

MARCH 2023 £1.50

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



What's on in March in Tring Church

Services at Tring Church

Sunday 5th March

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with Children's Activities **

Sunday 12th March

8am Holy Communion traditional language **
10am Worship for all

Sunday 19th March Mothering Sunday

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Mothering Sunday Communion **
(posies will be given to all)
3pm Piano and More concert

Saturday 25th March

2pm Holy Communion for Lady Day
(The Annunciation)

Sunday 26th March

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with Children's Activities **

** Streamed service on our website and YouTube

Mid-week Services in Tring

9.15am Tuesdays
Holy Communion
10am Thursdays

Holy Communion in traditional language

Lots more going on



Mondays 3.30pm - 5pm

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

Food Bank

Monday to Friday
10am - 12noon.

Drop-off donations and collect food



Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm Craft and a Cuppa

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

Social Coffee

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



Piano & more series



Sunday March 19th

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

Free but collection for church and piano expenses

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

Being the best we can be



I am writing this on Groundhog Day – an annual celebration in the United States which happens on 2 February each year. According to legend, 2 February is the day when the Groundhog wakes. If he sees his own shadow, then there will be six more weeks of winter; if he does not, then spring will start early. According to news reports, Punxsutawney Phil, the famous groundhog who lives in a tree stump in Punxsutawney, did see his own shadow this year and therefore more winter is expected.

I would have known nothing about Groundhog day if it were not for the famous film of the same name in which Bill Murray starred as a reporter who repeated the same day over and over again. As he realises that he is simply going to be repeating the same day, and there will be no consequences to what he does, his choices as to what to do each day change – he sees a psychologist, he gets drunk and leads police on a high-speed car chase, he

eats too much, he tries to manipulate people and situations. As he becomes more depressed, he tries to commit suicide in various ways, but each morning he once again wakes up in the local motel to the same song playing on the radio. So, he decides to do good – learning to play the piano, to sculpt ice, to speak French, and helping people in various ways. These various experiences lead to him becoming a changed character and (spoiler alert) he eventually falls in love and wakes on 3 February, a new day, no longer stuck in the time loop of Groundhog Day.

None of us will ever have the experience of the same day repeating over and over again, but sometimes life can feel repetitive and lacking purpose. When you read this, we will be in the season of Lent, a period when we take time to think about our lives as we prepare for the great celebration of Easter, a moment when we step away from our usual routine to do things differently for a while, an opportunity to think about our discipleship and what it means to us. What have you decided to do differently this year? How are you getting on?

We can all have times when we

struggle to live as we want to live, to be the best that we can be. As Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, 'What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.' Yet, much as the discovery of love (both community and romantic) helped to save Bill Murray's character in Groundhog Day, I do believe that God's love can help us as we try to be his disciples and follow where he leads. Time and again we may get it wrong as human beings, but God doesn't ask us to be his disciples on our own: instead he sends his Holy Spirit to give us the gifts, the strength to do what he asks of us.

It's God's Holy Spirit that gives me hope. I don't need to rely on my flawed self to keep trying and failing to get things right; instead I'm reminded that it's through God's grace that he is gradually forming us to be the people he knows we can be. That doesn't mean that I'm going to get it right all the time by any means, but God's Holy Spirit helps me to keep going, knowing that his love and grace will always be there for me.

Happy Lent!

Rachael Hawkins
St Martha's Methodist Church

To Keep a true Lent



Nothing complicated about this advice on what is really involved in the observance of Lent. Herrick chooses a simple approach in easy language with straightforward rhymes. The only strangeness is the organisation of the lines – apparently Herrick liked to experiment with combinations of long and short lines, which here slow the pace (almost jaunty?) and single out the ideas he proposes. He produced just one book of poetry – 'Hesperides' – containing over a thousand poems, many of them epigrams. His subjects include pastoral, ceremonial, political and philosophical themes but he is probably best known for his lines to his fictional mistresses Anthea, Prue, Corinna and others and his gusto for the good life.

Robert Herrick (1591-1634) was the son of a London goldsmith and one of

seven children. His father died when he was a baby and the family was adopted by his uncle. He was apprenticed, at the age of 16, to the family firm but, after six years, he enrolled as a student at Cambridge. After gaining his degree he moved to London and little is known of him, except that he continued to write poetry and joined the company of poets and musicians who gathered around Ben Jonson. In 1623 he was ordained and, after a spell as chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham, involving a time at war in France fighting for the English, he was given the living of Dean Prior in Devon. Dispossessed of his parish under the Puritans, he later returned to his Devon village where he died and is buried. His poetry was almost forgotten in the 18th century, by turns applauded and condemned (for its sometimes vaguely explicit imagery) in the 19th century but is now much appreciated for its life-affirming attitude.

Kate Banister
St Julian's, St Albans

*Is this a Fast, to keep
The Larder lean?
And clean
From fat of Veals, and Sheep?
Is it to quit the dish
Of Flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with Fish?
Is it to fast an hour,
Or ragged to go,
Or show
A down-cast look, and sour?
No: 'tis a Fast, to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat
And meat,
Unto the hungry Soul.
It is to fast from strife,
From old debate,
And hate;
To circumsise thy life.
To show a heart grief-rent;
To starve thy sin,
Not Bin;
And that's to keep thy Lent.*

Robert Herrick, 1648

Hope, pain and a journey of reconciliation



The story of a photographic exhibition

Musalaha is changing, developing its ways to communicate a message its communities do not wish to hear.

The reconciliation groups I wrote about in the last few issues of *Comment* are now pioneering a new strategy. You will remember groups of thirty, drawn from two 'other' communities, spend a year or so learning to approach and understand each other and then work in some community project that promotes understanding across the divide. Israeli women have visited Palestinian women in hospitals; children's summer camps have brought hope to the next generation; and young adults have ridden camels in the Jordan Desert as they built trust and explored reconciliation.

Joint advocacy

Let me explain this fresh focus through the story of a photographic exhibition designed to tell how reconciliation was experienced by a recent women's group.

Their wider communities were invited. Hiba, the women's Group Palestinian Leader, described the event as 'very brave'. A reasonable dose of apprehension seemed natural as 'foreigners', Israelis and Palestinians, from Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza gathered in the Old City of Beit



Sahour – close to Bethlehem and across the dividing wall. Few events in the land offer the opportunity for this diversity of people to gather, let alone discuss photos depicting the realities facing those who struggle with others across the divide.

Of the fourteen photos displayed, four were presented by participants during the opening reception.

One Palestinian woman felt quite vulnerable as she presented a photo of her grandfather's dimly lit keys in a slightly ajar drawer. These treasured family keys belong to the house her grandfather was forcibly removed from during the Nakba (the 1948 eviction of Palestinians), symbolizing her hope to return one day.

An Israeli woman presented a controversial photo displaying a tattoo of ١٩٤٨ (1948 in Arabic script) on her own inner left arm, evocatively displaying the live connection between the Shoah (holocaust) and the catastrophe of Palestinian oppression since 1948.

Hedva, the women's group Jewish leader, noted how grateful Palestinian guests

were to discover this Israeli woman's bold recognition of their suffering in relation to Jewish suffering.

The mother of a Palestinian lady wrote in the guestbook, in Arabic: 'A new command I give you: love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another'.

Let the heart speak

Yet this struggle has not been easy or tidy. As Hedva reflected on the ongoing complexities of hosting a landmark event like this, she stated matter-of-factly 'Art brings up emotions; whatever is in the heart will come out.'

I find this story moves us too. It enables us to see something of the inner life and courage of those living in Israel and Palestine amid the complexities of reconciling across the divide, especially in the light of recent news.

Colin Briant
High Street Baptist Church

The account above is derived from Musalaha's Jerusalem website <https://musalaha.org>
See: About Musalaha – Newsletters – January 2023 Exploring New Grounds

See also: 2022 Recap Newsletter dated December 2022
UK-based website <https://musalaha.uk>

For a Tring perspective email Colin or Janet Briant colin.briant@hotmail.com

For bespoke Tours of Israel/Palestine see <https://www.boundarybreakers.net/#holy-land-encounters>

The reality of God's blessing



'I've got a new job – God has really blessed me!'
'This is my new granddaughter. God has really blessed us!'
'We exchanged on our house; what a blessing from God!'

Saying, 'God has blessed me', has become a way of expressing thanks to God for positive things in our lives. While giving thanks is important and good, we can't associate God's blessing only with the good times. What about the times when we're struggling, when life is hard, when things aren't going well? What about the millions

of people who suffer more than we can probably imagine, because of war, famine and oppression? Has God removed his blessing and love in these instances?

In his introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, known as the Beatitudes, Jesus challenges this approach.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit...; Blessed are those who mourn...; Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...; Blessed are the merciful...; Blessed are the pure in heart...; Blessed are the peacemakers...; Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake...'. (Matthew 5:3-10)

The Beatitudes describe the reality of God's blessing. They apply to us all. We are blessed when we mourn for

the state of the world; we are blessed when we weep with compassion for others; we are blessed when we share God's desire for justice and mercy. The Beatitudes also have an ethical dimension – in the light of them, how are we to live?

How do we live with an openness to God? How do we pursue that which is right? What does peace-making look like? What does it mean, day by day, to live in God's love? Reflecting on the Beatitudes can help us to live God's love across Tring and the villages and the world – they are certainly worth engaging with!

Michelle Grace
Tring Team



Mothering Sunday

Sunday 19th March

We celebrate Mothering Sunday across the Tring Team Parish.
Please invite friends and neighbours and bring the whole family along.

Posies are given to all.

Tring 10am Mothering Sunday Communion
Aldbury 10am Mothering Sunday Communion
Long Marston 10am Mothering Sunday Worship

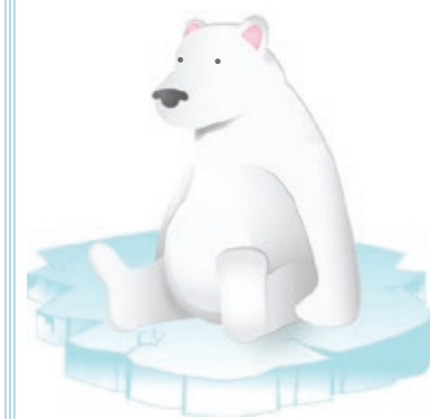


Quiet Place

Need space to contemplate?

Pop in to
St Martha's Methodist Church
Chapel Street, Park Road, Tring

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



Monthly prayer breakfast
8.30-9.30am

Saturday 4 February
St Peter & St Paul's

Saturday 4 March
New Mill

Saturday 1 April
St Martha's

On being an Anglican in Sydney who can't be a Sydney Anglican



After two years of worshipping in the same place, Sylvie and I have felt the need to move churches. Strangely for

me, having 'discovered' the Anglican church in my late teens and early twenties, it feels odd to be living in a place where to maintain contact with what I value about the Anglican tradition, I have needed to start worshipping in a non-Anglican church.

We are now finding our feet in the Uniting Church in Springwood, which feels – both theologically and liturgically – a bit like coming home. The Uniting Church is a distinctively Australian phenomenon: created in 1977, it was the result of three Christian denominations – the Congregational Union in Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia, and the Presbyterian Church of Australia – coming together in the hope that they would 'bear witness to that unity which is both Christ's gift and will for the Church'. (Some Methodist and Presbyterian churches didn't sign up and remain separate entities.) The Uniting Church now claims 2000 congregations across Australia, from state capital cities to remote regions of the outback, which worship in over forty-five languages, including many languages of Indigenous First Nations Australians.

In Springwood, the church seems to have amongst its members several people who, like me, are Anglican 'exiles': those who, despite considering the Anglican tradition to be a significant part of their Christian identity, feel that they cannot be Anglicans in the Diocese of Sydney because they are not 'Sydney Anglicans'.

How so? Around three years ago, shortly before we moved to Australia, we had a conversation with Huw Bellis about Anglicanism in Sydney. According to Huw, 'Sydney Anglicans' are not Anglicans. While I now think that this isn't quite true, the experience of the last couple of years means Sylvie and I now know very clearly what he meant. For two years, we worshipped in the Lower Mountains Anglican Parish (LMAP), a group of churches near where we have been living. We attended two of these

churches sequentially, settling on St David's Blaxland. The strong appeal of this church was the people: one of the friendliest and most hospitable congregations we have ever experienced. From the very beginning, we were made to feel extremely welcome, and soon became active members of their monthly book group, the rough equivalent of what had been an important part of church life and fellowship for us in Tring.

Anyone who knows anything about Sydney Anglicanism will be aware that the official position of the Sydney Diocese tends towards the socially and theologically conservative side of most contentious church issues. We were quite clear with LMAP's senior minister from the beginning that we were not on the same page as the Sydney Diocese on matters such as the blanket condemnation of homosexual relationships as being against 'what the Bible teaches'. He was generous with his time and made clear to us that although he shared the Diocese's conservative views on this, he considered it to be a secondary or tertiary issue, on which Christians may conscientiously disagree. It took us longer to realise that the Diocese's position on women in ministry – of which I had previously been unaware – was if anything even more of a stumbling block for us.

The Diocese of Sydney is unusual in Australia in that it does not ordain women to the priesthood, based (as far as I can tell) on an interpretation of certain passages in Paul's epistles about female headship in the church and the alleged illegitimacy of women preaching and teaching in mixed settings. This means that women who have been ordained into the priesthood in other Anglican Dioceses in Australia can only serve as deacons here. (Women have been ordained as deacons since the late 1980s.) This is very much a Sydney thing: go one diocese north to Newcastle or one south to Canberra Goulburn, and you find a very different situation. Perth in Western Australia – which has a female archbishop, Kay Goldsworthy – feels a long way away theologically as well as geographically. This Sydney position has led to many such women leaving the Anglican church: Leigh, the minister at our new church, being one of them.

I said 'ordained to the priesthood', yet the term 'priest' is rarely if ever used in Sydney Anglicanism. Such terminology, along with traditional priestly robes, is associated with Catholicism or 'high church' ideas of a 'sacrificing' priesthood and treated with suspicion. (Anti-Catholicism seems to have been part of the DNA of the Anglican church in Sydney in its early days.) Walk as a stranger into most 'Sydney Anglican' churches and you will have no idea who is likely to preach the sermon or preside over Communion (offered infrequently), until a casually dressed man steps forward. We have even seen sermons preached by someone who, clad in a Hawaiian shirt and shorts, looks as if he has just been reminded on the beach that he is on this week's preaching rota. Similarly, other elements we associate with Anglican worship – such as the lighting of candles during Advent – are conspicuous by their absence (more suspiciously 'Catholic' elements?). Indeed, the Christmas-free layout of LMAP in December is something of which the most hard-line 16th century Puritan could have approved. In the Uniting Church, by contrast, it felt like Christmas.

The other contentious issue has been the blanket condemnation of homosexual practice, which as all readers of *Comment* will know, has been a controversial issue for the worldwide Anglican Communion for decades. In terms of the official ministry position, the contrast between LMAP and Tring could hardly be starker. We met with Ken, LMAP's senior minister, about our concerns and although he was once again generous with his time in discussing both the ordination of women and the position on gay relationships, it became increasingly clear that he is fully signed up to the Diocesan position on both matters. LMAP increasingly started to feel more like a socially conservative Pentecostal or Evangelical free church – with very long sermons to boot – than it did a church genuinely respectful of the breadth of the Anglican tradition. It has increasingly irritated me that those who take more of an 'inclusive church' position on such matters have been regularly portrayed as simply blowing with the wind of contemporary social fashion, opposing 'what the Bible

teaches'. It seems to me more honest to recognise this as a conscientious disagreement about what the Bible teaches. That handful of New Testament passages that are often used to justify a blanket condemnation of same-sex relationships (including life-long, monogamous gay relationships) – the so-called 'clobber passages' – depend upon some questionable translations. *Malakoi* ['soft men'??] – sometimes translated as 'homosexuals' – has at other times been translated as 'sexual perverts'; 'effeminate'; or – in Tyndale's 1525 Bible – 'weaklings'. It has sometimes been associated with male prostitutes; sometimes with luxuries such as expensive clothes and gourmet food. I understand that this has moral implications in the ancient context of laziness or cowardice (whereas maleness is associated with strength and superior intelligence: hardly stereotypes we are likely to buy into today). *Arsenokotai* – another of the clobber passage terms – is even more unclear, and apparently not found in Greek literature prior to Paul. Many scholars have argued that the ancient world did not have a concept of sexual orientation akin to ours. Paul's

target seems to have been the model of homosexual practice in Hellenistic society (pederasty, male prostitution, and sex with slaves as an expression of power-relations: all generally assumed to be just seeking novel forms of self-gratification). Neither Paul nor his Jewish predecessors consider the case of people whose fundamental orientation is towards the same sex. It is not clear that the kind of gay relationships that, say, the 'gay marriage' debate is about ('permanent, faithful, stable', in Jeffrey John's phrase) are anywhere on Paul's radar.

A typical move by 'conservatives' is to accuse 'liberals' of just seeing what they want to see in the scriptures. As I understand the more inclusive position, it is more like this. We have a gospel which has at its heart accepting virtually every marginalised group hitherto considered to be unclean: lepers, cripples, menstruating women, Samaritans, Gentiles, tax collectors. If we are going to decide that one historically marginalised group is an exception to this rule, would we not need a firmer foundation for doing so than some deeply ambivalent Greek?

Many in the Blaxland congregation share – or are at least sympathetic

to – our concerns but have stayed put because they value the fellowship. We understand this dilemma, as we valued it too, but ultimately, we have felt unable to stay. As someone once (allegedly...) said, here we stand, we cannot do otherwise! We are keen to maintain the friendships we have made at LMAP – and to remain part of their book group – but we don't believe that worshipping in the same church is necessary to do so.

The question remains: why does what is perhaps Australia's most cosmopolitan city have its most theologically conservative Anglican Diocese? The answer seems at least partly to be rooted in the complete dominance of the conservative evangelical Moore College, Sydney Anglicanism's theological college for clergy training. Six of the last seven Archbishops of Sydney have either been trained or worked at Moore, and a former principal, Thomas Hammond, was Grand Master of NSW's Orange Lodge – which may partially explain some of the suspicion of Catholicism that still seems to persist. But that's another story, which I am not qualified to tell.

John Lippitt
Uniting Church, Springwood

Care for one another



'There should be no division in the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.' 1 Corinthians 12:25

What do you feel when you have been 'under the weather' or going through a stressful time and someone takes the trouble to ask how you are? Or you have been struggling with your health for a while and haven't been able to get to church... and it seems no one has noticed you have not been there?

Of course, it is uplifting and encouraging to know that someone has missed you and taken time to ask after you and that is what any caring community aspires to offer. However, it is unfortunately too easy in a widespread community for an individual to be overlooked and consequently feel neglected and unloved.

We are fortunate within Tring and the surrounding villages that there are already various networks which provide pastoral care and support to those in

need. In the Tring Team Parish of St Peter & St Paul, which includes the villages of Aldbury, Puttenham, Wilstone and Long Marston, there are not only Anglican and other church groups looking out for one another, but also community groups providing practical offers of support.

Have you thought you would like to be able to give time to help and encourage others? Well, you can... and the Tring Team Parish is asking for people who would like to find out more about being a Pastoral Visitor, to get in touch and potentially undertake some training to see whether this is a ministry which God is calling you to.

We are looking to respond to wider needs of recipients and deepen the pool of trained pastoral visitors. Areas where we would like to offer support would be to newcomers, the bereaved, hospitalised, new parents, the house-bound.

You may have had a good experience of pastoral care which you have received and would encourage that to continue; or perhaps you have been disappointed through a seeming lack of care in a certain situation. I

am inviting you now to contribute to our review by identifying any area of pastoral care which we currently do not address. It would also be helpful to highlight those things we do well and equally be honest where we have not had the resources or practice in place to respond to some situation.

If you are involved outside Tring Team Parish in providing pastoral care in your church or local neighbourhood, then I'd be glad to hear from you and share ideas how we can work together within the wider community. My details are at the bottom. It is really important that we can build up a network of care within Tring and the villages, so no one feels alone – it is tragically too easy for people to be neglected and feel that 'nobody cares'.

We propose to run over two Saturdays in June a course prepared by the Diocese of St Albans. I will gladly send details to anyone interested. Please contact me at paulbw32@icloud.com or on 01442 891714.

Paul Boddam-Whetham
(Pastoral Team Coordinator)
Tring Team



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Good news for New Mill!

Praise the Lord! Our lengthy period of Interregnum has come to an end. God has faithfully led us and provided someone to be our new minister. New Mill Baptist Church is thrilled to announce that we have at last found someone brave enough to take us on... We just can't believe our good fortune and we thank God for his leading and faithfulness in our search.

Jackie Buie started her ministry at New Mill with her Induction service on Saturday 25 February at 2.30pm and



preached on Sunday 26 February at 10.30am.

Jackie and her husband Andy have been a part of the Hub at Gold Hill Baptist Church, Chalfont St Peter, for several years and felt that God was leading her to pastures new. We are so lucky that New Mill was the area that she was led to explore and welcome her to lead us forward in our ministry and mission into our local community.

Val Carr
New Mill Baptist Church

Living out faith with joy



On occasion, my mother would say to me, 'Don't you remember your catechism?' My answer would be, 'What catechism?' Her own confirmation

involved intensive preparation and learning set texts by rote. My own preparation was a little more hit-and-miss.

In the early church, this process of formation for baptism and for life-long discipleship was called 'catechesis' (pronounced cat-eh-key-sis). The aim is to build a resounding inner echo of God's word, an image of Christ at the centre of each disciple's life through learning very simple core texts by heart.

From earliest times, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer formed the basis of what became known as a catechism: a simple and compelling way of forming disciples in the Christian faith and helping them to live out that faith with joy. Another key text to help us work out what it is to be a pilgrim is Matthew 5:1-2 The Beatitudes.

Can you remember your confirmation

classes (assuming you have been confirmed)? What did you learn in these?

Pilgrim, what is the Christian vision for the world?

The Christian vision for the world is one where God reigns in justice, peace and love.

How does Jesus Christ describe the citizens of God's kingdom?

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.



During Lent, the Tring Team is reflecting on a short Bible passage alongside the Beatitudes in their house groups. Each Beatitude is made up of three sections:

1. The announcement of God's blessing: 'Blessed are those...'
2. A vocation e.g. poorness in spirit or mourning, etc.
3. A promise e.g. receiving the Kingdom of God or comfort.

In our explorations we see how this pattern of blessing, vocation and promise is lived out, particularly in Jesus' own life and ministry.

Come and join us! All are welcome.

Huw Bellis,
Tring Team

Parish registers

Weddings

We offer our congratulations and prayers to this couple as they begin their married lives together.

Toby James Claggett & Hannah Lucy Smith

Funerals

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

*(Mona) Kathleen Richards 93
Jocelyn Viola Pearce 91
Peter Pavitt 85*

*Sandra Kempster 63
Joyce Isabel Wood 88
John Willmore 76*



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Tweet of the month



Previously I have mentioned that we have birds that are resident, winter visitors, summer visitors and passage migrants. However, I have not really covered a true passage migrant in-depth; so here we go.

Unlike Greenshank, which I mentioned back in 2015 as an example of a passage migrant, Sabine's Gull is a true passage migrant as it doesn't breed in Britain, whereas Greenshank does – albeit in small numbers in Scotland.

Sabine's Gull was named after Captain Edward Sabine who accompanied Captain John Ross on a voyage to look for the Northwest Passage in 1818 and saw this species breeding on small islands west of Greenland. In the Atlantic its breeding grounds are confined to the Canadian Arctic, Greenland, and sporadically on Svalbard. Its Atlantic wintering area is at sea off south-west Africa – off Angola, Namibia and South Africa. So, the areas where it spends most of its life are relatively inaccessible. Also, unlike most of the gulls we have in Britain, Sabine's Gull is a true seagull and is happy to migrate far out to sea and well away from land-based birdwatchers.

Its appearance is superficially similar to an immature Kittiwake, which is a common British breeding bird, and indeed even today distant Kittiwakes are still misidentified as Sabine's Gulls

by people using the advanced optical equipment now available. Given that most difficult-to-identify birds were identified from specimens having been shot, prior to the 20th century, it is no wonder that this elusive species wasn't identified until 1819 and as a result of an expedition that happened to go past its breeding areas.

For all its similarities to an immature Kittiwake, when seen well it is very distinctive and quite a striking gull. It is typically smaller than a Black-headed Gull and has a slightly forked tail. The adult has a dark grey hood in the summer and unlike other gulls, which often look very different at different ages, Sabine's Gull is actually quite similar in both immature and adult plumages. It has a distinctive wing pattern, which is fortunate as most sightings in Britain are of a bird flying along the coast – sometimes a fair distance offshore. The pattern consists of a black triangle on the outermost part of the wing, and in adults a mid-grey



patch that extends from the joint of the wing to the base of the wing along the front edge and in a curve to the base of the wing's back edge. The remainder of the wing is white and extends along the wing's back edge and is widest at the wing's joint.

Most British sightings of this species are in August to November as a result of strong winds blowing them close enough to land to be identified as they fly past. However, they do occasionally turn up in summer and one such bird lingered at Tring Reservoirs in July 2012 for five days giving excellent views.

When you consider what this beautiful, delicate-looking bird must cope with travelling the oceans from the far north of the Northern Hemisphere, across the equator and down to southern Africa and back each year, I would find it hard to not think of it as a miraculous part of God's creation and proof of his existence; and as we are now in Lent, we should also remember the proof of God's love for us who walked on this Earth 2000 years ago.

Roy Hargreaves, 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

Trailblazing Traidcraft



I've been a Traidcrafter for nearly thirty years. I've had various outlets: a spare room, Harlesden Methodist church, ad hoc events in Tring.

However, I took my last delivery just before a Christmas as Traidcraft is no more. News of their going into administration was announced suddenly at the end of January 2023. Traidcraft have pioneered changes in trade and continually fought against the global trend for 'more' and 'cheaper'. Some of you may have been part of the movement in the 1980s, when 'everything tasted of cardboard' as my mother-in-law remembers! The introduction of the Fairtrade Mark in 1992 was a pivotal point as it meant more products could be accredited and the range of stock broadened. Things have continued to move on and today things taste great! The range of products continues to expand from Fairtrade clothing and cleaning products to high-end tea, coffee and chocolate, many of which are on the shelves of mainstream supermarkets.

Humble beginnings

In 1970, a typhoon swept across what was then known as East Pakistan, devastating homes and claiming over half a million lives. World development charity Tearfund started to deliver relief to the Bangladeshi people and, in 1974, Richard Adams filled a returning charter aircraft with jute handicrafts, with the aim of helping the people with trade, as well as aid. But he wanted to do more.

In 1978, Richard and six like-minded young people had a vision for a fair-trade organisation. At the time, just five companies controlled about 85% of

the world's cocoa trade, and the same sort of percentages exist in most of the everyday commodities we enjoy today. Therefore, this movement of radical, church-based individuals were bucking the system by importing goods directly from artisans and growers and distributing them directly to ordinary consumers in the UK, cutting out the middlemen. Their first handicrafts catalogue was hand-drawn, and featured a selection of jute plant hangers, baskets and rugs – which would probably be fashionable today – all sourced from small co-operatives across Bangladesh.

Traidcraft sought out small-scale and community growers and traditional craftspeople whose lives depended on their skills, and who struggled to match what the big companies demanded. Their partnership with Traidcraft was going to be life-changing. Traidcraft has since worked with more than 100 producer groups in more than thirty countries around the world.

Trail blazers

Traidcraft were at the forefront of so many trade and product innovations. Not only did they insist on fair prices, they also paid a 'living wage'. They introduced a compostable foil wrap alternative on their chocolate (foil is one of the most energy-consuming forms of packaging and costly to recycle). They also introduced the Fairtrade premium, a contribution to community projects such health, education or environmental projects. They were instrumental in the introduction of the Fairtrade Mark, an internationally recognised symbol, and have brought about shifts in thinking around the world. The

Fairtrade Mark recognised that producers needed to show environmental consideration well before many considered climate change to be a justice issue.



Ups and downs of Traidcraft

1979

Traidcraft was established by Richard Adams as a faith organisation in Newcastle in 1979. Its first catalogue was hand-drawn, featuring a small selection of jute products from Bangladesh. Within two years, fairtrade tea, coffee, and subsequently a wide range of other food, clothes and accessories, paper and crafts, were introduced.

1986

Sister charity, Traidcraft Exchange, was founded to make sure that the UK Government ruled against the worst extremes of corporate abuse.

1989

In 1989 Traidcraft became founding members of the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO), that puts the interests of workers, farmers, artisans and the planet first. It's the work and achievements of all of its members that make WFTO a global authority on fair trade to this day.

1992

In 1992, Traidcraft jointly founded the Fairtrade Foundation and helped establish the standards that underpin today's well-known Fairtrade Mark.

1995

First ever Fairtrade Fortnight.

2001

Garstang in Lancashire declares itself 'the world's first Fairtrade Town'. Over 600 communities have achieved Fairtrade status since then and there is a network of over 2,000 Fairtrade Towns worldwide.

2013

In 2013, as a result of Traidcraft campaigns, the government set up an official supermarket watchdog, the Grocery Adjudicator, with the legal power to fine supermarkets who pressured their suppliers into unethical or harmful situations.

2018

Traidcraft announced major financial difficulties and planned to cease trading at the end of December 2018. Following consultation, it slimmed down operations, focused on popular food products and continued to trade.

2019

The 40th birthday of Traidcraft was celebrated by a huge thanksgiving service in Newcastle Cathedral. The Coffee Transparency Pledge was signed, making 100% of their coffee costs transparent and public.

2020

The revenue of Traidcraft PLC was reported as £5.4 million — down from £8.1 million in 2019 – and then the pandemic hit.

2021

Traidcraft Exchange, the charitable arm of Traidcraft since 2018, was rebranded as Transform Trade.

2023

Traidcraft PLC went into administration.

Decline

Prior to the pandemic, Traidcraft was struggling, and the threat of closure in 2018 was turned around by a slimmed down operation and a concerted effort from Fairtraders to keep it going by boosting sales. However, as the directors explained in their January announcement of Traidcraft's going into administration on 20 January, they attributed various factors which led to their decision: 'The business has been in a weak financial position for some years and the Covid-19 pandemic presented a significant new set of challenges,' the letter says. 'Just as we were emerging from the pandemic, like many other retailers, we faced the combined effects of the war in Ukraine, rising energy prices, and increased transport costs. December sales were also negatively impacted by the uncertainty created by Royal Mail strikes.'

Looking ahead

Transform Trade (formerly Traidcraft Exchange) continues the fight for trade justice. Charlotte Timson, Transform Trade CEO, responded to the announcement of Traidcraft's closure, stating, 'Since 1979 Traidcraft has reimagined the relationships between producers and consumers, putting justice at the heart of trade. It's no



exaggeration to say that the fairtrade movement as we know it would not exist without Traidcraft... The good work that Traidcraft has done over the years will not disappear. Instead, it must be built upon.' The mission of Transform Trade is to support the producers and continue challenging the system.

Tring's Justice & Peace Group will continue to raise awareness about Fairtrade in our community and encourage businesses and individuals to make choices which impact positively on producers. This year's Fairtrade Fortnight (27 February – 12 March 2023) continues to prompt us to 'Choose The World You Want' by making the small switch to

Fairtrade in order to support producers in protecting the future of some of our most-loved foods and the planet. This year the Justice & Peace Group are focusing their attention on the many cafés and restaurants in our community to ask them to stock Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar. By visiting each establishment, we hope to raise awareness about the difference our choices can make. As consumers we encourage you to ask about Fairtrade and comment positively on it when you see the Fairtrade Mark in a shop, café or restaurant.

Polly Eaton
Justice & Peace Group, Tring

Kitchen essays



'God made the first Christmas and man has ever since been busy spoiling it. Year by year the propaganda of the shops grows increasingly active; and their

suggestions for the keeping of that high feast, including such secular items as dozens of brandy, whisky, and champagne, appear annually more elaborate and incongruous than ever before...' (And we might think that the way Easter is celebrated, or rather, swamped in the supermarkets by lashings of chocolate is equally incongruous! CW)

This is the opening of one chapter in my favourite cookery book, first published in 1922. Dotted among the recipes, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, are biblical quotations, theological musings, lines of poetry, references to Greek

mythology... you name it.

'The Children of Israel reached the Promised Land after 40 austere years in the wilderness, with little to eat and less to drink, displeasure prevailing above, murmurings below, yet we read that later they attained to greatness and prosperity on a diet of mammoth grapes and abundant wine, of overflowing milk and honey.'

The chapter on food for children has a recipe for roly-poly pudding, offered as a preferable substitute for 'ungraceful rolls of suet pudding, accompanied by inadequate treacle'. The author (Agnes Jekyll, sister-in-law of the famous garden designer Gertrude Jekyll) concludes this chapter thus, 'Well-brought-up children are trained to say Grace, which recalls the memory of a Scotch [sic] minister, accustomed to share the mid-day meal of some of his flock between services. He varied his grace according to the feelings evoked by the fare set before him. Before fresh herrings, a dish he cordially disliked, he

would begin, "For the least of all these Thy mercies", whereas roasted goose or duck with apple sauce moved him to a more fervid thanksgiving, beginning, "Bountiful Creator". The simple Grace said daily throughout the King's Navy, "Thank God", accompanied by a hearty thump on the table, may well follow these children's dishes and grown-ups have been known to join in.'

Jekyll encourages variety in your diet, warning you against what a schoolboy friend of hers called, 'the practice introduced by the Greeks of a man having only one wife, which is called Monotony'. And if you are indeed looking for something a little different to have for a fish lunch on a Friday, I would be happy to forward her recipe for Cod's Head Soup.

Carole Wells
St Peter & St Paul

Lent Films 2023 - The Beatitudes

All films start at 6.30pm at St. John the Baptist in Aldbury.
Tea, coffee, wine and popcorn will be available.
There will be a short discussion after each of the films.



Sunday 5th March Blessed are those who mourn....

Manchester by the Sea 2016 15

Lee Chandler is a brooding, irritable loner who works as a handyman for a Boston apartment block. One damp winter day he gets a call summoning him to his hometown, north of the city. His brother's heart has given out suddenly, and he's been named guardian to his 16-year-old nephew. As if losing his only sibling and doubts about raising a teenager weren't enough, his return to the past re-opens an unspeakable tragedy.

Sunday March 12th Blessed are the meek....

A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood 2019 PG

Tom Hanks portrays Fred Rogers in a timely story of kindness triumphing over cynicism, based on the true story of a real-life friendship between him and journalist Lloyd Vogel. After a jaded magazine writer (Matthew Rhys) is assigned a profile of Fred Rogers, he overcomes his scepticism, learning about empathy, kindness, and decency from America's most beloved neighbour.



Sunday March 19th Blessed are the merciful....

The Son (French) 2002 12A

Olivier - meticulous, careful, even-handed - teaches carpentry at a vocational school in Liège. He's asked to take on Francis, 16, a new student. He declines the request then begins to watch, even spy on, the new lad. Olivier knows something. Later that day, he's visited by Magali, his ex-wife, who tells him that she's remarrying and is pregnant. Olivier seems to follow instinctive responses: "why today?" he demands of Magali; he continues to follow Francis; he changes his mind about enrolling the youth. What's the history between the two? After that becomes clear, what is it Olivier will do? Is this precise and measured carpenter in control of himself



Sunday March 26th Blessed are the peace makers....

Selma 2014 12A

The unforgettable true story chronicles the tumultuous three-month period in 1965, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a dangerous campaign to secure equal voting rights in the face of violent opposition. The epic march from Selma to Montgomery culminated in President Johnson signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, one of the most significant victories for the civil rights movement. Director Ava DuVernay's "Selma" tells the story of how the revered leader and visionary Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and his brothers and sisters in the movement prompted change that forever altered history.



The experience of transcending suffering



In January I attended a talk at St Albans Cathedral by the scientist and priest the Revd Professor Nick Goulding. The talk was entitled 'Healing Light in Medicine'. He

outlined the connection between the (probably) worst character in the New Testament, the Lady of the Lamp and the uncle of the late, great Olivia Newton-John (on whom I had a crush when I was a youngster – Olivia Newton-John, that is, not the Lady of the Lamp.)

Nick is an Associate Priest at St Mary's, Kinsbourne Green, just north of Harpenden. He gained a degree in Physiology and Biochemistry and a PhD in Immunopathology at Southampton University and spent ten years researching arthritis at the Royal National Hospital in Bath. A Reader for ten years, he felt the call to be ordained in 1994. He and his wife, Jenny, and two children moved to Harpenden in 1994 and he trained for the ministry part-time at Oak Hill College, whilst establishing an Arthritis Research Unit at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. He is Chaplain to Bart's and the London, Queen Mary's School of Medicine and Dentistry and also teaches pharmacology, immunology and medical ethics in the University of London.

Healing is the experience of transcending suffering, Nick believes. The idea that light had healing properties is found in many ancient civilisations such as ancient China and Egypt and the still-current practice of Hindus in saluting the sun at dawn.

Despite being known for his murderous tendencies rather than his healing, Herod the Great used the healing properties of light, establishing a healing centre at Ein Gedi, on the western shore of the Dead Sea. The surface of the Dead Sea is 430 metres (1,412 ft) below sea level, making its shores the lowest land-based elevation on Earth. This means that virtually all the harmful UVB rays have been filtered out by the additional 1,400 ft of atmosphere (not that Herod the Great knew that).

In more recent times, Florence Nightingale established that natural sunlight aided healing for sick soldiers in the Crimea and brought this practice back to Great Britain.

The next person mentioned by Nick was the scientist from the Faroe Isles, Niels Ryberg Finsen, who won the prestigious Nobel Prize for Medicine for his work on the healing properties of light. Niels himself was a sick man, confined to a wheelchair for the later part of his life. He wrote: 'My disease has played a very great role for my whole development...'

The disease was responsible for my starting investigations on light: I suffered from anaemia and tiredness, and since I lived in a house facing the north, I began to believe that I might be helped if I received more sun. I therefore spent as much time as possible in its rays. As an enthusiastic medical man, I was, of course, interested to know what benefit the sun really gave. I considered it from the physiological point of view but got no answer. I drew the conclusion that I was right and the physiology wrong. From this time (about 1888) I collected all possible observations about animals seeking the sun, and my conviction that the sun had a useful and important effect on the organism (especially the blood?) became stronger and stronger. What this useful effect really was, I could not find; I have been working for this goal ever since but have not been able to find exactly what I have been seeking, though we have gone somewhat forward. During my work towards this goal I encountered several effects of light. I then devised the treatment of small-pox in red light (1893) and further the treatment of lupus vulgaris (1895).'

In beautiful but simple experiments, Finsen demonstrated that the most refractive rays from the sun, or from an electric arc, may have a stimulating effect on the tissues. If the irradiation is too strong, however, it may give rise to tissue damage, but this may to some extent be prevented. In small-pox Finsen thought that the multiple scars might be avoided if the patient was protected from the chemical rays. Experiments with such patients were successful. This led to the treatment of lupus vulgaris or other skin diseases – or employed as general sun-baths, which, on Finsen's suggestion, was tried in cases of tuberculosis. The results were promising but, as a rule, the northern climate was not well suited for such therapy. When the usual Nobel festivities took place at Stockholm on 10 December 1903, he was sitting at his home in his wheelchair receiving congratulations from his numerous friends.

Prof Nick then talked about the use of high-powered lasers in surgery. They are very good at precision cutting where that is necessary. Low-powered lasers are also used in muscle therapy in many soccer clubs. Presumably in rugby clubs you are told to grin and bear it, or perhaps rugby has moved on since I played at school.

The next scientist was Gustav Victor Rudolf Born, son of the great German-Jewish physicist Max Born, the contemporary of Einstein. Gustav was also the uncle of the recently deceased Olivia Newton-John. Gustav was a German-British professor of Pharmacology at King's College London and Research Professor at the William Harvey Research Institute, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry. He fled Germany with his family in 1933, as his father and maternal grandfather were Jewish. He attended The Perse School, Cambridge and Edinburgh Academy and studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh. Gustav Born achieved scientific fame for his application of light transmission aggregometry – the test of how readily platelets in our blood clump together. He also outlined the use of artificial light to treat Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

Nick then moved on to the use of light in Spiritual Healing, outlining some of the thought of the ancient theologians St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas.

Isaiah 58:6-8 struck many in the meeting, in which the light of the Lord is promised to those who help establish justice: 'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?'

'Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?'

'Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.'

Not to mention the famous passage from John 8:12: 'When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."'

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team

Many and various ways to serve God



For Christmas I was very pleased to receive a number of books. Two of them reminded me how many different ways there are of expressing what it is to be a Christian, and

how varied are the circumstances through history in which Christians have practised their faith.

One book was about Irish saints and hermits who travelled to the Hebrides and the Atlantic shore of Scotland, some to spread the faith but others to find spiritual solitude in remote places. It is this latter group and others like them which intrigue me. For some of them went to great lengths to try to get away from other people and to be nearer to God and also went to extremes of bodily privation and loneliness to achieve this. Of course, at times we all want to get away from the busyness of life – the idea of peace and quiet can be very attractive. Throughout much of the history of the church, there have been monks and nuns living in community, and there have also been those who have gone further and become solitaries and hermits. Some of these found they were sought out for spiritual guidance, Julian of Norwich for instance. All of these tried to get away from it all to love God better, and yet one wonders if it is right to go to such extremes – living on rocky islands or desolate places.

Actually the book covers a variety of missionaries as the author discovers in his travels. We learn about the monastery which St Columba founded on Iona, and which still exists as a place of mission and community. Of course, St Patrick features and I can't help quoting something he wrote to show how different was the spirituality of some at that time: 'I would pray up to one hundred times and at night perhaps the same... and I would rise to pray before dawn in snow and ice and rain. I never felt the worse for it.' Then there was St Adamnan who became a monk on Iona and wrote about St Columba's life, which contains both useful information and fabulous material. Many more followed these both as missionaries and hermits.

The opposite of this is an active life based on the desire to spread the gospel, to love God and his church at

the same time. It is not 'either/or', when it comes to God and our neighbours, but 'both/and'.

Another book I was given is a life of Nicholas Breakspear, the only Englishman to become Pope. Born in Abbots Langley in about AD1100 he tried to become a monk at St Albans Abbey but was not accepted. He was not put off the religious life but joined an order in France and then progressed up the ecclesiastical promotions ladder ending up as Pope. Before that he had been a very busy and much travelled diplomat and missionary. His desire was to serve God and his church and it turned out to be by ascending the career ladder of the church that he reached the top. I tend to have several books on the go at the same time, and so I have been reminded of the two extremes, so to speak, of the Christian life. Some Christians are completely away from it all, and some are totally immersed, it seems, in the ways of this world.

I must admit I didn't know more than the basic outline of the life of the only Englishman to become Pope, in spite of his origins in this county and his connexions with our Abbey. (Most days I sit in a stall in the Abbey near to one bearing his name!) Rejected as a monk

by St Albans Abbey, Nicholas Breakspear went to France and there joined a community of canons. Such was his learning and ability that he was made a Cardinal. In 1154 he was sent by the then Pope to Scandinavia as Papal Legate. One of the great issues of the day throughout medieval Europe was that of authority – in ecclesiastical matters: who was in charge, the king or other secular ruler, or the Pope? So, who appointed bishops was a big issue. In Norway Nicholas was to establish the Pope's authority. He had to deal with matters of finance, the payment of the clergy. So often, sadly, in history, the church has acquired

much land and property and money but the money has not been fairly distributed subsequently. Nicholas also went to Sweden and Denmark and established a new cathedral at Linköping – nowadays our diocese has links with the church there and exchange visits have taken place. His achievements in Scandinavia included freeing the church from secular control, establishing the payment of Peter's Pence to Rome and the enforcement of clerical celibacy, an idea rejected by Anglican clergy as 'not commanded by God's Law'. After his success in Scandinavia, Nicholas returned to Rome and perhaps surprisingly, he was elected Pope, taking the name Adrian IV. While Pope he was much involved in the power-politics of the day, namely the struggle between various rulers over whom the Pope claimed to be the ultimate authority. He alone crowned the Holy Roman Emperor.

Few readers of *Comment*, I suspect, are called to be hermits on lonely Scottish islands, or function as leaders of nations. But it is always fascinating to discover the different ways people have tried to serve God and their fellow humans. Hermit and Pope are the two extremes!

Martin Banister, St Albans Cathedral



CECILIA TEA ROOMS.

Cecilia Hall, Puttenham
Friday 31st March, 3-5pm
Full afternoon tea with homemade sandwiches and selection of cakes.
£5 per head. Booking is essential - Phone Christine on 07514 548289



The problem of homelessness: we can't do it alone...

Hannah Asquith, CEO of Youth Concern and member of High Street Baptist Church, was honoured to attend a Parliamentary Reception at the House of Lords in February, hosted by Lord Best OBE DL, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of StreetLink.

StreetLink exists to help end rough sleeping by enabling members of the public to connect people sleeping rough with the local services that can support them.



Hannah highlighted Aylesbury Vale's homelessness problem with Felicity Buchan, MP and Minister for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, a local MP Rob Butler, Annie McLoughlin, Homeless Link Chair of Trustees and other charities working in the homeless field, including our partners AHAG, Connection Support and Wycombe Homeless Connection.

Youth Concern can't support Aylesbury Vale's vulnerable 13-25-year-olds alone. Getting out and making new connections, replicating best practice and learning from others' mistakes is the way forward. In its ten years, StreetLink has received 500,000 notifications of rough sleepers' locations and helped 86,000



homeless people across the country. Before StreetLink there was no easy way for the public to link rough sleepers to support. StreetLink has been a game-changer.

Youth Concern

Candlemas returns!



The candles were metaphorically lit and the wine most unmetaphorically uncorked in anticipation of a very welcome return of Tring Choral Society's

Candlemas concert on Sunday 5 February!

Conducted by the hugely enthusiastic and expert Richard Grylls, reprising a much-loved role at this event from previous years, he was ably supported by Colin Stevens on the organ. The wonderful choir of over forty singers and their music was centre stage, with Huw Bellis and others

conducting the traditional evensong service beautifully also.

I'm delighted to say that the event raised almost £1400, split between Friends of Tring Church Heritage (FOTCH) and the Parish Organ Fund – that mechanical participant in the service is showing its age and hence was the focus of the fundraising! As a FOTCH Trustee, it's always great to be in the church to see different parts of our Tring community coming together and making great use of our wonderful building. It is also great to see the replacement (energy efficient) lighting part-funded



recently by FOTCH and the Choral Society and the enhanced Audio-Visual system installed with FOTCH funding in previous years facilitating a much higher quality experience for singers and the sung-to alike.

Richard Abel
Friends of Tring Church Heritage

The power of the number three



It is amazing the influence that the number three has had on our psyche, and the number of times it is used in all literature, including the Bible.

From earliest days we are taught our ABC (not our AB or our ABCD). Then follows our introduction to the 'Three Bears' and the 'Three Little Pigs'. A little later we meet 'Cinderella and the Two Ugly Sisters'. This leads us to realize that three is in fact a very awkward number. 'Two is company but three's a crowd'. A stool is a very uncomfortable chair, and we cannot wait to get off our tricycle onto a proper bike.

So it is even more surprising that we are still drawn by the number; it seems in spite of its disadvantages to have some mystic attraction. In the Bible the

first tale is of the three characters in the Garden of Eden: Adam and Eve and the serpent. There were three gifts given to the Christ child and three crosses at the death of Christ on the hill of Golgotha.

Central to orthodox faith is the immensely difficult doctrine of the Trinity, three persons in one. The Father manifests creative power and justice, Christ manifests love and forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit gives us strength and inspiration. The totality of God in all his aspects is in fact more than a show of these qualities – all the persons are more like a diamond with a million shining faces, except that they are not made of stone.

The other trinity we come across is in the letter of St Paul to the Corinthians: faith, hope and charity. We hear many sermons on 'but the greatest of these is charity'. Yes, we know that charity means more than charity – in fact it is the love which binds and justifies us. But just for this moment,

let us find a little time for the other two. In the context of today, charity comes last and is represented by the daily flow of begging letters coming in the post. These we open in guilty despair and cast into the recycling, because we can't meet the needs of all.

Faith in its best sense is standing up for what we believe in, but it is often used in another context to imply that faith only comes into being at the point where rational reasoning has to be abandoned. I think that this idea diminishes faith. It must then become hope. Hope has inspired all generations. It was hope that led the Israelites out of Egypt. It was hope that led to the fulfilment of the Messiah; it is in hope that we wait for the Second Coming, and it is hope that one day I might be classed as a sheep rather than a goat, with the parable in Matthew 25 in mind.

David Gittins
St Peter & St Paul

Crossword

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

ACROSS

1. Friends (4)
5. First gift of the 3 wise men (4)
7. Woven fabric (7)
8. Prisoner with Daniel (chap1) (8)
10. Garden of the Bible (4)
12. Make tidy (4)
14. Measure of how far to go (8)
16. Passageway (8)
17. Aristocrat (4)
18. Against (4)
19. Buy (8)
22. Book of the Bible (7)
23. Body of the church (4)
24. Very small (4)

DOWN

1. Animals of the family (4)
2. Knob (4)
3. Made larger (8)
4. Sorrow (4)
5. Bring into being (8)
6. Sunrise (4)
9. Old fashioned weapon (7)
11. Repeats (7)
13. Life partnership (8)
15. Astonishment (8)
18. Last word of prayer (4)
19. Measure of milk (4)
20. Heavenly '....' (4)
21. Ill will (4)

Would God save us from climate and environmental disaster?



A number of house groups at St Peter & St Paul's have been studying Operation Noah's (see box) four-session course 'Tenants of the King'. It sets out to explore the issues

of environmental destruction and the climate emergency in a biblical context, and to set in train discussion of practical actions that we as individuals, and as churches, can take in response. The house group I'm part of found the course not just stimulating but also useful in focusing our minds on the things we could do and the changes in our lives that we could make. For one thing, it made a change to discuss a crucial issue other than that of sex and gender, which those of us who are Anglicans continue to find so very difficult to resolve. But also, we found that adding a theological dimension to the discussion was important for us as Christians, in a debate which (I believe quite understandably) has been dominated by secular voices.

One theological issue struck me as particularly crucial, which I think has to be faced. It arose from our discussions of the Bible text set for Session 3 of the course, and the only one taken from the Gospels (the rest were from the letters of Paul). The text was from Matthew 14 and tells the powerful and resonant story of how the disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat without Jesus, when they see him walking across

the water towards them. The disciples (significantly) are terrified, but the practical, down-to-earth and impetuous Peter steps out of the boat towards Jesus – and immediately starts to sink. Jesus stretches out his arm to save him from drowning, and they all continue to the other side, one assumes in awed silence, as a great calm descends on the waters. It is worth noting that the same (or maybe similar) incident is described twice more by Matthew in his Gospel.

Surely God, who created humanity, loves us with a special love and granted us dominion over nature, wouldn't allow us to sink to disaster and extermination as a result of our spectacular failure to observe a proper care for our fragile planet? Surely the everlasting arms wouldn't allow us to sink into extinction? James Lovelock, who died last year on his 103rd birthday, and is best known perhaps for his Gaia hypothesis (see box) wrote extensively on climate change, which he saw as the main existential threat to humanity. He was not a practising Christian, though brought up in a Christian household, but his book 'The Revenge of Gaia' from 2006, has quite a lot to say about religious attitudes to climate change. He quotes 'that saintly woman' Mother Teresa as saying 'Why should we care about the Earth when our duty is to the poor and sick among us. God will take care of the earth'. Lovelock comments '... if we fail to take care of the Earth, it will surely take care of itself by making us no longer welcome.' Indeed, a great strength of the Tenants of the King course is that it makes abundantly clear

that if we fail to tackle environmental issues, we are also failing in our obligation to the poor and displaced of the Earth. Lovelock later quotes, with approval, Rowan Williams: 'It is a very big issue, the question of divine action... For a theological believer, the relation of God to creation is neither that of the old image of someone who winds up the watch and leaves it, nor is it that of a director in a theatre, or worse puppet master, who's constantly adjusting what's going on.' The non-believer Lovelock writes of his wish for a new version of the Beatitudes to address how we should care for our world, suitable for the very different conditions today from those that existed in Jesus' time. Perhaps that would be a task for the Tring Team Parish house groups which are studying the Beatitudes this Lent? Lovelock, near the end of his book, quotes the word of the 12th century abbess Hildegard of Bingen, who wrote of God:

*...I ignite the beauty of the plains
I sparkle in the waters,
I burn in the sun, and moon and the stars...
I adorn all of the Earth,
I am the breeze that nurtures all things green...
I am the rain coming from the dew that causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life.
Let us likewise rejoice.*

Edmund Booth
St Peter & St Paul

The Gaia hypothesis proposes that living creatures (plants and animals) interact with their inorganic surroundings on Earth to form a self-reinforcing and self-regulating system that helps to maintain and perpetuate the conditions for life on the planet to flourish. For example, when humans by their environmental destructiveness threaten all forms of life on the planet, Gaia takes its revenge by creating conditions which will result in mankind's extinction but allow other forms of life to continue and prosper. The hypothesis was formulated by James Lovelock and co-developed by the microbiologist Lynn Margulis in the 1970s. Lovelock named the idea after Gaia, the primordial goddess who personified the Earth in Greek mythology. The suggestion that the theory should be called 'the Gaia hypothesis' came from Lovelock's neighbour, the novelist William Golding who wrote (inter alia) 'Lord of the Flies'. In 2006, the Geological Society of London awarded Lovelock the Wollaston Medal in part for his work on the Gaia hypothesis. For further details of Gaia, see the Wikipedia entry 'Gaia hypothesis', on which most of this information is based.

Lovelock was a chemist by training, but had an enormous breadth of curiosity and achievement. Among other things, he conceived and built the first microwave oven – a true polymath.

Operation Noah, which was set up in 2004 to provide a Christian response to the climate crisis, is a small charity with big ambitions. It works with churches of all denominations to address the climate crisis, particularly through its 'Bright Now' campaign, which encourages churches to divest from fossil fuels and invest in climate solutions like renewable energy. The Bright Now campaign is also starting to work with churches on large-scale, nature-based solutions, from increasing tree cover to other environmentally-sensitive ways of managing church land. Nicky Bull, who worships at High Street Baptist Church, has been greatly involved in the organisation; she serves on the charity's board, of which she is a past chair.

Operation Noah's strapline is 'We are faith-motivated, science-informed and hope-inspired'.

A place at the table



Having just enjoyed reading February's *Comment* I noticed several interesting book reviews and information about local book groups. So hopefully this little book-related item will be of interest!

At High Street Baptist Church we have been running some book discussion groups using the Big Church Read material (www.thebigchurchread.co.uk). The format is a blend of a book group and a small home group. One of the joys of this method is that you can commit to the book when the title appeals and when time allows. Another feature of the Big Church Read is that you read the book together at a slow pace. The plan is that you read a chapter, then gather together (we are still meeting online), watch a short summary video and have a discussion – questions are provided. Our group tends to meet once a week for an hour and we have some time praying at the end.

Our next Big Church Read book is 'A Place at the Table' by Miranda Harris and Jo Swinney. As Lent is bookended by food-related events (pancakes and the Last Supper in case you were wondering!) the theme seems appropriate. Whether your Lent is focused on fasting and reflection or pancakes and Easter eggs, it seems fitting to spend time contemplating some deeper themes around the 'table'. According to the blurb 'A Place at The Table' is a 'profound reflection on hospitality and the transformative power of community'. 'Growing things takes time, whether it is relationships or vegetables. That's why it's important to look into each other's eyes and eat together: to plant, grow, harvest, prepare, celebrate and clean up together.'

The authors of 'A Place at The Table' are Miranda Harris, late co-founder of Christian environmental conservation charity A Rocha, and her daughter, Jo Swinney. Miranda Harris's tragic death in 2019 sent a shockwave across the globe. A Rocha is the parent of Eco Church, a now familiar term to churches across the UK who are striving to implement creation care centrally in their gospel message. Using Miranda's notes on this topic discovered after her death, daughter Jo Swinney pairs her own words with her mother's writings to

explore how sharing food is at the heart of a shared life.

We're used to tables as Christians. You probably have a Communion table visible in your church, whether ornate and decorated front and centre, or one that is simply carved and gets moved around according to space and requirements. The table holds a great deal of symbolism for us as believers. We gather for breaking of the bread not only to remember the sacrifice of Jesus but to remember the fellowship he enjoyed with his disciples. Tables feature throughout the Bible from the detailed instructions to hold the bread of presence in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:30) to overturned tables in the synagogue (John 2:15). However, this book is less about the physical table and more about the hospitality experienced around the table.

The Bible has quite a lot to say about hospitality too. Some of it is very direct: 'Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling' (1 Peter 4:9). We probably all know people whom we would say have the gift of hospitality. Those people who open their homes readily and always have a meal or piece of cake to offer. In the last year we have seen people in our community open their homes and offer hospitality to Ukrainians seeking refuge at this difficult time. An important aspect of welcoming people into your home is providing food. The Bible offers lots of examples of Jesus sharing food with others. He spent time with friends and those on the margins of society and he spent time resting and time teaching. I look forward to thinking more about these meals and what they can teach us as we read 'A Place at The Table'.

Each year Baptists Together (formerly the Baptist Union) is presided over by a new person who brings their own theme and focus for the year. Currently, Hayley Young is the President and she has chosen 'Building a bigger table' as her theme. Drawing on Jesus' ministry around meals, she challenges us to develop our inclusivity as churches and welcome those who are missing or being



neglected. She explains: 'My prayer this year is that, even in our differences and disagreement, we still cheer each other on. To allow our differences to reflect the very nature of God in a community and not to let us divide us or get in the way of God's mission.' You can read more about Hayley's theme here: www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/634999/Building_a_bigger.aspx

Julian, my husband, loves nothing more than cooking a big vat of curry. Living in a Victorian terraced cottage in London in my 20s, I have very fond memories of hosting big meals with the table laden with saucepans for people to help themselves to our 'world cuisine'. Conversation flowed, people made new friends, there were always one or two guests staying too. I've never really got the hang of serving dishes and Julian still loves to mass cater. Although I still enjoying hosting, I must admit to feeling less spontaneous than the old days. Is this because of 'growing up'? Is it because I am hung up on what inviting people for a meal 'ought' to look like? According to Swinney, hospitality is '... kindness and care and a place to belong for a while'. I'm looking forward to thinking more about this subject and what 'A Place at The Table' has to say to me and our group as we read together.

Our Big Church Read starts on Thursday 2 March at 7.30pm. If you would like to join, please order the book from www.thebigchurchread.co.uk/a-place-at-the-table/ or from Our Bookshop in Tring and email admin@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk for the Zoom code. We look forward to welcoming you at the table!

Polly Eaton, High Street Baptist Church

Unequal treatment in the Church of England



You might be interested in my recent exchange of letters with the Bishop of St Albans, and in what prompted it. In January 2023, Philip North, Suffragan Bishop of

Burnley, was nominated as the next diocesan Bishop of Blackburn. Bishop Philip does not recognise the ordination of women as priests and bishops and will be the first diocesan bishop to be appointed with this theological position on the ordination of women since women were permitted to be bishops in 2014. Bishop Philip is on the Council of The Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda

(SSWSH), which is a network of clergy who do not share in Communion when it is presided over by any female priest, any male priest ordained by a female bishop, and by any bishop, male or female, who has ordained women.

Hearing of this, I wrote on 19 January 2023, as follows:

Dear Bishop Alan,

I am shocked and dismayed to hear of the appointment of Philip North as a diocesan bishop. Thirty years on from the ordination of women, and nearly a decade from the first appointment of a female bishop, it is indefensible and insensitive to continue to allow senior church leaders the scope to regard and treat women as second-class Christians and ministers. Philip North cannot possibly be as supportive of the women ministers in his flock as he is of the men, a demoralising situation for all the women in the church. Without the devotion and service of women, the Church of England would collapse immediately.

I have strived in my life and work to regard and treat all human beings with equal respect. I am blessed with three adult daughters who have always been encouraged to regard themselves as the equals of men, too often against ingrained prejudice. The institutionalised discrimination which is allowed to persist in the Church of England would be illegal in any other walk of life.

I hope and pray that this appointment is an aberration. It is certainly sinful and, to my mind, abhorrent; the church should be a beacon of light and justice, but seems set on being a shameful laggard. I would like to be re-assured that you are opposed to any discrimination against women in Christian ministry.

I carry out a number of roles in Tring Team Parish, but write in a personal capacity.

Yours, John Whiteman

On 30 January I received this reply:

Dear John,

Thanks for your email.

As you will be aware, I've just appointed the first woman bishop here in the diocese – Jane Mainwaring will be consecrated on Thursday in Canterbury Cathedral. Just over a year ago I appointed our first woman dean of the cathedral and we've now had women archdeacons for several years. I am delighted to celebrate the contribution and ministry of women at every level of the church.

I have nothing to do with the appointment of Philip North. The first I knew of it was in the newspapers. Therefore, if you wish to express your views you need to write to the Archbishop of York or the chair of the Blackburn Diocesan Vacancy in See Committee, which was chaired by the Rt Revd Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster.

+Alan St Albans

I am disappointed by this reply. I feel that Bishop Alan does not share my sense of responsibility and shame for the ingrained discrimination within the Church of England. I have joined

WATCH, the campaign group for Women and The Church, and would encourage others to do the same. I used to be sure that, as a cradle Anglican, I would end my days as

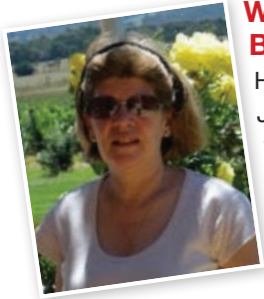
an active member of the Church of England. I can no longer be sure of that.

John Whiteman
St Peter & St Paul

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Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI RIP



Who was Pope Benedict?

He was born Joseph Ratzinger, 16 April 1927 in Bavaria, southern Germany, youngest of three children. His

father was a Police Officer. He was, as were other youngsters of his age, conscripted into the Hitler Youth and, at 16, was in the German army.

In 1945 he deserted and was made prisoner of war by the Americans. After that, he returned to Munich and his seminary studies. He was ordained priest in June 1951. He was an academic and became a theologian.

He was a shy and, in many ways, a lonely person. His friends were his books. He loved writing and wrote over sixty books, the most well-known of which is probably 'Jesus of Nazareth'.

His Papacy

He was the first German national in 1000 years to serve the church, which he did from 19 April 2005 until February 2013.

During this time he visited more than twenty countries and sought to revive the church and encourage the faithful.

In 2013 he announced his resignation, becoming the first Pope to step down since Gregory XII in 1415.

As Cardinal he was called 'God's Rottweiler' for his uncompromising and conservative views. He did have his missteps. One of these was to rehabilitate a traditionalist bishop who denied the Holocaust, which angered the



Jews; another was a speech antagonising Muslims; but he was much respected for his personal, deep faith. His great strength was to be able to express the Christian faith in a way that was understandable to modern people.

In 2010 he made the first ever Papal State visit to the UK. He was welcomed by great crowds of pilgrims (I remember it well!) before meeting HM Queen Elizabeth II. He also met politicians and gave many sermons. But his visit was controversial for critics who claimed he was not doing enough to tackle sex abuse in the church. This was a topic that would continue to haunt Benedict. He lived in isolation within the Vatican, which probably suited him well.

A conservative Pope

Benedict was a shy, private man, not a people-person, a real bookworm and academic. He was very traditional and conservative, yet innovative in his action of resignation. His greatest gift to the faithful is his writings and many books, and maybe it is here that we see a glimpse of the real Benedict.

Tricia Apps, Corpus Christi

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Berkhamsted Walk

Raising funds for The Children's Society

Sunday 30th April 2023

Choose the walk that suits you for a great day out in the beautiful Chiltern countryside around Berkhamsted

6, 12 and 18 mile walk options

#berkhamstedwalk
For details and to register online: www.berkhamstedwalk.com

Berkhamsted Walk

Sunday 30th April 2023

Raising funds for The Children's Society
It is a painful fact that many children and young people in Britain today are still suffering extreme hardship, abuse and neglect. Help us to make a difference to the lives of these vulnerable young people. As little as £5 could pay for a hot meal for a child who has not eaten all day, or pay for a vulnerable young person to travel to a counselling session, giving them a safe place to talk.

Choose the walk that suits you and make the most of the springtime countryside:

- The Fun Walk:** 6 miles for all ages
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Get involved
It's easy to participate in the walk – just visit www.berkhamstedwalk.com and register online. You can donate in advance of the walk by visiting our JustGiving page at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/berkhamsted-walk (link on our website).

We will have limited ability to take registrations and donations on the day, so online registration is preferable. The routes will be emailed to all participants who sign up and donate in advance.

For details and to register online: www.berkhamstedwalk.com

Plans for the Coronation?



Do you have plans for the Coronation?

I looked at <https://www.royal.uk/coronation-weekend-plans-announced>. More details will

follow, but the bare bones are as follows:

- The Coronation of His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort will take place at Westminster Abbey on the morning of Saturday 6 May. The Service will be conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- Across the Coronation Weekend, there will be further opportunities for people to come together in celebration of the historic occasion. On Sunday 7 May 2023, a special Coronation Concert will be staged and broadcast live at Windsor Castle. The Coronation

Big Lunch, at which neighbours and communities are invited to share food and fun together, will take place across the country on the same date.

- On Monday 8 May members of the public will be invited to take part in The Big Help Out, which will encourage people to try volunteering

for themselves and join the work being undertaken to support their local areas.

Does Tring have plans?

It is early days, but please put Monday afternoon in your diary for a church/churchyard extravaganza. Starting with a church service at 2.00pm, followed by live music, a bar, hot food, gallons of tea and cake, a Royal Fancy Dress competition, a Royal Quiz, Maypole dancing, ending at 6.00pm with a mass rendition of the National Anthem. Jane Banister will lead the event from the church and, together with Tring Together, we aim for an afternoon that's for everyone, free to attend and where everyone is made to feel welcome. Let's demonstrate Tring's great community spirit, inclusivity, and diversity.

Will you come and help

Email vivianne@tringtogether.org.uk to offer your ideas.

Vivianne Child
Tring Together



Life, the universe and deadlines



We all have them. We need to pay the outstanding bill by a particular date, put the bins out on a particular day, order our regular prescriptions before we run out... you can tell what age and stage I am at to use those examples!

I have never been good at deadlines because I am a 'worrier'. Some members of my household live life on the edge, doing everything at the last minute. The worst (or best?) of these is my eldest son, Tom, who will pack for a flight half an hour before he leaves, not even thinking whether his clothes are clean or whether he knows the whereabouts of his passport. He never thinks he might have to remove ice from the car or have a flat tyre or there may be roadworks or an accident to delay him...

In my working life, deadlines have always been on charts or pieces of paper attached to the wall to remind me how long I had to complete a task or marked in a desk diary to be sure everything went to plan and the printer received all the materials they needed on time to meet the delivery dates. All of these had 'buffer', a little wiggle room to allow for the day you were ill, or couldn't get into the office on the days before we could all work from home anyway.

Working with the little publication called *Comment* is different again. There are deadlines for copy that are – you all know this and never have to ask because it's at the back of the magazine; and sometimes in a little ad you see along the way, filling a small space – the 1st of each month. Now, this is not the 1st of the month in which the magazine is published because by then *Comment* is in your pigeon hole, the post or through your letterbox! It has happened that on the 3rd or 4th of November someone remembers they need to have an article in the November magazine – is there any chance I could fit it in? You know the answer...

Volunteers are more difficult to manage than paid employees. (Discuss!) Someone once said it was like herding cats. They all want to help but maybe in their time and their way. So when we hope that *Comment* will miraculously be filled with just the right number of articles

to fill the space that are all varied and interesting and come with photos – AND all arrive on the 1st of the month, I'm afraid that's not what happens!

Let's start at the end of the process. To get magazines to you on time – ideally before the 1st of the month – means having it delivered to Barbara and Barry Anscombe a few days before so they can bundle them up for the team of volunteer distributors. So let's say we lose 4 days or even a week of the month. The printer needs some lead time to fit it into a space in their schedule and print and assemble and deliver it to Barbara and Barry – that means we try to get the files ready for press by the middle of the month before publication.

Then there is another volunteer, Kev Holt, who has a day job already, so he tries to fit the design of the magazine into his 'spare' time. It takes several stages of proofing, back and forth between Kev and myself, because – try as I might – I cannot always estimate correctly how much space an article will take. Sometimes the first proof will show me that we need to fill three and half more pages. Aaagghh! Who can I ask to write something at very short notice? Finding interesting pieces from DENS or A N Other charity comes in useful here. And if someone HAS missed the deadline, I am usually able to welcome that latecomer with open arms to fill the space. Kev also has to get it ready for the printer which means doing clever things with the colours and photos so they print at the best quality. This part takes an elapsed time of nearly two weeks because Kev can't just sit down on one empty day when he has nothing else to do (what?!) to put it together. He does it here and there to flow in the text and try to fit it one way and another so it looks right (till the phone rings and ten other people need him to do something more urgent).

Before it goes to press there are also a few others who look at the almost finished article to make sure we haven't done something alarming, those very important extra sets of eyes. Last month John Whiteman spotted a missing comma which turned an innocent article into something quite inappropriate! Good save!

In theory I have all the articles in on the 1st of the month. I am so glad THAT'S not what happens! I remember Kate Openshaw used to do it this way.

It meant she was up most of the night trying to complete it! Volunteer I may be, but I get little enough sleep without doing it that way. No, I delight in those other volunteers, you, the writers, who send things in as you think of them so, in a good month, I already know a few days before the deadline whether I need more articles and can be prepared. It also means I can edit articles, apply the *Comment* housestyle, write back and ask for the images to be sent separately, query anything I didn't understand – before the last minute. It means I can use time at the weekend or evenings or – sometimes essential – very early in the morning, when most sensible people are asleep in their beds. Then there is no need to panic, everything can be fitted in. Of course, I do have to take *Comment* on holiday with me; I do have to do it when looking after a small baby (the current baby is 5 months old and would rather I played with her...) and before Christmas, I had to do it from my bed when I slipped a disc and could not sit at a desk for a week!

The main message here is PLEASE keep writing articles and sending them in as early as you can, because that takes pressure off me, and Kev, and everyone else in the team who bring *Comment* to your homes.

The Editor

COMMENT
The magazine of the Churches in Tring

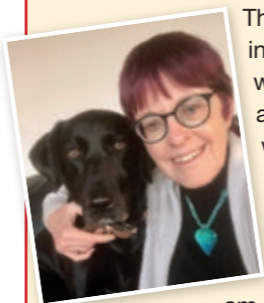


Please submit your article to the Editor by the 1st of the month BEFORE publication.

Aim for 500 or 1000 words and please send a head and shoulders colour photo or jpg and any other photos in high resolution.

Contact
comment.magazine@gmail.com

Postcard from Orkney



The NHS is much in the news and watching it creaking at the seams, with waiting times increasing across the services it offers, is heartbreaking. I am in awe of the staff with whom we come into contact with their crazily long hours, cheerfulness, kindness and care.

The Scottish NHS here in Orkney seems to work incredibly well, usually with same-day GP appointments, minimal waiting at hospital to see the consultant and good overall support services.

We had to travel to Oxford recently for Mac to have an operation that could only be carried out at the John Radcliffe Hospital. This was all paid for by the Scottish NHS for which we are extremely grateful. However, as Mac has mobility issues at the moment following his stroke, he needs assisted travel through the airports, involving wheelchairs being accessed. Some

readers of this august publication may be familiar with this service, or absence of it. It seems the curse of 'lack of staff' is endemic across many sectors and we certainly experienced it at Heathrow and Edinburgh airports. A piece of advice we were given, and which I am now passing on if you are unfortunate enough to need it, is if you have requested wheelchair assistance, do not leave the aeroplane until the wheelchair arrives at the aircraft door. The airline crew can't leave until you do, so they work hard at getting your arranged assistance sorted. We had to wait an hour at Heathrow for a chair, but the pilot was very friendly and offered to show us around the flight deck. I suspect this is something he does to keep potentially rowdy children quiet and it certainly worked a

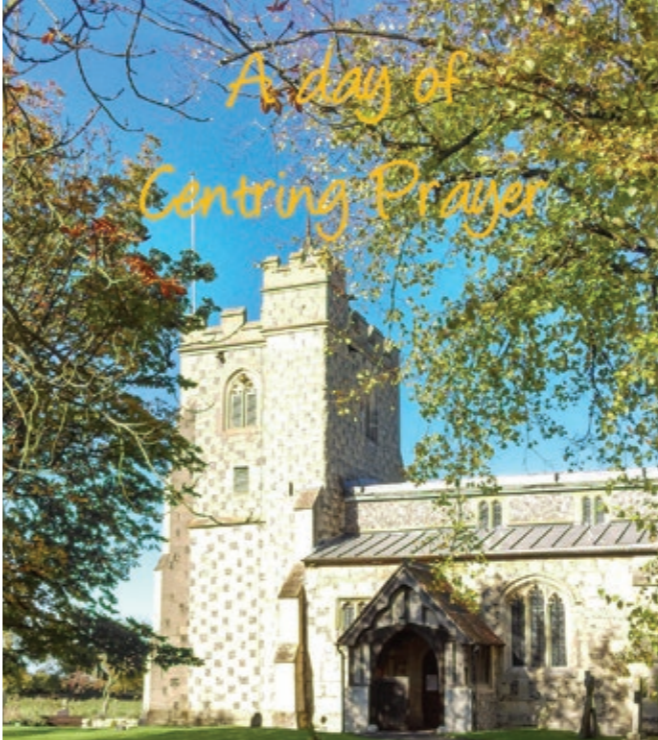
treat for us. He also helped with pushing the wheelchair with its slightly portly passenger up the ramp to the aircraft building. What a nice young man!

The whole adventure highlights one of the disadvantages of living on a remote island when there's travelling to be done, but with enough determination these obstacles can, and are, overcome.

Carrie Dodge, Milestone Community Church, Dounby



A day of
Centring Prayer



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Life with the Red Cross in Tring



This is part 2 of an article that started in the December/January edition of Comment.

Most of us turned up for the nursing course after

Christmas and we found it was more interesting than we had expected – and useful, too. It included lots of practical work. We had a real bed and learned how to change a bottom sheet with the patient still in the bed, how to do hospital corners and how to blanket bath – all much easier when you know how.

We learned the importance of the right diet and when a patient needs a light diet; about infectious diseases, incubation and isolation times, which was really useful later when our children caught most of them! We had another session on temperature control, how to use a thermometer and take a pulse; and how to deal with hypothermia which was very useful later looking after elderly parents. We did more bandaging and how to apply dressings.

Every evening we had a different topic. A Doctor came to talk to us about drug-taking and a man came from Civil Defence to talk to us about what to do in the event of nuclear war – thank goodness we didn't have to put that into practice!

We took in a lot of very useful information, much of which I used myself over the years and often said to myself 'Thank you, Nora!'

At the end of the course we took

another exam, this time tested by a local SRN. This time we were not quite as scared! The next week, Nora said 'Now you have your First Aid and Nursing certificates, you are able to do DUTIES. We had no idea what this would entail, but we soon found out.

My first duty was to blanket bath an old bedridden lady, which I had never done before, but with my newfound knowledge, I felt quite confident. After that I did many blanket baths, one old lady every week for five years and another for three years. It was a good way to get to know lots of local people and their families – and I enjoyed it!

Duties, however, covered many other things, in the town and villages and further afield. The most unusual ones were when we were called to help with the premature babies at the Royal Bucks Hospital because so many nurses with off sick with flu, and when we went to make up beds for the Paralympic Games at Stoke Mandeville. Some members were on duty at the Knebworth Pop Festival and had to deal with drug overdoses.

In Tring we were on duty at the Gymkhanas in Icknield Way, when most of the casualties were minor, like wasp stings or small bumps, but sometimes more serious conditions. When we did the Motor cross rally at Little Tring it was a different matter, and some casualties had to be sent to hospital.

We were always on duty for Tring Carnival and had our own caravan to use as a base and later a Red Cross Ambulance. Every year Flanagan's Fair came to Tring and the old owner would seek Nora out and offer the Dodgems

for an hour on the Wednesday with all proceeds to Tring Red Cross, so we had to be on duty, in uniform, and Nora would be there too. The reason for this was that his uncle had been a Prisoner of War and was very grateful for the Red Cross parcels which he said had saved his life.

Then, of course, we had Red Cross Flag week, which always fell in the week containing Henri Dunant's birthday, our Founder. Nora had the red boxes for us, together with badges to say we were legally allowed to collect and where. My husband and I collected in Long Marston for thirty-five years. It took all day and we enjoyed seeing all the people and were greeted as old friends. Often we would meet older people who had been in the war and were also grateful for the Red Cross boxes and happy to support the cause. Once, though, we went just outside the village and were reprimanded for straying into Bucks!

Other fundraising for the Tring Red Cross were the Bring & Buy and Jumble Sales, both well supported by local people.

Once a year we had the annual inspection, when we had to be correctly dressed in our uniforms and had a group photo taken when a senior member from the Headquarters at Hertford came to inspect us.

So you see, Tring Red Cross was a big part of the life of Tring. There was just one problem: we needed our own HQ.

To be continued...

Erica Guy
St Peter & St Paul

Water and buildings don't mix



Our magnificent old parish church leaks every now again, but far more worrying is the water we cannot see. The water which comes off the church roof and down the

drain pipes is not getting away from the building. The Victorian pipework is now entirely blocked and the soakaways

they lead to no longer work. This means we are having to put in new drains and soakaways.

There will be two new soakaways to the front of St Peter & St Paul's, and another behind the church. These are made from large crates buried in the ground allowing the water to collect and then disperse well away from the church building. An archaeologist will be on hand during the works to keep a watchful eye. It is also important that all spoil from a churchyard remains in the churchyard, so

this will be carefully distributed on the north side of the church.

It is a huge project, some £50,000, and we are hugely grateful to FOTCH who are paying for this preventative work to keep our church in good order. To see what could happen if water gets underneath the walls, all you have to do is to look at the vestry and the big cracks there. Fixing those is the next project.

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

Pram theology

A Christian was seeking guidance from God and decided that he would pray and then stick his finger in the Bible at random. His finger alighted upon the text 'And Judas cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself'. Thinking that could not quite be right, he tried again and this time he came upon, 'Go, and do thou likewise.'

I don't know if that old preacher's story is literally true, but it ought to be. It came to mind while pushing a pram around our village, having just read the passage in chapter 6 of Mark's Gospel about the commissioning of the disciples, and remembering a very bad sermon I heard long ago. You may remember that Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and told them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts. 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' The preacher went on to say that this is exactly what we should do and give up the practice of priests living in rectories, vicarages or presbyteries or ministers living in manses and should follow the teaching of Jesus on this topic.

There is a problem with that interpretation. In Luke's Gospel we have a similar passage to the one from Mark in which Jesus says pretty much the same things as he does in Mark. Later, however, in Luke's Gospel, just before his trial, Jesus says: 'When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?' They said, 'No, not a thing.' He said to them, 'But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one.' This is pretty much the opposite of what Jesus says at the beginning of the Gospel, because the circumstances have changed.

Tring Team Parish is studying the Beatitudes in our Lent Groups. It's a wonderful Bible passage – but how literally should we take it? What came to mind as I pushed our sleeping baby around my village were five simple principles for reading the Bible. (I could have had ten if I had been allowed more space!)

This is not profound theology, but pram theology.

1. Don't think any one passage of the Bible contains all the Bible has to say on a topic. This was the mistake of the preacher who, out of context and without looking more widely in the Bible, drew the wrong conclusion from the passage in Mark on the sending out of the Twelve Apostles.
2. You don't have to take literally everything in the Bible. You should approach the Bible intelligently, looking to see what sort of literature the passage contains. Is it claiming to be history? Is it poetry, like the Psalms or some other form of literature? Each needs a different type of reading. I heard recently on Radio 4 the claim that the Bible says the earth is stationary and at the centre of the universe. The Bible does NOT say this – the philosopher Aristotle said it did; and the medieval church looked for verses to support this idea. They came up with some poetry from the Book of Psalms which was praising Jerusalem and saying 'it cannot be moved'. We make a mistake when we take too literally something that is a story or a parable.
3. You can still learn something from a passage which you don't take literally. A group of South American indigenous people decided to follow the Christian faith. Their English Methodist pastor was explaining to them the history of how Genesis chapter 1 was interpreted before and after Charles Darwin's work. One of the tribe elders interrupted and said

'Pastor, we understand what this story is saying. It is that God made the whole universe.' You don't have to take this story literally to learn from it. Like those people in South America, I don't think it happened in six days but I do think the passage is telling us that God made everything in the universe (God probably made the universe in a hot Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago but that is another article).

4. Listen to the opinions of others on the Bible, whether Christians who went before us from their books, or from your friends and ministers. We need to listen and consider the views of others, for that is how we learn. We can always learn from others who have read more widely than us or thought more deeply. Lent, Advent and other Bible study groups are a great place to do this. What we do when we profoundly disagree with others (as I do on the topic of the Bishops' recent pronouncement on same-sex marriage) is a difficult topic and one which requires yet another article.
5. The Bible is both human and divine, inspired by God but written by ordinary people. Tring's Rector likes to quote the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann. Here are two quotes from his contemporary, the Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, on the nature of the Bible: 'In God's Word, God does not deliver me a course of lectures in dogmatic theology, God does not submit to me or interpret for me the confession of faith... God does not communicate "something" to me, but God's own self. The Scripture – first of all the testimony of the Apostles – is, as Martin Luther said, the crib in which Christ lies... It is a human message; its human character means that it is coloured by the frailty and imperfection of all that is human.'

Jon Reynolds
Tring Team

Afternoon tea with a saint...



I was interested to learn from the Commemorations article in the February edition of Comment that Janani Luwum is now regarded as a saint.

My previous parish, St Mary's in Shortlands, Kent, had close ties with Uganda and Janani came to visit us and preached a sermon. I remember we were all warned not to repeat anything he said, and the congregation was vetted to ensure there were no reporters present.

A few days later my husband and

I met him over afternoon tea at the Vicarage. We knew, of course, that he was in constant danger, but that didn't lessen the shock when he was assassinated soon after. He was a courageous man and deserves his elevated position.

Anthea Fraser
St Peter & St Paul

In memory of Dorothy Walsh

Comment readers will be saddened to learn that Dorothy Walsh slipped away in her sleep on 31 January this year aged 91. I am her older son and I was with her. She died very peacefully at Penrice House, the care home where she had been living for the past five or six years since she became unable to live independently in Tring.

Dorothy was born in 1931 and raised in Rugby. She had memories of knitting socks for Merchant Seamen during the Second World War (special pattern with no heel so they would fit anyone and could be pulled on quickly). She met Bill through the Methodist Church in Rugby and they married in 1953. He was an Engineer and they left for Nottinghamshire where he was involved in setting up a new factory producing light bulbs.

I was born in 1956 and Nicholas in 1962. Bill died unexpectedly when Dorothy was 46. She continued studying handicrafts, did a teaching certificate and then taught classes at the Further Education College in Doncaster.

By the mid-1980s both Nic and I had completed our education and moved away. I was teaching in Cornwall and Nic working as a photographer in East Anglia. Dorothy decided to retire and move south; she chose Tring as being within striking distance of both sons, close to her brother-in-law in Luton and a small town with a lot of character.

She lived firstly in Museum Court and then in Plaiters Close. She was actively involved in St Martha's Methodist Church and then St Peter & St Paul's Church. She opened her home to a house group where Bible study was mixed with home-made cake, much appreciated by the



members who attended it. She was adept at sewing, jewellery-making and knitting and a member of various craft groups in Tring. She made a stole more than ten years ago for the then curate of St Peter & St Paul's, Didier Jaquet, a sheep stole for the Rector Huw Bellis and another for non-stipendiary minister Ian Ogilvie.

Dorothy supported FOTCH (The Friends of Tring Church Heritage) and opened her garden for one of their fundraising events which involved moving from garden to garden for yet another course of food and conviviality. She also sewed and embroidered cushions as raffle prizes and was involved in the local Meals on Wheels service.

She had three grandchildren and took much pleasure both in visiting them in Cornwall and also having them to stay in Tring. Eleanor, born in 1988, works in education and is a published writer. William, born in 1990, is a Film Editor, based in London and Andrew, born 1994, is a Primary School teacher in Bristol.

We have many happy memories of Dorothy. If anyone would like to get in touch to share theirs, then please do so either via The Mead, Wansford Meadows, Gorran Haven, St Austell PL26 6HU or via edmundwalsh@hotmail.com.

Her funeral will be at Mount Charles Methodist Church, Victoria Road, St Austell PL25 4QF on Monday 20 March at 11.30am. The service will be followed by a buffet lunch in the church hall. If any of her friends are able to make the journey to Cornwall, they would be most welcome.

Ed Walsh, Dorothy's son

When Dorothy moved to her new home, she quickly became a popular member of our congregation here at Mount Charles Methodist Church. I know that she missed Tring and her friends there and was an avid reader of *Comment*. She even managed to persuade me to write an article once! She used to pass on her old copies of *Comment* to me and I, too, enjoyed dipping into them; in fact, I feel I almost know some of you, although I've never been any nearer to Tring than driving long the M40. I will be leading the service for Dorothy on 20 March and anyone who would like to attend will be most welcome.

Elizabeth Burroughs
Mount Charles Methodist Church



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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 18

ACROSS	DOWN
1. PALS	1. PETS
5. GOLD	2. STUD
7. TEXTURE	3. EXPANDED
8. SHADRACH	4. RUTH
10. EDEN	5. GENERATE
12. TRIM	6. DAWN
14. DISTANCE	9. HARPOON
16. CORRIDOR	11. ENCORES
17. EARL	13. MARRIAGE
18. ANTI	15. SURPRISE
19. PURCHASE	18. AMEN
22. GENESIS	19. PINT
23. NAVE	20. HOST
24. TINY	21. ENVY

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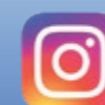
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