spends £200 on some solid-gold boxers – that would probably cause a ripple.

But that is where the frustration lies, for me. We live in a world where so much is constantly moving forward – technology, science, health, awareness, understanding. Why are living conditions for everyone not also doing the same? I'm not saying we should all live in mansions and have speedboats (though they would come in handy with global warming ramping up); but surely we should all be able to afford food and heating, right?

Until that day, I am more than happy to write and talk about the fact that people in my family – myself included – often worry about money. It's often a struggle, it's often really difficult. It's important we acknowledge and talk about that fact. I was brought up being told 'we don't talk about money', but I refuse to feel shame for an economic system that is not my fault. We work hard, we scrimp, we save, and it's still difficult; but we keep going. We keep our heads up, we keep making jokes and making cups of tea; and we stick together, in the hope that one day, the crisis will be over.

**Tom Mayhew, Writer and ex-Tring School stand-up comedian**

## Poem of the month



Here is a short poem describing the author's wish to be able to move from doubt to a deeper faith. The title 'Avowal', with its meaning of 'affirmation',

makes clear that the wish is well-founded. Two uncomplicated images of swimmers and hawks emphasise their dependence, not on their own efforts, but on air and water to stay 'afloat', and point the way to a similar reliance on divine grace, not human endeavour, for the committed believer.

Denise Levertov was born in 1923 in Ilford. Her father was a Russian Hasidic Jew, who was held under house arrest during World War 1. He emigrated to

England, later becoming a Christian and an Anglican priest. Her mother came from North Wales and was a major influence on Denise's education – she was educated at home, with her sister, and was keenly interested in writing and literature. At the age of 12 she apparently sent a poem to T.S.Eliot, whose detailed reply was very encouraging. During World War II she served as a civilian nurse in London. When she married an American in 1947, she settled with him in America and took American citizenship. There, she followed a university career in writing, translation and literary criticism. As a prolific poet, her work became more political because of her opposition to the Vietnam War. Her religious ideas show a slow move from agnosticism to Christian faith, and she became a Roman Catholic in 1984. She died in 1997.

### The Avowal

*As swimmers dare  
to lie face to the sky  
and water bears them,  
and hawks rest upon air  
and air sustains them,  
so would I learn to attain  
freefall, and float  
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,  
knowing no effort earns  
that all-surrounding grace.*

**Denise Levertov 1983**

Copyright notice: this poem is from 'Oblique Prayers' c. 1984, and can also be found in Levertov's 'The Stream and the Sapphire: Selected Poems on Religious Thought', New York; New Directions 1997.

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

## Reconciliation with Musalaha



### 'Here I Stand: Reconciliation'

On 6 September Archbishop Justin Welby, Su McClellan and Daniel Munayer will present a Lecture and

Panel Discussion on reconciliation. This is online and in London – ticket details in the panel. If you would like to view online with others in Tring, please email me.

This event is jointly sponsored by Embrace the Middle East, a charity that supports partners working with excluded and marginalised communities, and St Martins-in-the-Fields, a leading London Church led by Dr Sam Wells, a regular presenter on Radio 4's Thought for the Day.

Daniel Munayer, you may remember, came to Tring last year when over thirty of you heard him speak. He is the new Executive Director of Musalaha, an organisation that teaches and facilitates reconciliation mainly between Israelis and Palestinians. Born and raised in Jerusalem, Daniel is both Palestinian and

British, with an Israeli passport. Daniel has worked with the Danish Refugee Council and in Greece and Iraq. He is the only Palestinian ever to be invited personally to address the UN Security Council in New York.

Su McClellan is a curate at Coventry Cathedral, whose ministry of reconciliation is internationally recognised. Su works with Embrace to foster understanding of the complexities of life in the Middle East and to support partners there.

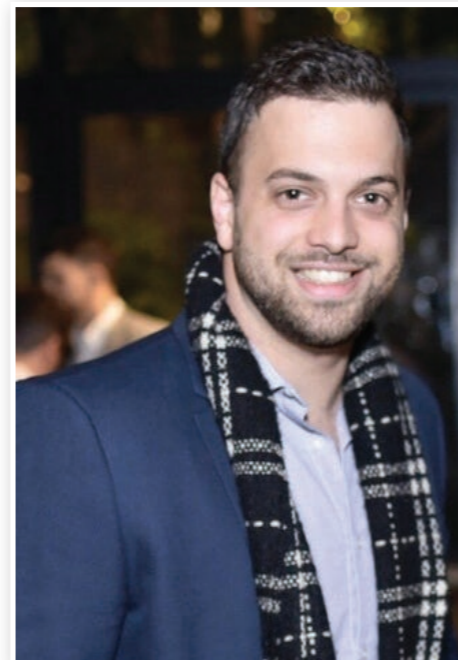
The Most Revd Justin Welby was ordained in 1992 after an 11-year career in the oil industry. In 2002 he became Canon of Coventry Cathedral, where he jointly led its international reconciliation work working extensively in Africa and the Middle East. He has had a passion for reconciliation and peace-making ever since. As the 105<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury, his priorities are the renewal of prayer and the religious life, reconciliation, evangelism and witness. He visits places of conflict to encourage Anglicans who are pursuing peace and reconciliation.

### 'The Holy Land and Us – Our Untold Story'

In October and November, we plan to view and explore 'The Holy Land and Us – Our Untold Story'. Now available on iPlayer, these two BBC programmes feature the way the foundation of the State of Israel shaped the narratives of two British families, one Israeli, the other Palestinian, co-presented by Rob Rinder and Sarah Agha. Using the approach seen in 'Who do you think you are?' these two grandchildren trace their families' history back to 1948 and before, to reveal personal stories hitherto unknown to them. The series is even-handed and sensitive as the two competing narratives emerge. I see this as a good way to make better sense of the background for the foundation of the State of Israel and crucially, the current situations in Israel and Palestine. You will remember Musalaha's groups seek to build grassroots relationships across communities holding these narratives.

If you would like to be part of this group, please email me.

**Colin Briant  
High Street Baptist Church**



### Tickets for Wednesday 6 September

#### 'Here I Stand: Reconciliation' and other Contact details

<https://embraceme.org/events/embrace-annual-lecture-here-i-stand>

<https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/calendar/here-i-stand-reconciliation/>

[colin.briant@hotmail.com](mailto:colin.briant@hotmail.com)

<https://musalaha.org>

<https://www.musalaha.uk>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001k3w3/the-holy-land-and-us-our-untold-stories-series-1-episode-1>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001kc09/the-holy-land-and-us-our-untold-stories-series-1-episode-2>

# Shetland in Spring



A few months ago, I wrote about how I went to Sri Lanka just after my wife had died and how it had helped me mentally to go on that trip. It also helped me organise a funeral

for Moira that celebrated her life – and indeed, everyone I spoke to afterwards said it was how she would want to be remembered. Less than two weeks after the funeral, I embarked on the four-week holiday to Scotland which we had planned to do together and included two weeks on Shetland to show Moira the places I had told her about when I was up there on previous visits.

The cottage I normally stay in was only available from 7-19 May, not the best time to be up there for birds, as spring comes later. Nevertheless, I was resolved to see as much wildlife as I could. So, when I arrived at Lerwick on 7 May after a particularly rough ferry crossing, I headed south to Sumburgh Head to look at the seabird colony there. At this time of year birds would be breeding, or about to start the process, so birds that I wouldn't normally see during autumn visits, like Puffins, should be about and also in their summer plumage.

At the time I think southern Britain was bathed in reasonable sunshine; the same could not be said for Shetland. It was windy, foggy and cold – at least 15C cooler than when I left Tring. Wind and fog can co-exist quite happily on Shetland. It was at this point I realised that I hadn't packed gloves! As soon as I started scanning the cliffs, I realised that the seabirds weren't there in the numbers I was expecting. This made

me wonder how much last year's avian flu outbreak had affected the Sumburgh seabirds. Fortunately, it was the foul weather that had left the cliffs largely empty: the seabirds stay out on the sea where it is safer and they can feed. Subsequent trips to Sumburgh Head and other places allowed me to see a reassuringly good number of Puffins and other auks on and by cliffs, which was a pleasure to see.

Wintering birds were still about on Shetland so I was also able to see Great Northern Divers and Long-tailed Ducks in complete summer plumage, while also enjoying flocks of breeding Arctic Terns instead of the odd one or two stragglers in the autumn. Also, because it was spring, there was the possibility of spring overshoots as birds from southern climes keep heading north instead of stopping on mainland Europe. Add to that the novelty of listening to birds singing to attract a mate and defend their territory and it seemed likely I would enjoy myself. Unlike last year I wasn't doing a year list so I decided to focus on birds I hadn't seen on Shetland before, which normally means rare birds.

Hoopoe (below left) has eluded me in the past on Shetland in the autumn so on the day I arrived, I spent a few hours looking round Hoswick for an elusive Hoopoe, a fruitless search which continued the following day. On my third day I looked for birds in the Hillswick area, resulting in me finding an Osprey flying down past the living room window,



a Great White Egret in the south, and on the way back saw a smart Night Heron (above) – a new Shetland bird for me.

As the days passed a Hoopoe was reported on Noss, which involved a short ferry crossing to Bressay, driving across Bressay to get the small Noss ferry and spend most of the day not seeing a Hoopoe – I didn't go.

On 11 May I covered sites near Hillswick until news of a Red-rumped Swallow (below right) down at Virkie tempted me to head south where I was treated to excellent views of it flying within metres of me and perching on wires to be photographed (the rump is more buff than red).

When the Noss Hoopoe moved to Bressay and was being seen 'on the road' down to the Noss ferry, along with a Western Subalpine Warbler being reported at Quendale, I planned to head south early on Saturday to get the first ferry to Bressay, see Hoopoe (as if), then back to Mainland and head south to Quendale for the Western Subalpine Warbler. If that Hoopoe was 'on the road' I was going to be the first one to see it, and blow me down I did! The Hoopoe flew onto the wall next to my car and waited long enough for me to photograph

it. I then diverted to see an Eastern Subalpine Warbler (below) in Lerwick and got OK photos, which were improved on my last day on Shetland. I then went down to Quendale and saw the Western Subalpine Warbler – also a Shetland tick – all before 10.00am!

The following day I saw a Manx Shearwater – my fifth Shetland tick – and topped off the trip by seeing a Fin Whale from the homeward-bound ferry, the second largest Whale in the World.

Sometimes what seems like a bad experience actually works out for the best. If I had seen the Hoopoe at Hoswick

it would probably have been in flight or seen briefly, and I wouldn't have gone to Bressay with such excellent views of it. Never be quick to judge an experience as a bad one; God might be setting you up for a better one in the future.

**Roy Hargreaves**  
**St Peter & St Paul**



## The saints in the north?



The editor of *Comment* invited us to submit images of our favourite windows, so here is one of mine...

St Peter & St Paul is blessed with an abundance of stained-glass windows which shine

brightly in the sun at different stages of the day. They were installed as colourful Christian images more than 100 years ago, at a time when coloured pictures, and images of all kinds, were rare.

One window, which you might not have noticed, is in the north wall of the church, adjacent to the space currently occupied by the organ. I used to gaze at this window in my days as a mediocre chorister, when I would sit in the choir stalls opposite the organ. I was very taken by the bright blue background colour, and the elaborate sepulchres housing the three saints depicted in the window. On the left is St Peter, holding his symbolic key (the one to heaven, remember). On the right is St John, with a scroll giving the first words of

his Gospel, and an eagle ready to carry the word to all people. It is curious that pride of place in the window is given to St James, looking slightly like a sailor with his sea-faring hat and beard, and holding a very sturdy staff. He did travel to spread the gospel, and is the patron saint of Spain, although he is thought to have been martyred back in Jerusalem.

The window is not in the best condition, a bit surprising as it does not get much sunlight to bleach it. The inscription along the bottom is almost unreadable, such that it's not clear whether it's in English or Latin. Maybe somebody can enlighten me on this point.

Look to your left as you approach the altar rail next time if you'd like to see this bright, if faded, set of images. It is also adorned with cobwebs which have

been there so long that we'd probably need a faculty from the diocese to remove them.

**John Whiteman, Tring Team**



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# Churchyard flora and fauna



You may have noticed around Tring that there has been a growing focus on 'green' issues and opportunities; and this has been no less in many of the churches of all denominations.

Some of us in the Tring Team Parish, which includes St Peter & St Paul's in Tring, have been giving this some special focus and several of our churches in the team have achieved Bronze in the 'A Rocha' sponsored Eco Church awards, with the others close behind. We will be working towards silver over the coming months.

You may also have seen our churchyard surveys of flora and fauna which were conducted in June where we logged many of the species of plants and animals in our churchyards with help from some local naturalists and the iNaturalist application loaded on smartphones. As part of that survey, I was particularly drawn to a grave just outside the main church door at St Peter & St Paul's which I had walked past many times over the years but only really looked at when it had the nativity scene mounted on top of it in Advent. Once I took a proper look, I realised quite how many different species of plants were rooted around it and in the cracks within it, and with the help of our friends and the application were able to identify them, learn more about them and importantly about the fauna that uses them for food and shelter. I include below a picture of the grave and some notes on some of the species that we as a group have been able to identify.



**Lady's Bedstraw (Galium verum)**  
Its name is probably derived from the tradition of stuffing straw mattresses with it as, when dried, it has the scent of new-mown hay. It was also used to curdle milk in the process of cheese-making as a vegetarian replacement for rennet.



**Black Medick (Medicago lupulina)**  
It is understood that the name 'medick' refers to its supposed origin in Iran rather than having any medicinal value. It is food for a large number of species of weevils, leaf-mining and gall midge flies, true bugs and butterflies.



Elsewhere in the churchyard we found two types of buttercup, the bulbous buttercup and the meadow buttercup. It seems that buttercups are of a genus of flowers that are poisonous (so best not eaten!). They are, however, used as food by the larvae of some Lepidoptera species, butterflies and moths.

The naturalists working with us explained that the difference between the bulbous buttercup and the meadow buttercup is in the way the sepals are arranged beneath the flower. In the

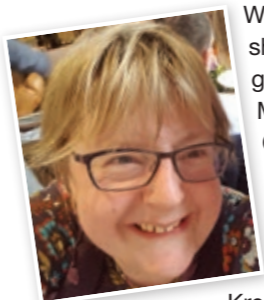
meadow buttercup, they lie 'pressed' against the flower, whereas those of the bulbous buttercup hang down. I have to confess I had not thought there may be more than one type of buttercup and had never really looked under the petals to see what the sepals were doing (in fact, I had

not even known what a sepal was... the parts of a flower that enclose and protect the unopened flower bud). Who would have thought?

Take a look around our churchyard and see what you can find and let us know. The Eco Team in the Tring Team Parish are: Janet Goodyer, Anne Nobbs, Roy Hargreaves, Caroline Hind, Edmund Booth and Mike Watkin. If you want to find out more about any of the Eco Church engagement in the Parish, we would love to hear from you.

**Mike Watkin, Tring Team**  
07715 553556,  
mike@tringteamparish.org.uk

# Tring Park News



We're delighted to share that recent graduates Leonardo McCorkindale, Carla Contini and Euan Garrett will be joining alumni Paris Fitzpatrick and Hannah

Kremer in the cast of Matthew Bourne's 'Romeo and Juliet'. The international tour opened in July 2023. Congratulations!

Eleven Dance Course students competed in the Cecchetti Vocational Awards 2023. There were many successes for current and past Tring Park pupils including major awards for Rebecca and Jakob. The judges were Susan Lucas and Jonathan Payne. The Barbara Geoghegan Award: Jakob; Commendations: Daisy, Aimee and Hannah; The Promising Student Award: Rebecca. Congratulations also to Sophie, Yuna, Yoyo, Sarah, Tom and Leonardo for making us incredibly proud and for dancing impeccably.

We have very much enjoyed being able to host our Parent Social Teas and Open classes again.

We welcomed four staff and fifty Year 8 pupils from Barnhill Community High School, a state comprehensive school in Stevenage. They took part in a dance workshop and an acting workshop with some of our Sixth Form pupils.

We had a visit from the Artistic Director and several staff from the Royal Swedish Ballet School in Stockholm. The Artistic Director is the parent of a former student on the dance course.



The Academic certificate presentation ceremony took place. We were delighted to welcome alumna Dr Rhian Mitchell as our guest speaker. Rhian had a career in contemporary dance after leaving Tring Park and then retrained as a doctor. She is currently working in a hospital neonatal care unit.

In early March, The 16 performed at The Little Angels Charity Concert in Berkhamsted Town Hall. This concert was arranged by a Tring Park alumna to raise awareness of SUDI – Sudden Unexplained Death of an Infant and to support both The Lullaby Trust and Teddy's Wish.

On Red Nose Day this year staff and pupils 'wore red for Comic Relief'. £700 was raised. Thank you to all who donated.

The Lower School Readathon, organised by the English Department, raised £832 for the charity ReadforGood which buys books for sick children in hospitals across the UK. This will also give Tring Park 20% of the money raised to buy books for the school.

Congratulations also to those pupils who took part in the external Schools' Mathematical Challenge.



Our KS2 pupils visited the Natural History Museum which ties in nicely with the history of our school building.

Thank you to the Commercial Music Course and Dance Course students for letting us borrow them to show off the Clock House renovation that was completed last year. The living and communal spaces were upgraded and now feature an Xbox games room, American diner inspired kitchen area and a cosy ski-lodge-themed common room/kitchen space. Renovation by Envoplan, Ben Gregory-Ring.



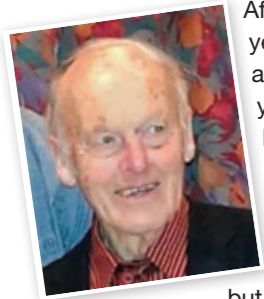
In June, as part of the Tring Book Festival, organised by Our Bookshop on Tring High Street, our school was delighted to host best-selling author, Hannah Rothschild. It was a wonderful night in a truly extraordinary setting. This was a former home of the Rothschild family until 1945, where Hannah's father and other family members stayed safe in the war. She was talking about her latest novel, 'High Time'. She is pictured bottom left with Stefan Anderson, who retired from Tring Park after twenty-one years of distinguished service.



Finally, in July, our First Form, the Year 7s, visited the zoo with great success as more animals were seen than usual. Whipsnade can be a bit fickle on that front! We hope that this has helped our young people think about the environmental situation more deeply. They are the generation who are facing the very real possibility of some species only being in zoos. We hope that this wider learning is impactful. Our Second Form, the Year 8s, had a very practical insight into Physics as well as tourism; we were at Legoland on the twists and turns of their rides. Our Third Form, Year 9s, were very moved by their workshop and visit to The Holocaust Galleries of The Imperial War Museum. Huge thanks to the team of colleagues who give up their time to make such visits possible.

**Sarah Bell, Tring Park**

# A tribute to a long-serving, well-loved pastor



After twenty-seven years as pastor and twenty-three years as an elder, David Chapman has decided to retire from office at Akeman Street Baptist Church – but never from serving God in any capacity.

His time as pastor was the longest for any pastor there since the church was founded in 1801. David, whom many of you know, would be the last to want any acclaim for such a record, for he would say, 'to serve God is an honour for however long or short a time; it is for the glory of God'.

David was born in Horham in Suffolk in 1947 and suffered the loss of his father at the age of 12. Both he and his future wife, Janet, who was born at Haughley Green, were from farming stock and therefore their early life was much involved in that occupation. They married in 1967 and had a daughter, Bev, who is still at Akeman Street, and a son, Andrew.

At 14 years of age David came to commit his life to Jesus and in his late teens felt called to serve him. This call led him to abandon his early interest in accountancy and take up a three-year course at the London Bible College, at the end of which he was ordained for Christian ministry by his home church in Suffolk.

In March 1973, at the age of 26, David arrived in Tring to be the pastor of Akeman Street Baptist Church. During his time as pastor eighty-five people acknowledged Jesus as their Saviour and Lord by being baptised by immersion and 167 people were received as church members. At the end of the year 2000 David stood down as pastor to become General Secretary of the Association of Grace Baptist Churches in the South East, but he continued as an elder at 'Akeman Street' until April this year.



David was, and still is, a very able Bible expositor, taking a book or a character or theme in the Bible for several months. He is a thoughtful, well-prepared, challenging preacher, one who does so often with a warm smile, which many find hard to do. He always made the gospel message through the cross of Christ and the

resurrection central to all his preaching. He was an efficient administrator in the organisation of the church, always ensuring that each department of the work was done 'decently and in good order'. Amongst other initiatives he and Janet started the Fish Club for children aged 5-11. They started it soon after arriving in Tring and have only just given that up to others, although they are still involved. Fifty years is not a bad record for working with children. There are, probably, many people living in Tring who can recall those Wednesday evenings with pleasure.

Personally, I first met David in 1975 when we had moved out of London to Wigginton and were members of Northchurch Baptist Church. I was surprised to see this young man in the market place with a bookstall and ready to chat to passers-by. I soon made myself known to him. From 1989, when I was Lay Pastor of Wigginton Baptist Chapel, David was always willing to come and preach for us. He and Janet have been good friends with Audrey and myself in the Lord's work for many years.

Knowing him, I am sure that David will continue to be of great help at Akeman Street Baptist Church or elsewhere and will be only too willing to 'step into the breach' when there is a need. He has been, and will continue to be, a 'good and faithful servant.'

**John Young**  
**Akeman Street Baptist Church**



# Predictable conversations: science, faith and the pursuit of truth



Do you ever have a conversation with someone new when you know roughly how the conversation is going to turn out? I have had roughly the same conversation with scores of people down the years. It has happened three times so far this year. It goes roughly thus:

**Other** Hi. What do you/did you do for a living?

**Me** I am/was a teacher.

**Other** Primary or secondary?

**Me** Secondary.

**Other** What do you/did you teach?

**Me** RE and Physics.

**Other** What! (or some other expletive). But science is about facts and religion is about feelings and made-up stories.

**Me** Well, science is about the pursuit of truth which it hopes to find but has not yet completely grasped. Religion, as I see it, is similar.

I then go on, if I have time, to explain where there are big holes in the knowledge that scientists are trying to fill.

The first conversation this year was with a fellow tenor in the Tring Choral Society. Time did not permit a full discussion and I said that the topic probably required three pints to begin to do it justice. The second conversation was very amusing. I was at High Wycombe Hospital and the specialist nurse was telling me that current medical knowledge did not know the best way to treat my condition. Would I be happy to take part in a randomised trial? The computer would pick the people to go for treatment A or treatment B and then doctors would analyse the results. I said I would be happy to be involved; that was how science advances. He then asked me what I used to do and the conversation went very much as above, with the nurse insistent that science gave certain and sure answers despite the fact that he had just said it was not certain what was the best treatment of my problem! The third time was while in the queue to get on a boat in Venice, but the temperature was 33C which resulted in no intelligent conversation being possible

– or possibly that was the large glass of wine I had with lunch.

Science advances but each new advance generally shows another new gap in our knowledge. Let's take as the example gravity. The British scientist Isaac Newton took forward our knowledge of how gravity works (but not what it is in essence). Newton's law of universal gravitation states that every mass attracts every other mass in the universe, and the gravitational force between two bodies is proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. (If you didn't get that, see me after class.)

This worked very well in most situations. But not always. It could not be used to predict the orbit of the planet Mercury which clearly had not got the memo on Newton's 'law' on gravity – it repeatedly disobeyed the law even though the other planets of the solar system were good boys and girls. Einstein's work helped explain and predict the orbit of Mercury (and other objects moving near a massive object such as the sun or other star).

But neither Newton's nor Einstein's theories explain to us the rotation of galaxies. According to current theory and current knowledge the galaxies should fly apart as there is not enough matter in them to hold them together. But they don't. Two solutions have been proposed.

The first is Modified Newtonian Dynamics (MOND). This is a hypothesis or idea that proposes a modification of Newton's law of universal gravitation to account for observed properties of galaxies. The second is to stick with Newton's laws of gravity (as modified by Einstein) but to say that there exists Cold Dark Matter (CDM) which we can neither see nor currently detect but which physicists and astronomers all over the world are now looking very hard for with some massive telescopes and also, I believe, with particle accelerators. The answer will no doubt be found by people with bigger telescopes than

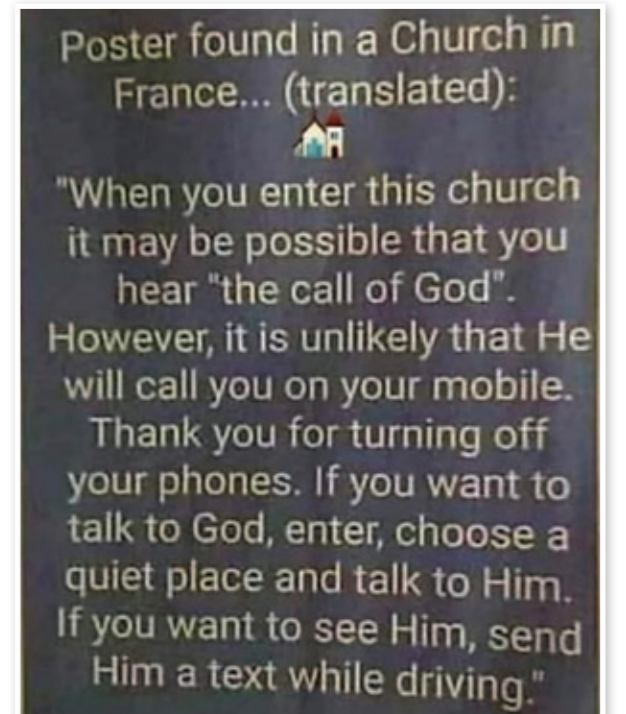
mine and far bigger brains than mine. I have a slight aversion to the Cold Dark Matter theory as it sounds like the worst of mediaeval theology with its particles that cannot be seen or detected by other means, but I am happy to be proved wrong. We still do not fully know what gravity is, something which Newton conceded centuries ago.

I was at a lecture at St Mary-le Bow in the City of London recently when three biochemists (I do occasionally mix with some rough types) said that the Cold Dark Matter theories were not the biggest issue in science but that the biochemical pathways to life were the next big deal. But to paraphrase the words of Mandy Rice-Davies in a rather different context, 'Well they would say that, wouldn't they'.

Whatever will hit the headlines as the next biggest scientific find of the decade, it is clear, despite what my fellow tenor and then the nurse at High Wycombe Hospital said, science is evolving and does not give certain answers to everything. None of that goes anywhere near proving the existence of God, but it does show that the notion that 'the certain answers of science' have disproved religion is just an idea that is plainly wrong.

**Jon Reynolds, Tring Team**

*The Editor asked me to write about Einstein and theology, but this is what happened when I sat down to write!*



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

**COMMENT**  
The magazine of the Churches in Tring

Please submit your article to the Editor by the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.



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## In memory of Sandra Mary Thorne

Sandra Thorne was a long-time resident of Tring, working at Tring Library for nearly thirty years. She joked that between her and husband Aubrey, a policeman here for twenty years, they probably knew half the population of Tring! She loved the town and could often be seen around the shops with her Tring bag. While working at the library she collated a lot of its records of the history of Tring, having tea with Dorian Williams at Pendley Manor on one occasion in order to include his contributions to the town.

Sandra was born on the 23 December 1937 in Watford. At the age of 9 her mum moved to Canada to marry a Canadian Air Force man she had met while he had been stationed at Abbots Langley and Sandra moved in with her grandparents in North Watford. The original intention was that Sandra would follow her mum to Canada but instead Sandra stayed with her grandparents and wider family in the house at Harebreaks.

It was a happy, but unconventional childhood. Granny and Grandad had seven children so it was a busy household and money was tight, but there were also plenty of uncles and aunts around to care for Sandra. She passed the 11+ and went to Watford Girl's Grammar School where English was her favourite subject, reflecting her love of books which influenced her later career choice. Sandra left school at 16 and went to work for the gas board where she met Sheila Burnell, who became a close friend when she moved to Tring.

Sandra met Aubrey Thorne at the Youth Club at Harebreaks Methodist Church. Aubrey was doing National Service at the time and was in his naval uniform attending the service with his mother. When he looked across the church and saw Sandra, it was love at first sight. They were married in September 1957 at the church where they had met.

Sandra and Aubrey lived in North Watford, but moved to Welwyn Garden City when Aubrey entered the police force. They had moved to Ware by the time Alison and Michael were born at home and it was also where her love of gardening began. They moved to Wigginton in 1966 where they had a house with a big garden, kept chickens and also had an allotment.

It was while the family were in Wigginton that Sandra began working



part-time in the library at Tring. She hadn't passed her driving test at that point so she would have to walk to get there and, when she worked late, Aubrey had to get tea for the children. Alison and Michael remember that tea on those days was never as good as when Mum prepared it!

In 1971 the family moved to 66 Mill View Road in Tring. Sandra continued working in the library and became involved in Tring Theatre Company, an amateur dramatics group. On one occasion John Craven's Newsround did an item on the glis glis in the area and did some filming at the library – Sandra could be seen giving information to John. It became one of her claims to fame!

In 1983 the family moved to 92 Mill View Road, a plot that Aubrey snapped up as soon as it came on the market. Aubrey built an extension and garage – and Sandra got stuck in with the decorating and enjoyed the bigger garden.

There were family camping holidays in Swanage and Devon, playing on the beach and walking. Sandra also visited her mum and stepbrother Grant in Canada a few times. In later years Sandra and Aubrey had trips to Portugal, Yugoslavia and Italy as well as garden shows around the country, all inspiration for her own garden in Tring.

After Aubrey's mum died, they decided to buy a farm in Wales. They had seven fields, 100 yards of river and nearly

sixty sheep. Sandra was still working in Tring but travelled regularly to spend time on the farm: it was a place that both she and Aubrey loved. Grandchildren, Kathryn and Jonathan, would play in the river in all weathers and loved bottle feeding the orphaned lambs. Sandra was very in tune with her grandchildren and loved being with them or having midnight feasts.

The farm was sold in 2004 and Sandra and Aubrey continued to enjoy their retirement. Sandra joined the U3A and they both began attending services at St Martha's regularly: they were a valued part of our church family.

In recent years Sandra had been in a lot of pain. Macular degeneration made reading and close embroidery difficult, as well as the arthritis in her hands. She missed her friends during Covid-19 and the beginnings of dementia meant that she lost a lot of confidence. She was thankful for the care she had and to have her family close by. She is now at peace.

She will be remembered as a supportive wife, a loving mother who would do anything for you. She was practical and enjoyed dressmaking, knitting and embroidery, but was also generous, trusting and open-hearted. She will be much missed by her family and friends.

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

# In memory of Grace Hodge

It is with great sadness that the family of Mrs Grace Hodge announces her passing after a long and happy life, on the 21 June 2023 at the age of 97.

Grace passed away peacefully at St Joseph's Care Home in Tring and will be lovingly remembered by her five sons, Robin, Philip, Timothy, Mark and Laurence, their wives, her eleven grandchildren, their wives and partners and her ten great grandchildren. The family would like to pass on their thanks to the staff at St Joseph's for treating her with great care and kindness particularly in her final days.

Grace was born in Tring on 16 February 1926 above her father's shop at 56/57 High Street. Her father, Laurence John Archibald Gower (known as Archie and sometimes known as 'Oily Gower') and her mother Lilian Gower, owned the hardware shop known as 'John Gower and Sons' that was originally established by her grandfather John Gower.

She first went to Gravelly Infants School, then to Tring Junior Mixed School in the High Street and then to Hemel Grammar School. After matriculating, she went to Watford Art College which started her lifelong love of art and painting. After a brief period working for John Dickenson's, drawing technical components, she joined the Wrens during wartime, mainly because she liked their uniforms!

First she was based with the Wrens in Rochester, then commonly known as 'doodle-bug-alley' and then moved to Oxford. A lot of her time was spent scanning aerial photos of the various locations including the Normandy coast using stereoscopic viewers looking for evidence of military installations.



After she was demobbed from the Wrens, she was given a job with the Economist Magazine in London as an artist and cartographer. She produced maps of Malaya for Encyclopaedia Britannica as a separate project during this time. She really enjoyed her four years at the Economist.

It was during this time she met her future husband, Norman Hodge, first on the train and subsequently whilst taking part in the Shakespeare Plays held at Pendley during the time of Dorian Williams. Norman came from Plymouth and had been transferred to a job in London too.



Grace and Norman were married in St Peter & St Paul's Church on 2 September 1950. They purchased a house in Wigginton and lived there until 1970, before moving back to Tring where they lived till their deaths. Both of them had a love for the church and church music. Norman was a very accomplished organist and choirmaster and was the organist at Holy Trinity Paddington, St Bartholomew's Wigginton, St Mary's Northchurch and St Peter & St Paul's in Tring. Grace sang in the choir at most of these churches. During this time her family grew to having five sons although she always yearned to have a daughter, but she did have five granddaughters and eight great granddaughters to compensate her!

For many years she wrote the entries in the Church Book of Remembrance because she was an expert in calligraphy.



She always continued going to art classes with her friends and all the family have her paintings hanging on their walls. She was always modest about her art but she really was very talented. It is not widely known but she spent many hours producing an illuminated scroll in gilt and other colours on behalf of Tring titled 'Loyal Address to Her Majesty on the Occasion of her Coronation' back in 1953.

She really loved the WI and ran the Wigginton WI Choir and co-wrote several hilarious pantomimes. She also loved International Folk Dancing. She also enjoyed helping with meals-on-wheels which she did for many years. She had so many good friends from all the activities she took part in and was always a busy person with a very full social diary.

So, she was born in Tring, married in Tring and passed away in Tring: she had Tring running through her veins. The whole family give thanks for her long life, her kindness, her good health, her love for her family and the happiness she found from St Peter & St Paul's and having so many good friends.

**Mark Hodge, son**



# In memory of Betty Mary Aston

Taking Betty's funeral was a huge honour and slightly daunting. Betty would let you know in no uncertain terms what she thought of something. Our parish book group would always wait with bated breath for her verdict on the monthly book. We would never know if the verdict would be 'That was rubbish', or 'I enjoyed that'. When faced with the longer Lent reading choice, she would say she wouldn't live long enough to tackle it. However, on many occasions, having listened to the opinions of others, she would go back and finish reading a book which she had not liked to start with.

Betty died a few months short of her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. Would she approve of her funeral service? Betty had attended many funerals herself, of friends and clients, and would often comment that she didn't want a gushing eulogy made at her own service. The problem is, Betty was a truly remarkable person and it was going to be hard not to acknowledge this.

Betty was born in London in 1927. She was evacuated to Eastbourne for a short period during the war, but spent most of it in London, where she attended Palmers Green High School. From school she went to secretarial college and became an articled clerk. Thus began a record-breaking career as a solicitor. Betty was the longest-serving female solicitor on the roll, being an active solicitor for 71/72 years. I doubt this record will ever be beaten. I know that Betty was proud of this. I don't know that she would have used the term feminist, but I was proud to have known a pioneering woman who paved the way for others. Well into her 80s, Betty signed some legal documents for my mother's will. I took these to some very young female solicitor. I had to tell them about Betty. I think they thought I was a bit mad, but it mattered a lot to me! She helped to change the culture within law firms.

Betty met her first husband, himself a legal executive but from a very different social background, at the Young Conservatives and they were married in 1953. It was a surprisingly modern marriage with an equal division of domestic chores. Tim and Penny remember their mother as an elegant lady and a wonderful dancer. They also remember coming down to a smoky living room after a late-night evening of bridge playing.

Betty's mother was a staunch atheist,

so it was only later in life that Betty came to faith, and was only confirmed in her 40s. It was at St John the Baptist, Aldbury, that Betty became a church activist. As her faith developed, it became sad for her to come to the conclusion that she no longer saw conservatism as it was being practised as being compatible with her faith. For Betty, faith required making a difference. She had a huge social conscience, community mattered to her massively, and she was incredibly generous to charities. The reading used at the service was from the prophet Isaiah, and this vision of justice and preparing the way of the Lord was important to Betty. She also loved Advent hymns.

If faith was her inspiration, then law was the mechanism by which Betty could help people. Practising in family law she saw the whole range of humanity. Unsurprisingly she was very open when the church debated issues relating to human sexuality. She had come across everything already. She was also clear that she was able to help people. This was important. If partners in the law firm were concerned with profit, Betty would remind them 'we are here for more than that'. It is not a bad reminder that God's purpose for us in life is generally that we are here for 'more than that', whatever 'that' is!

For someone who was so demonstrably successful, Betty could also be prone to self-doubt. She described herself as a 'glass half full person', but those who knew her well would tend to disagree. Her response to dark periods would be to think about what new project she could embark upon or how she could be useful. It is why she remained active as a lawyer and active on the church council.

Her grandson, Jacob, described her as a much-loved mother and grandmother and remembered beautiful walks in Tring Park, her delicious pavlova, National Trust membership, watching 'Pointless' on television, Christmas trips to Waddesdon, her shortbread biscuits and the Christmas decorations that she had from her childhood. He said of her:



'My grandmother lived a life that was truly special. She was a remarkable individual who defied convention. What made my grandma so fascinating is that the rules of life didn't seem to apply to her. She had a huge amount of energy and led such an active lifestyle that we never considered her to be an old person. In her mid-80s she was part of an organisation that provided lifts for the early 60s and one of the people she was taking home had a Zimmer frame. Well, my grandma carried it up the stairs to their front door! Even in her early 90s she was still playing bridge three times a week, cooking her own meals, going to U3A discussion groups and taking a bus into Berkhamsted where she was still working as a solicitor. The only thing that finally slowed down her social life and stopped her from working was a global pandemic.' Her granddaughters described her as their 'ideal woman' and wanted to grow up to be just like her.

I think the quote I most liked about Betty was from Jane. She commented that in old age, Betty would still be well dressed in brightly coloured clothes: 'Even in old age she was never beige'. In style, and certainly in her valued opinions, there was never beige with Betty; we are definitely poorer without her, but grateful for all that she did.

**Huw Bellis  
Tring Team**

# Useful contacts

## TRING TEAM PARISH

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

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

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

**Diocesan Lay Ministers**  
Jon Reynolds  
01296 662326  
jonreynolds1386@gmail.com

Grahame Senior  
01442 822770  
gsenior@seniorpartners.co.uk

Mike Watkin  
07715 553556  
mike.watkin@btinternet.com

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

Vivianne Child  
01442 826092  
vchild@childassociates.co.uk

**Parish Advisor**  
John Whiteman  
01442 826314  
john@tringteamparish.org.uk

**Church Wardens**  
Roy Hargreaves (Tring)  
01442 823624

Jane Brown (Aldbury)  
01442 851396

Christine Rutter (Puttenham)  
01296 668337

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

Judith Weatherill  
(Long Marston)  
jweath76@gmail.com

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

Janet Goodyer  
pewsheets@tringteamparish.org.uk

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

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

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

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

**Senior Steward**  
Rosemary Berdinner  
01442 822305

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

**Administrator**  
Emma Nash  
01442 827881

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

**Parish Administrator**  
Nicole Brandwood  
tring@rcdow.org.uk

**HIGH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**Ministers**  
Joe Egan 07521 513493  
joe@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

Ruth Egan 07521 513494  
ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

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

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

**NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**Minister**  
Rev Jackie Buie  
07549 432582  
minister@newmillbaptist.org.uk

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



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

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

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

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

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

 Tring Parish  
 @revhuw

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

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

**Design**  
Kev Holt, Ginger Promo

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

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

## COMMENT DEADLINES

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August

## Crossword puzzle answers

From page 10

### ACROSS

1. HEROIC
5. LEGATE
8. CONTEMPORARY
9. PURPLE
11. INCH
14. INTERCESSIONS
15. BEDE
16. RODENT
18. PERSEVERANCE
20. HANDEL
21. TREBLE

### DOWN

2. ELOQUENCE
3. OUT
4. COMMERCE
5. LOOK
6. GRATIFIED
7. TRY
10. PREFERRED
12. CANONICAL
13. ESURIENT
17. BELL
18. PEA
19. ACE



## Services at Tring Church

**Sunday 3rd September**  
8am Holy Communion traditional language  
10am Communion with craft activity \*\*

**Sunday 10th September**  
8am Holy Communion traditional language\*\*  
10am Worship for all  
3pm Piano and More concert with  
The Icknield Ensemble

**Sunday 17th September**  
8am Holy Communion traditional language  
10am Communion with craft activity \*\*

**Sunday 24th September**  
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**  
Usually Holy Communion  
**10am Thursdays**  
Holy Communion in traditional language

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

# What's on in September in Tring Church

## 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

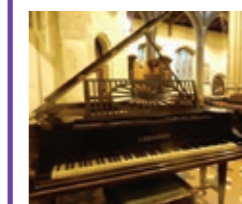


## Social Coffee

Fridays, Saturdays  
10am - 12 noon,  
and after Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday services



## Piano & more series Sunday September 10th



3pm for an hour's concert of music followed by refreshments.  
Free but collection for church and piano expenses



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Heirs & Graces Day Nursery, Florence House,  
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Stephen Hearn

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t: 01442 826446 e: [sales@tringmarketauctions.co.uk](mailto:sales@tringmarketauctions.co.uk)