

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



High Street Baptist Church - Tring

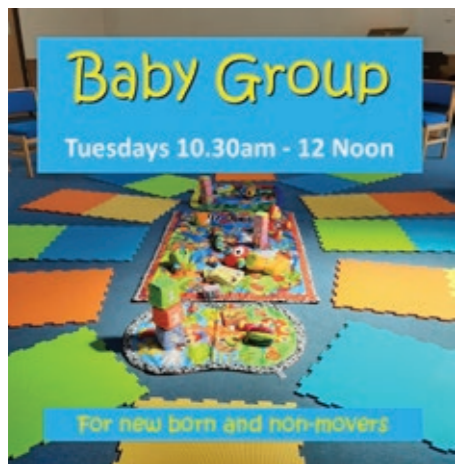
Growing in the message and challenge of God



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Activities @High Street Baptist Church



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tringbaptistchurch High Street Baptist Church

Editorial



So how was my Sabbatical? And what did I do? They are questions that I have been asked since my two-and-half-months off and the answers are 'good' and 'not a lot'. The aim was always just to stop for a bit: my role in the parish is one that has developed and grown in an organic fashion, so it was very good to take time to stop and consider where things are.

As it was the summer, it meant that the children were around for a lot of the time, which was lovely, and we were able to have a family holiday. The weather added to the mix (I cannot remember a holiday where we have not taken waterproof coats before). I spent Sundays going around lots of other churches to see how things happen elsewhere, but I did choose churches that were similar to ours in tradition. The conclusion from that is that we are all in the same boat at the moment – struggling with volunteers and money – but also that we do what we do quite well in the Tring Team. I am afraid that there was one church where the service took nearly two hours, and the vicar's teeth were not totally secure throughout the whole process, and I did despair somewhat.

I did a lot of knitting, and also was able to survey quite how much wool I have in my stash. My sister now has a scarf that complements her winter coat, Eliza and her friends have jumpers for the winter, and I have a lovely toffee-coloured scarf in a lacey pattern that is available for anyone who would like it – donation to church funds if possible!

There is something therapeutic about knitting, and it always makes me feel better about watching TV if I have something to do (although the combination of a complicated pattern



and a foreign film with subtitles is fatal); it is also very good to be able to make things for other people – and I do always check in advance if they want the item and like the colour.

There were visits to museums, and wool fairs; I saw the writer Lemn Sissay give a talk (amazing – read his poetry if you can); and went to Greenbelt, the Christian festival, with speakers on the church today, how safe is democracy, some fantastic music, and an outdoor eucharist with home-made bread and fizzy canned grape juice (yes to first, no to second!).

I also spent an inordinate amount of time on sorting out house administration – turning children's accounts into adult accounts requires far more paperwork than should be required these days. The banks should only need to look at the amount in the accounts to know that if I am a money launderer, then I am a singularly inefficient one.

Some time may have been wasted on Netflix – a son of mine who shall be nameless bought a subscription over the summer – but at least I now know what the fuss was about.

I did not come back with lots of resolutions and ideas for change, but I had a rest, and that was good. And on my first day back, I dealt with people about funerals, weddings, baptisms, and Christmas – and it reminded me why I went on Sabbatical!

And so, we pray that you would inspire us to commit to and act on the small difference we can make: May we bring peace through small acts of gentleness and reconciliation; May we bring wealth through small contributions and collaborations; May we bring safety through small acts of consideration and acceptance; May we bring wholeness through small acts of care and service. And in the small ways, O God, may our small difference make a big contribution to your saving work in our world. Amen.

Jane Banister
Tring Team

Our Father in heaven

The first four words of the Lord's Prayer help us find our place again each day in the vastness of the universe. We are not here by chance, as random collections of atoms in infinite space. We are people and we are called into a relationship with our creator. That

relationship is defined by love: not our weak love for God but God's strong love for us; the love of a Father for his children. God made you. God loves you powerfully and personally. God calls us by name into a relationship of love and trust, which forms us and recreates

us as God's children: 'Our Father in heaven'.

Steven Croft
from '40 Days of Reflections on the Lord's Prayer' Church House Publishing

Harvest home (well, Puttenham)

Many thanks to Christine Rutter and her helpers Caroline Hind, Ernestine Matthews, Bea Bingham and Oliver Matthews (who took the money) for providing, serving and clearing away a delicious harvest lunch at the end of September. The sherry trifle was delicious and contained more alcohol than I have consumed in ten years!

The Editor



Thank you, God for the still, quiet woods of autumn, carpets of shed acorns crunching underfoot, mushrooms newly grown since yesterday squatting among the gently shifting mosaic of fallen leaves.

For brown fields turned golden by the setting sun, the cautious stare and stamping hooves of wary sheep, the dapper magpie's raucous, laughing cry.

For hedgerows decorated purple, crimson, pink by berries of bramble, bryony and spindle, clusters of fluffy seeds released by willow herbs.

For all that has been grown, created and achieved this year, as life settles to see out the winter's cold and storms and waits to break out in new glories next year.

Brian Ford



Pax

All that matters is to be at one with the living God to be a creature in the house of the God of Life.

Like a cat asleep on a chair at peace, in peace

and at one with the master of the house, with the mistress, at home, at home in the house of the living, sleeping on the hearth, and yawning before the fire.

Sleeping on the hearth of the living world yawning at home before the fire of life feeling the presence of the living God like a great reassurance a deep calm in the heart a presence as of the master sitting at the board in his own and greater being, in the house of life.

D.H. Lawrence 1928/9



To anyone who has seen how cats sleep, stretch and yawn near a fire, this sensuous, domestic image is immediately recognisable.

Repetition of the words 'home', 'house', 'hearth' against the background of 'peace', 'deep calm' and 'great reassurance' add to the atmosphere of relaxed contentment and contemplation, the pax (peace) of the title. Such ideally should be our state of mind in the presence of God. Though Lawrence rejected his formal Christian upbringing, he retained a deep, mystical sense of the life force in the world.

David Herbert Lawrence (commonly known as D.H.) was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, in 1885. His father was barely literate and often drunk; his mother was more refined and a great

reader, but her death, when Lawrence was in his early 20s, added to his discontent. To escape the unhappiness at home, D.H. often escaped to the surrounding countryside. Encouraged by his mother and beset by health problems, he took a Teacher's Certificate and began writing poems and short stories. In 1912 he met and fell in love with Frieda, the German wife of one of his professors, and, unable at first to get a divorce, they eloped to the continent. But her German parentage, his anti-war feelings and the questionable nature of some of his writings, meant that they were never able to settle in Britain and spent eighteen years travelling the world, beset by poverty and ill-health. He died of tuberculosis in France in 1930. Probably best known for his novel 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' and the subsequent obscenity trial of 1960, Lawrence also wrote many accounts of his travels.

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

Our journey with God



While on holiday over the summer, we called into Durham.

I had heard about a statue there which I was keen to see and thankfully managed to find it! The sculpture

is called 'The Journey'

and was sculpted by Fenwick Lawson and placed by the theatre in Durham in 2008. It depicts six monks carrying a coffin which contains the remains of St Cuthbert and recalls the journey of the monks of Lindisfarne who in 875, following Viking raids on Lindisfarne, fled the Island carrying with them the coffin of St Cuthbert. He had been their Prior and their Bishop and was responsible for spreading Christianity across the north during a turbulent time. The monks also carried with them the Lindisfarne Gospels, produced by the community and beautifully illustrated.

the Normans built the current cathedral as his shrine.

I had seen the statue in photos, but it is always good to see these things in real life and there were three things that I particularly noticed.

All six of the monks had different expressions: I saw tiredness, devotion, uncertainty – other people might see other emotions, but they were all different – it made me think about the different responses that we all have on our journey with God, depending on what is going on at a particular moment, but no matter how they were feeling and what they were thinking, they were still there, carrying their saint, keeping him safe, committed to their task.

Then there was the face and hand of one particular monk. I know it's only an artist's impression and we have no idea what the monks really thought, but I love the sense of devotion that I saw in his face. Given that the coffin has been moved around several times over the course of a century, I suspect the monk hadn't known Lindisfarne, but he had still been part of the journey, playing an important part in what must have been a difficult task. Yet this monk is clearly committed to his task: this is important to him.

Then, thirdly, was the back view. Each monk was supporting

his partner, arms around the shoulder. It's how some coffin bearers carry coffins today so the artist may have used modern funeral bearers as an example. I don't know how coffins would have been carried in that era, but I loved the image of the monks supporting each other to carry their burden. It's a reminder that we all carry each other's burdens,

Then, thirdly, was the back view. Each monk was supporting



that God carries our burden, that we are never on our own.

I was told that the artist wanted the statue to be in the grounds of the cathedral and in many ways, it felt a shame that it wasn't there – it would have spoken of pilgrimage and commitment as visitors entered the building, preparing them for going into that place of prayer. There was, however, something special about it being in a very modern part of the city – the link with the old and new, that today we continue that journey of pilgrimage, that pilgrims do walk among us in the everyday, not just in the 'holy' places of this world.

I'm certainly glad I got to see it and would recommend a visit if you ever find yourself in the area.

Rachael Hawkins, St Martha's Methodist Church



Making sense of death



My children mock me that I love to go and visit ancient standing stones on holiday. One question why these stones are in place. Many of the theories are that they relate to ancient funeral practices. There is one theory that the Aubrey holes at Stonehenge were for the cremated remains of the political elite at the time. However, we can go even further back than that. I was excited to discover on a trip to the Dordogne that, over 35,000 years ago, our ancestors had rudimentary funeral rites. It is fair to conclude that for thousands and thousands of years human beings have made sense of death and dying through rites and rituals. We

are able to cope with the pain of death by having a way to deal with it. In the last generation (or maybe even half generation) we seem to be doing our best to discard this fundamental aspect of human life. The emancipation of humankind from myth and ritual has deemed grief to be an unnecessary superstition. Now you can hand over a dead relative (sorry should I say 'passed' relative as we aren't allowed to talk about the dead) to a specialist funeral director who will arrange for a cremation without you being present. They will then return the ashes to you and you can get on with celebrating the life of a loved one. No need for ritual. No need to grieve. Well, whatever you made of the late Queen Elizabeth II's funeral, it is abundantly clear that we do need to grieve. For me the best thing about the whole pageantry was that it made space

for us to grieve our own loved ones. We were not just mourning the death of a monarch, we were reminded of our personal grief and we were allowed to express it. Death is painful for those who are left behind. Grieving hurts. However, ignoring it and just trying to celebrate does not make things better. Not using the word 'died' does not change the fact that someone has died. Absolutely we must give thanks and celebrate the lives of our loved ones. But it is OK (and maybe even necessary) to cry as well. There is no Easter Day without Good Friday, there is no resurrection without death. I thank the Queen for making that clear. **Huw Bellis**
Tring Team

Orkney tribute to our Queen

*A great peace settles over the fish fields.
The sun sleeps in autumn rose mantled calm.
God's breath is shallow and quiet across the waters.
Dark comes, not as a fear, but as a warm comfort.
God bless the Queen, the Queen is dead.*

*God save the king.
Dark descends velvet, soft,
Gently encompassing grief.
Silent over nation, a change.
Grieve now, closure found.*

*Charles, King, stoical, stately,
With heavy burden, world watching
Not some two-pound theatre,
the whole world. Billions.*

*Dawn, heavens greeting us all
With a new Monarch and the sun.
The world awakes in anticipation,
The nation rejoices in the chosen one.*

Mac Dodge, The Milestone Community Kirk, Dounby
** fish fields = Nordic skaldic kenning for the sea*

Memories of the events of 70 years ago



Watching the events of the last few weeks, my thoughts have turned to the similar events of seventy years ago. My mother told me over breakfast on 6 February that the King had died, and we were also told in the school assembly. As a 9-year-old, it was difficult to absorb what was happening, but an event I witnessed later in the day has left a more memorable impression. I was walking home from school at lunchtime when I noticed the Mayor reading what turned out to be the Proclamation of Accession in front of the town hall in Morley where I lived. There were about fifty people gathered around

him, listening intently to his words. Suddenly they started to sing 'God, save our gracious Queen.' This brought it home that something important was happening. In May 1953, my parents took me for a day trip to London as preparations for the coronation were well under way. I remember seeing all the flags and bunting along the Mall and experiencing the buzz of excitement as people looked forward to 2 June. We managed to pack a lot into the ten hours we were in London, visiting Piccadilly Circus, the Tower of London, the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, tea at a Lyons Corner House, and travelling to Kew Gardens (unfortunately they had closed when we arrived). I remember Coronation Day. We did not have a television at the time, but a

friend of my mother had purchased one for her invalid father who was bedridden. We all crowded into his bedroom and closed the curtains to improve the television picture. After the service, we opened the curtains to see the town completely deserted and the rain falling. I remember seeing the procession, through the streets of London, which seemed to go on for ever, and Queen Salote of Tonga who was riding in an open carriage despite the rain. Several days later, the Town Council gave every school child a coronation mug as a souvenir of the day. It will be interesting to see how the coronation of King Charles will be organized as we have been led to believe it will be a lower key event. **Ted Oram**
St Peter & St Paul

A true story of love and forgiveness



**** WARNING ****
some readers may find the following article distressing
'Anthony Ray Hinton – I hereby sentence you to death by electric chair'. These were the harrowing words heard by a man who was wrongly convicted for the double-murder of two fast-food restaurant managers who were shot in Birmingham, Alabama in 1985. He spent the best part of the next thirty years in solitary confinement on death-row before his exoneration and release in 2015, after ballistics evidence finally proved he could not have fired the murder weapon. I had the privilege of meeting Anthony in September 2022 where he told his extraordinary story to a small audience in the UK. It is a distressing story. It is a story that makes me angry. But most of all it is a story of extraordinary love and forgiveness.

By his own admission, Anthony acknowledges that his wrongful conviction was a direct consequence of him being born black and poor. The investigating detectives knew he was innocent. The prosecuting attorney knew he was innocent. His defence attorney knew he was innocent. The all-white jury knew he was innocent. The judge knew he was innocent. But as Anthony himself explains, their view was that his arrest and sentence meant 'there was one less [racial slur] on the streets'. During his subsequent decades on death row, Anthony's cell was closest to the execution chamber and he recalls how he could smell burning flesh from the electric chair. After the first instance of this he told the guard what he could smell and was advised that he 'better get used to it' and that 'one day that smell will be your flesh'. In the years that followed, rather than being consumed by fear, anger and hate, Anthony's faith in God sustained him in the most remarkable ways. He recounts stories of how in his mind he managed to escape his tiny cell and prospect of execution to imaginary situations where he met the Queen and beat Roger Federer at Wimbledon. But there is one particular story that is even more remarkable than all of this. While Anthony was in prison, a young

white man was sentenced to death for the murder of a black man. The young man was the son of the local head of the Ku Klux Klan who had been instructed by his father to kill a black man, any black man. The evidence was damning and the young man was sentenced and placed in the cell next to Anthony. Over the following years, Anthony and the young man had countless conversations from their cells. The young man represented everything and everybody who hated and despised Anthony, and unlike Anthony, he had justly been convicted for murder. Anthony had every human reason to despise and hate him. And yet he didn't. Instead, because of his Christian faith he was able to demonstrate the most remarkable love for the young man. Overwhelmed by Anthony's God-like love for him, over time, the young man came to faith in Jesus Christ himself, and his own heart of hate was replaced by one of love. The young man was never acquitted of his murder. He was never exonerated. His sentence to death by electric chair was carried out. In his final wishes prior to his execution, he was permitted a visit

from one person. He didn't request his father visit him. He requested Anthony. They hugged and cried and said goodbye. And then the young man was executed, at peace. Over the last few weeks as I have reflected on Anthony's extraordinary story again and again, I have come back to the same Bible verse I quoted at my own baptism, aged 17, Romans 5:7-8: 'Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' Anthony couldn't take the place of the young man, but he could against all odds, remarkably love him while the young man was still full of hate. Listening to Anthony's story first-hand was very, very humbling. I can genuinely say I have never heard anything like it in my entire life. And I have only heard one story of love and forgiveness that surpasses this – the ultimate story of love and forgiveness, the story of Jesus Christ. **John Heasman**
Akeman Street Baptist Church

Wedding congratulations!

Congratulations to John Heasman's younger daughter, Betsy, on her marriage in September this year to Tom at Akeman Street Baptist Church!
The Editor



The royal funeral: pomp and contrast



Many of you, perhaps most, watched and listened to the royal funeral with unswerving attention and proper reverence. Some of you, like me, may have allowed your minds to wander. It was a splendid and magnificent occasion and a fitting act of worship in which to commend Queen Elizabeth, a firm Christian believer, to God's care.

Yet still my mind wandered. For one thing, after more than half a century of leading funeral services, I couldn't help thinking of the contrast between those services I have taken and that taking place in Westminster Abbey. Obviously, I do not remember most of the services I have taken. But one is fixed in my mind. It was soon after my ordination and was of a man with no relatives or friends. He had lived in a geriatric ward of the local hospital, formerly known as the workhouse. I was told the service would all take place at the graveside, with only the undertakers present. In fact, one man from his ward turned up. (In the intervening years I have taken several so-called 'paupers' funerals.) What a contrast, I thought, between a whole nation mourning and a service with no mourners.

There is a great contrast between a state funeral and an ordinary one. The Queen's funeral lacked nothing in terms of pomp and circumstance. It was, as we expected, magnificently and reverently carried out with hundreds taking part. Furthermore, the emphasis was on the Christian faith. From beginning to end it was about God.

In our current secular society, many people have problems in talking about God and prayer and worship. Based on the Prayer Book service, the Queen's funeral started with the sentences teaching us that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life and that we brought nothing into the world and take nothing out. At the end the commendation included the words 'Go forth upon thy journey from this world, O Christian soul.' These words should mark the ending of every human life but what a difference between our lives and the mystery of monarchy – how can one person be so different and yet just the same basic human being?

Much emphasis was put on the setting of the service in the historic building of Westminster Abbey. In a sense, there was the continuity of royal occasions in that building. Yet over the centuries, what was thought appropriate for funerals has changed greatly. For one of the features of the Reformation was a change in emphasis as to what a funeral was about. Once it was thought the more prayers for the dead, the more requiem masses and so on, the more the soul of the departed would be helped on its way to heaven. There was a strong belief in purgatory as a place of purging the soul before reaching heaven, but also in the human efforts needed to earn remission for the departed.

So the words of the funeral service were changed. The first revision (1549) included thanks for deliverance from 'the miseries of this wretched world', and this theme of deliverance from this sinful world was retained in subsequent revisions. In 1662 a collect was added praying that at the general resurrection we might all be found acceptable in God's sight.

No wonder that in 1922 a revision of the Prayer Book Funeral Service was sorely needed. How on earth people accepted the 1662 version as a suitable funeral service for those who died in the first World War, I do not know. Although 1922 was never authorized, it was the one more widely used with its shorter psalms, alternative readings and so on. The Queen's service, while retaining the dignity and style of the Prayer Book, like the Common Worship Funeral Service had the elements we need and expect

– prayers for comfort, giving thanks for the life just ended and remembering the bereaved in hope.

One final thought arises from the presence of the young Prince George and Princess Charlotte. Mostly we do not expect to see children at funerals. I never attended my grandparents' funerals although I was much older than these royals. With that thought goes an admiration for their exemplary behaviour through a very long service. Clearly children don't always need something different – they can join in regular worship and probably benefit from being part of a solemn family event.

So, a variety of thoughts occurred to me as I watched the royal funeral service, as no doubt they did to some of you. Maybe you remembered services you have attended or gave a thought to what you would like for your own service. Some people (like her late Majesty) leave careful instructions; others sadly refuse even to think about they would like their family to do.

Martin Banister
St Albans Cathedral

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Give us this day our daily bread

Food inflation is at a record high as prices surge 10.6% higher than a year ago. I'm sure we've all noticed our favourite foods cost more than they used to – but had you realised the cost of fresh food has increased by 12.1% since September 2021, and the cost of pasta and tinned tomatoes by 8.6%? Bread prices are up by 16%.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, food banks in the Trussell Trust's UK wide network distributed over 2.1 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis – 14% more than the same period the previous year.



With food and household energy prices continuing to rise, 76% of consumers are saying they expect to be affected by the cost-of-living crisis over the next three months, up from 57% in the summer.

Spare a thought then for the most vulnerable in our society, the people who were struggling to afford food before the

current crisis.

A member of High Street Baptist Church and Tring resident since 2004, I am proud to be the CEO of Youth Concern, an independent local charity that supports vulnerable

13-25-year-olds locally. Our charity is experiencing a tenfold increase in the number of young people needing help.

Between January and March 2021, 72 young people visited Youth Concern's Drop-in Centre in central Aylesbury. 132 visited during the same period in 2022 (183% increase).

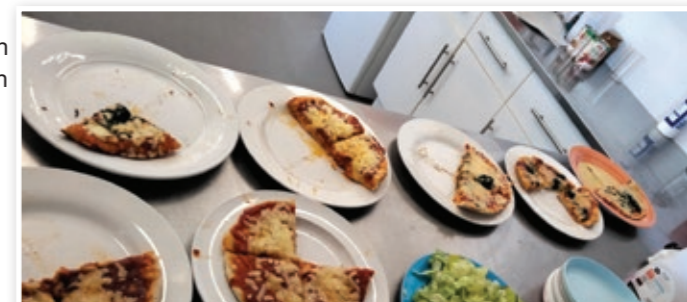
Between January and March 2021, 26 young people asked for – and received – information about budgeting and benefits. During the same period in 2022, 253 received that information (973% increase).

In 2022, the number of young people eating a meal at the Drop-in Centre increased by 1027% – and those receiving food and care parcels (e.g. soap and sanitary products) by 880%.

Ali, aged 19, has been using Youth Concern's services for a few months. He's struggling to make ends meet: 'I'm actually OK at budgeting but it's hard to make the money stretch. A homecooked meal at the Drop-in Centre and a food parcel to take away – it helps me get to the end of the week.'

But Youth Concern wouldn't be delivering its vision (that local vulnerable 13-25-year-olds will have the resources they need to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives) if we just gave out food parcels and hot meals.

Have you heard the old adage that it's



better to teach a man to fish than to give him a fish? 'Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.' Amongst other things, at Youth Concern we teach young people how to cook. We teach them how to shop economically. And how to turn a food parcel or the contents of a shopping basket into multiple meals. For example, our 'Grow It, Cook It, Eat It' programme – the pride our young people felt when they picked tomatoes, peppers and chard from our small garden, made a dough and cooked their very own pizzas was visible.

Find out more about Youth Concern's work by following the links in the box. And if you felt able to donate, on behalf of the 700 vulnerable young people Youth Concern supports annually, thank you very, very much indeed.

Hannah Asquith
High Street Baptist Church

Youth Concern
www.youthconcern.org.uk

Twitter, Instagram or Facebook:
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kate@youthconcern.org.uk

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Inflation revisited



There is a blizzard of commentary on the state of things as we approach the *Comment* deadline for November, and it would be quite brave to try to anticipate what the hot topic will be when the next edition of *Comment* hits the streets.

My earlier note characterised

inflation as a symptom of the market sorting out winners and losers from the change in fortunes brought about by the energy price shock. I also said that the government has the power to influence who wins or loses (my implicit hope being that it would seek to protect the poorest).

In the Autumn mini-budget the government used its power with a vengeance, mitigating the energy price crunch for nearly everybody, and giving a (tax) hand-out to the best-paid in

the economy. The cost of all that is to be borne by future taxpayers in the longer term, and in the shorter term by foreigners being prepared to lend us the money to fill the gap. The hope is that, in the longer term, we'll be so much richer that the extra taxes won't be noticed.

So far, however, we are struggling a bit with the short-term element.

John Whiteman
Tring Team

Stephen Hearn
Tring Market Auctions

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Tweet of the month



As I write this I am on Shetland, sheltering indoors from winds gusting up to 65 mph, about 700 miles north of Tring. Not everyone's idea of a holiday but it isn't always like this and when it isn't, Shetland really is beautiful and a great place to see birds.

Those 700 miles can make a remarkable difference to what birds you can see and how they behave. Take a close relative of the Linnet, the Twite. The Linnet is fairly common on farmland around Tring and is found in lowland areas all the way up the east coast to Orkney with a small number found on Shetland in summer. I have seen them once or twice up here myself. By contrast, the Twite, aka Mountain Linnet, is found in north Wales and southern Pennines north to Shetland where it is the commonest finch by some considerable margin. In the southern part of its range, Twite breeds on upland moorland on hills

and mountains, but can winter lower down. On Shetland they breed on both lowlands and uplands and are found all year round in the garden of the cottage I stay in.

The name Twite is from about the mid-16th century and is onomatopoeic, if you have a good imagination. Its scientific name is *linaria flavirostris*. *Linaria* is derived from Latin and means linen-weaver. It is also the scientific generic name for European Toadflax plants. *Flavirostris* is also derived from two Latin words *flavus* and *rostrum*. *Flavus* can mean yellow and *rostrum* can refer to a bird's beak: so *flavirostris* means yellow-billed and the Twite does have a yellow beak in autumn/winter.

Gardens on Shetland are an excellent habitat to see birds in – both common and rare ones find the varied vegetation in them very attractive. I would think that the majority of trees on Shetland are in gardens and that is a big factor to their attraction. This year it has been particularly apparent. As well as the usual Twite in the garden, I have seen Pied Flycatchers, Wood Warbler, Yellow-browed Warbler and Great Grey

Shrike in the cottage's garden. I even had a rare Citrine Wagtail fly over the garden this year to put the icing on a big cake.



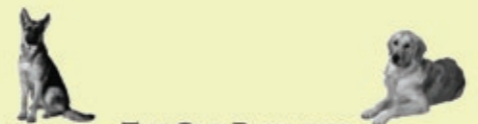
In the Bible three earthly gardens are mentioned: The Garden of Eden, The Garden of Gethsemane and Golgotha. The Garden of Eden was obviously a place of beauty, which became a place of betrayal. The Garden of Gethsemane is similar as Jesus used to pray there and was ultimately betrayed there. Golgotha was the garden where Jesus was crucified so it started out as a place of sadness but turned into a triumph of joy and happiness as Jesus was resurrected from a tomb in Golgotha. So, while I am not a keen gardener, I have to recognise the importance of gardens in the spiritual and earthly aspects of my life.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

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What do you think happened on 6 January?



The events in the centre of Washington DC on 6 January 2021 must be the most recorded, documented, and investigated in recent history. We must surely know what happened at The Capitol on that day, and what it means for America? And yet the alternative narratives about 6 January, and the events leading up to it, differ almost completely; an assault on democracy, or a determined attempt to protect it? In viewing that day from a little distance, each of us will apply our critical faculties but also our pre-conceptions, as we decide which narrative we think is true.

If there is such scope for differing accounts of a fully documented event so recently, how much more scope must there be for uncertainty about what happened some 2000 years ago. There was (of course) no video, not even a contemporaneous diary, of the life of Jesus. The letters about him were written

some years later, the gospels some decades later, and the available documentation was assembled into what we now call the New Testament some three centuries later. The narratives were written and assembled in societies and circumstances very different from ours; for example, slavery was an accepted occurrence.

Also, almost everything that we have was written by men. The writers of the gospels and epistles were certainly inspired by their faith, and committed to it, to the point of being martyrs in a number of cases. However, they were also fallible human beings, with their own backgrounds and perspectives. The documented tensions between Peter and Paul, and their respective followers, attest to the humanity of the members of the early church.

So, how would my attitude to the Bible relate to those of the seven speakers quoted by Annette in the September edition of *Comment*. I'm not sure there's exactly a box that I would



tick, but somewhere between boxes 5 (we need to look at the whole to interpret the detail) and 6 (we need to recognise the fallibility of the human authors). Does my attitude partly reflect my own hang-ups? I expect so. I had a liberal Christian upbringing and education, and am steeped in a field of knowledge that is inclined to be liberal (Economics). My attitude leads me to be ready to accept, indeed to expect, an evolution in the Church of England's understanding of what is involved in loving God and loving my neighbour. How could it be otherwise?

John Whiteman, St Peter & St Paul

Round the church in 50 years



This was the September choice for the Parish Book Group, in which the Very Reverend Trevor Beeson looks back over the second half of the 20th century,

calling it 'a period of turbulence and change on a scale not experienced since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'. And who would disagree with him?

While he can show examples of dramatic change, such as the ordination of women and the complete rewriting in modern language of the services, he also shows all the bureaucracy and delay which can hinder any effort to make progress. Alongside these achievements Beeson points to examples of important issues where entrenched opposition has succeeded in frustrating calls for change, as in the areas of homosexual clergy and same-sex marriage services. Oh dear!

Here in Tring we had thought the argument in favour of Anglican-Methodist unity was won – we had a wonderful Concelebration service in St Peter & St Paul's Church – only to have our expectations crushed at the final hurdle when a vote in the General Synod in May 1972 failed to reach the 75% majority required.

As a former chorister I enjoyed Beeson's scathing description of much modern worship music as 'a great deal of new rubbish'. (He is careful to give credit where he feels it is due, however, and praises e.g. Timothy Dudley Smith's hymns, like 'Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord'.)

Beeson's emphasis throughout the book tends to be on the many personalities he encountered during his long and varied career in the Church of England; his assessment of these people is often warm and admiring, but sometimes caustic, 'damning with faint praise'. Here's his description of a canon of Winchester Cathedral whose accent

(he was a Belgian) sometimes caused confusion ... 'Joseph's bruzzers vent on zheir own way. Joseph 'oweveair remained in goal,' 'ze 'ymn is one souzand and elephant' (111) or, on the first Easter Day, 'Ze disciples came to ze empty tum'. Yet Beeson also makes sure to add that he 'won the affection of many by his geniality, kindness and good humour'.

Members of the book group brought their own experience of life in the church to bear on the many topics raised by Beeson and discussion was animated. To the issue of declining numbers, both of clergy and congregations, we have no solution, but perhaps October's book: 'Why I am still an Anglican' (a collection of essays by, among others, Ian Hislop) may suggest some reasons for optimism. We'll let you know.

Carole Wells, St Peter & St Paul

Reading paragraph 5 of this article made me weep with laughter! Thank you, Carole, Trevor and the Belgian canon.

The Editor

Keys!



Keys, keys, keys – now where on earth are they? I am sure that if I calculated how much time I spent looking for keys, I would be shocked, which is why I haven't done it.

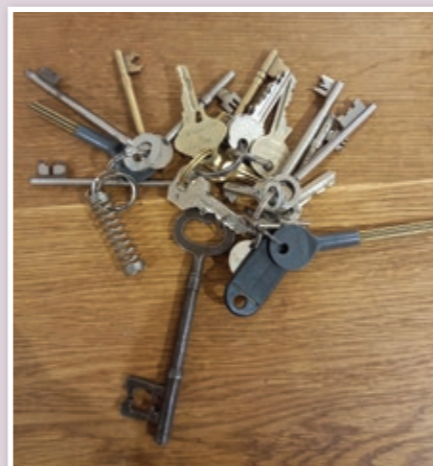
Five churches and two clergy means that we have a vast number of keys of which to keep track, and that is without church halls, schools, cars and bicycles to add to the weight. We do have set places to keep the keys, and maybe we ought to have a ceremonial key-returning to safe place at the end of each day, but that would get scuppered by those who want to borrow keys, or who just need to check whether glasses were left in church, or a last-minute desperate call for food bank. Some churches have many copies of keys that are issued to lots of people and keeping track of those is very difficult. Some churches still have the original key, which is a large piece of metal to carry around, and almost impossible to replicate; and some of the key rings have several unknown keys on, but I

dare not get rid of them, as the minute I do that, someone will tell me exactly what the key is for.

It is a rare occasion that I leave the house without having shaken my coat and bag to check that I can hear the sound of keys jingling. Then I check that they are the right keys for the right church. Then I stand outside the front door looking for my own door key, which proves elusive. Which coat was I wearing the last time I went out? Quick feel of waterproof coat, which reveals house key and also several coins, two conkers and an opened packet of drawing pins. Of course – last worn when putting up posters in the rain.

Any keys put on the front seat of the car also have an alarming habit of sliding off the seat into that gap either between the seats, or the door and the seat, and it amazes me how such a large bunch of keys can find its way into such a small gap: so frustrating when I can see them, but I can't reach them.

I read somewhere that in order to stop losing things, one needs to concentrate when putting them down so that you remember properly. Of course, that relies on other people not picking them up, and also focusing on which



church keys they are that I am putting down. I might find the keys again, but are they the right keys that I need for that occasion?

The only thing that is more frustrating than this, is the remembering of countless passwords for all the different accounts and email addresses that I have, but that is for another day.

Jesus said 'I am the door' and I am very relieved that no keys (physical, at least) were mentioned!

PS Sometimes after an article, people are very kindly disposed to offer help and suggestions. This is a situation where I know the solution, but need to act on it, so the responsibility is mine and no one else's!

Jane Banister, Tring Team

Accepting, confessing, forgiving



Last month I talked in *Comment* about Musalaha, a Jerusalem-based charity that builds grassroots relationships across divided communities.

This second article focuses on their Women's Groups.

Their women's work mainly promotes reconciliation between Israeli and Palestinian women. Some groups are also drawn from the Muslim and Jewish communities. Women's groups last for twelve months using the reconciliation training born out of Musalaha's three decades of experience.



in a room with Israelis, let alone share how I feel. This has been a remarkable experience.' Palestinian woman

Another woman responded, 'I love the friendship that meeting gives us. I'm very good friends with some Palestinian women. I teach one woman the piano and she teaches me Arabic! It's great.'

Musalaha believes the participation of women in peacebuilding increases the probability of both a positive process and good final impact within their communities.

**Colin Briant
High Street Baptist Church**

Cross-border Israeli-Palestinian programmes

These begin with 5-day desert encounters in the Jordan desert, similar to those described in the September edition of *Comment*. These are often the first direct experience either side has of the other. After a year, participants work together towards a joint initiative in their local communities.

As mothers, Palestinian and Israeli women have a kind of 'moral authority', arising out of their responsibility for educating and passing on values. Women share stories of community life, while men tend to discuss issues. Women have an ability 'to give grief a public expression'. The role of grief, of coping with losses, both their own personal losses and those of women in the other community, is intrinsic to reconciliation. A sincere understanding of the 'other' only comes with a willingness to understand pain, to accept, to confess and forgive. The women involved in Musalaha's

activities reflect these traits. They share their stories of how they came to reconciliation. They trace journeys from hatred to acts of embrace.

'I never thought I would be able to sit



A few years ago, before Covid-19, an Israeli woman from the Golan Heights and a Palestinian woman from Bethlehem made two UK tours to UK churches and conferences in the Midlands and North of England, telling the story of their relationship. This included Spring Harvest conferences at Harrogate and Skegness. Hedva Hamov and Shireen Awaad lead the Musalaha women's work described above. We hope to write about them in future editions of *Comment*. Perhaps they will visit Tring in a future UK tour.

See also <https://musalaha.org/women/>
Musalaha's Jerusalem website <https://musalaha.org>
UK based website <https://musalaha.uk>
For further information go to the websites or contact
Colin or Janet Briant colin.briant@hotmail.com.

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Crossword

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ACROSS

- Divisions of a hymn (6)
- 'May we all '.....' into heaven' (6)
- The ten '.....' (12)
- Just, and fair (6)
- Rebounding sound (4)
- One of the monarch's abodes (7) (6)
- Boiled mixed meal (4)
- Deep blue (6)
- A sect of Protestants (12)
- Cows (4)
- Sinners (6)

DOWN

- Financial expert (9)
- Maths total (3)
- Morally permitted (8)
- Top of the hill (4)
- Admitted a wrong-doing (9)
- Hospital employment work (3)
- Gift of money (9)
- Used at the Last Supper (4) (5)
- Written (8)
- Can do (4)
- Vegetable (3)
- Short title (priest) (3)

Answers on page 30

The Children's Storehouse



There are some people who are born to make a difference; James and Cathryn Barringer are prime examples. Wherever they go, they see a need and are determined to do something about it. Cathryn created the Children's Storehouse eleven years ago. It is entirely run by volunteers and relies on donations. The people who come to the events are quiet, respectful and so grateful. The parents are given a card with the age and gender of their child(ren). They choose clothes (aged from newborn to 7), toys, books (often in their own language) and/or baby goods. They can choose ten items per child from each area. Some do not speak English and communicate through an app which translates what they want to say. The children come with their parent(s) and participate in the choice. The atmosphere is one of care.

Cathryn relates the history: 'The idea for the Children's Storehouse came



when we felt God led us to live here in Hemel Hempstead and our desire to love and serve the community that we had just moved to. We had just had our first child and had many hand-me-downs which was so very helpful. I took the idea to our local family centre to see if they thought it would help local families in need, and they jumped at the idea. That was summer 2011.

team members from other places too. Now several packs are made up weekly to go out to families through a network of health visitors, social workers, family support team, refugee support team and more. Cots, beds, pushchairs, high chairs, clothes, toys, bedding and more, donated by local families for us to give away, go to support vulnerable children and families in Dacorum. Every child, and every family, is precious to God. Their practical needs are his concern, and through the Children's Storehouse we are able to share God's love in this practical way to anyone who has need.'

'We started with a few friends, and few boxes in our garage and a session at the family centre, whose team invited families they were working with whom they knew would benefit from free clothes, toys and so on. Two years later we launched Hemel Vineyard Church and the Children's Storehouse was encompassed into the mission of the church family and continues to be led by the church, although we have

Meg, the Children's Storehouse Coordinator combines the skills of effective organisation and communication with donors, professionals and families, with a beautiful heart and passion to serve families and children. There is a list of goods required on their website. There is also the opportunity to buy new toys for Christmas. If you would like more information, please refer to <https://www.hemelvineyard.org.uk/childrens-storehouse>.

Alison Bliss, part-time helper, the Children's Storehouse



hemelvineyard
church

children's storehouse



Serving Dacorum Families
Part of hemelvineyard

A room of one's own (with apologies to VW for the title)



Virginia Woolf wrote an extended essay with that title about the importance of women having space (both literal and metaphorical) to write or create or to be themselves. Now that Tring School's new build has been finished, I can say with great satisfaction that the Chaplaincy has, at last, a room of its own! It is not large, and we don't have a window, but there is a desk, a bookcase (vital) and chairs, including a spinning office chair. We have our names on the door as well.

Over the past eleven years, it has been interesting not having a space that is ours. In some respects, it has been freeing, as people cannot say there is

only one space that is the 'God' space. Practically speaking, it has been difficult not having anywhere to store things – we have borrowed drawers and shelves, and I have worn out one shopping trolley!

But now we have our own space to store things and to meet people. Staff morning prayer is held there once a week at 8.00am, and we have a space where we can sit and work or where people can find us (always difficult if you don't have a designated space). It is not big enough to have our lunch clubs in, but that is OK.

We owe a huge 'thank you' for this room to Andrew Dobberson, newly retired, who championed both the chaplaincy, and also the need for us to have a room of our own: so thank you!

Jane Banister
Tring School Chaplain



Do as God would do



Among the many things that the Bible is good for, the Bible also tells us about who God is and what he's like. God gave us the stories in the Bible – the interactions

between God and people – as a window into what he is like so we can get to know him. We can find out about his nature and his character and how he thinks and feels about things. We can learn about what's important to him and why. We can discover how he relates to US, how he thinks about us and his world, who he calls us to be and what he calls us to do as his people.

The reason it's so important for us to understand what God is like is because that is what he wants US to be like, in our nature and character. God's goal for us is that we should increasingly be more and more like him, to imitate him in this world; to be asking ourselves, 'How is my life measuring up against the kind of person Jesus would be, and the kind of things Jesus would do, if he were me in my situation living my life?'

Romans 8:29 says God 'predestined us to be conformed to the image of his

Son'. In other words, our destiny is to be conformed to his image, to be changed – so we become more like Jesus. Colossians 1:15 tells us that Jesus is 'the exact living image of the invisible God'. Jesus is what God looks like in human form.

So 'being like Jesus' and 'doing like Jesus' is what we're called to be and to do: loving people, as Jesus did; welcoming people as Jesus did; forgiving people as Jesus did; extending grace and mercy and compassion as Jesus did; being kind like Jesus; praying like Jesus; being a servant like Jesus; and laying down our lives and our rights, like Jesus. We are to be like God and like Jesus in every way we can in how we live in this world.

God wants to bring the fruit of the Spirit into our lives (Galatians 5: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) not just so we'll be nicer people; it's because that's what he himself is like

– loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled – towards us. That's the kind of fruit that will naturally come about in our lives if we allow the Holy Spirit to take up residence, cooperate with him and allow him to take charge.

2 Corinthians 3:18 says the Holy Spirit will 'make us more and more like him', 'changed into his likeness'. That is our destiny as Christians: not just to believe the right things; not just to do good things; not just to be nicer people – but to be more and more like Jesus.

Ephesians 5:1 says 'be imitators of God' or do as God would do.

Steve Burnhope. Aylesbury Vineyard

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Letter from Orkney



Greetings to all in Tring. We are so sad we could not call in to St Peter & St Paul's while on our great adventure south. I had envisaged a gentle drive and adequate time for rest in between visits. Not a chance! Once news got around to family and friends, we had a full itinerary before we even started the car. Can you imagine, if we missed anyone out? World War III would break out. It was all very enjoyable, but next time it might be in secret so we can put our feet up.

Sadly, we have removed ourselves from St Mary's Church which required an enormous amount of thought and prayer, but we finally felt we could not agree with the views of the Diocese, so we did the only thing left to us, which was to consider joining another denomination church. This was particularly hard for Carrie as she was secretary to the Vestry Committee and much more deeply involved.

Anyway, great news, our proposed new place of worship for the moment is The Milestone Community Kirk, Dounby



about which we have had good reports. We will keep you posted. Further to my last brain-dump in October, the wind is at present at around 50/60 mph and the rain lashing with a vengeance. The sheep in our front paddock are huddled against the wall, so today we will light our woodburner and snuggle down to practise our performance for tomorrow's Foy. Wish us luck. Bouquets gratefully accepted.

We are off to Australia next month, to the Brisbane area to be precise, as it is my lifelong pal's 80th birthday. He has no idea we are coming. We have arranged with my Goddaughter to be in the restaurant at the table prior to his arrival. Should be great fun, two old codgers having a night on the town. It is a bit of a challenge for Carrie as I have to have assisted travel these days. Another big adventure. At 78, I have to get on with it and hope St Peter has a Queue.

We are still getting cruise ships docking and the tour buses flitting about. I feel quite sorry for their bedraggled customers being 'dumped' at the Standing Stones. One cannot use an umbrella on Orkney unless you wish to be like Mary Poppins. I feel evermore sorry for the stoical tour guides having to remain cheerful and entertaining. I don't think a coach load of American and Japanese tourists would be happy with a singalong. At least the tour guides know what they are in for and dress accordingly. High heels and a showerproof fashion jacket don't do much for you here.

I am getting closer to the present with my personal history: memoirs sound too posh. I have always wondered about my own father and his history: he died at 54 just as I was emerging from those conflicting teen years. Born in Scotland and qualified as an architect, I have no idea how he ended up in Norfolk or



met my mother, so I am making sure as much as I can is recorded. Another good project for those long winter evenings. Either that or watching endless 'Midsummer Murders' or 'Vera' on Scottish TV.

In the meantime, I sincerely wish you all a traditional Celtic Blessing:

*May the road rise up to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face
May the rain fall soft upon your fields
And until we meet again
May God hold you in the hollow of his hand*

Mac Dodge
The Milestone Community Kirk,
Dounby



Stand up to protect nature

The new UK Government has launched a series of measures that plan to rip up vital protections for nature, just when we need them the most. Despite hundreds of thousands of people uniting against this unprecedented attack on nature, and our friends at the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts, WWF and many more organisations backing us, we have yet

to have any reassurance that nature will be safeguarded.

Over the last fifty years, we have lost over 40 million birds from our skies, and around two-fifths of UK species have declined in recent years. We are already in the midst of a nature and climate crisis. This is a time when we should be protecting nature, not destroying

it. There is so much to enjoy in nature, from the birds in our gardens, to the wildest corners of our countries. But it desperately needs our help to thrive.

Please stand with us and take our quick and easy action to let your MP know how important nature is to you.

Siân Duncan
RSPB

Prayer – the universal language



Virtually all religions have prayer, and in times of extreme danger, even non-religious people will often pray.

It is said that a colleague once came to the

home of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Niels Bohr and, having noticed a horseshoe hung above the entrance, asked incredulously if the professor believed horseshoes brought good luck. 'No,' Bohr replied, 'but I am told that they bring luck even to those who do not believe in them.' Non-believers may pray for the same reason.

A 2018 survey by Tearfund quoted in the Guardian found that one in five adults pray despite saying they are not religious, and over half of adults pray at some time. One gentleman aged 64 said that although he was an agnostic, he prayed every night! A second survey in 2020 showed that 5% of adults who had never prayed started to pray during lockdown and that the largest age group doing this was the 18-24 year-olds.

The percentage praying shows great variation by country. A 2021 survey of some countries showed 95% of Nigerians praying daily against 10% of French – no UK figure quoted.

Virtually every religion includes prayer. Collins Dictionary defines it as 'a personal communication or petition addressed to a deity, any other form of spiritual communion with a deity or a similar personal communication addressed to beings venerated as being closely associated with a deity, such as angels or saints.' Wikipedia has the widest definition (and, I think, the best) – 'Prayer is an invocation or act that seeks to activate a rapport with an object of worship through deliberate communication.'

Prayer is not just a one-way street. Mother Teresa says 'God speaks in

the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer.' Many would consider that meditation is part of prayer, as Mother Teresa suggests, and I feel this is best represented in Lectio Divina – the monastic combination of Bible reading, meditation and prayer which we sometimes use in our house group. Lectio Divina is recognised by the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic and Methodist churches, who all have articles about it on their national websites.

Christian prayers are individual or corporate, and most religions have this same distinction. As an example, Muslims have to perform Salah, the five daily prayers. These can be prayed on one's own or in a congregation after Adhan – the call to prayer given by the muezzin. Hindus pray on their own – puja – which takes place at home as part of ouja, the daily devotion that Hindus should practise. Communal prayer also takes place in the mandir or temple. Buddhists have varying methods of 'prayer' depending on the country, but the basic premise in strict Buddhism (Theravada Buddhism) is that what we see as prayer is a meditation introduced by chants. This can be done individually, or in a temple where the introductory chants are performed by a monk. Some sects, such as the largest one, Mahayana Buddhism, pray to Bodhisattvas privately or in the temple. Bodhisattvas are people who obtained enlightenment but refused to enter nirvana so they can help others reach enlightenment. They seem to me to have a similarity to saints.

As a Benedictine, my instructions come

from the rule of St Benedict written around AD500. In chapter 20 of the rule he says: *And let us be assured that it is not in saying a great deal that we shall be heard (Matt 6:7), but in purity of heart and in tears of compunction. Our prayer, therefore, ought to be short and pure, unless it happens to be prolonged by an inspiration of divine grace. In community, however, let prayer be very short.*



St Francis of Assisi at Prayer by Bartolome Esteban Murillo 1650

At Turvey Abbey any personal prayer by a monk or nun in a service usually consists of no more than two sentences. That would be considered far too little in most churches!

So it seems most religions see prayer as primarily an individual act which can be empowered in a congregation by communal prayer. Of course, some only take part in communal prayer, and do not say prayers as individuals.

Personally, I find Lectio Divina in a small group very powerful, and take part in it with the Turvey monks, nuns and fellow oblates. I wonder whether others in Tring would be interested in a monthly Lectio Divina? If so, contact me johnsteeleallan@gmail.com.

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

Parish registers

Funerals

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

Miao Qi Yu 16
Terry Clay

Mary Vila 99
Yvonne Hithersay

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Please note that the closing date is 15 November 2022 to lodge a completed application for grants payable from Autumn 2023.

Use your LOAF!



After a wet and windy Saturday, it was a relief to see it was no longer raining on Sunday 2 October, the day of Tring's Apple Day. In the hazy morning

light, stallholders found their spots among the apple trees dripping with fruit, the anthills and the untamed surroundings. As the morning developed the sun came out, and so did the people. Jeacock's Orchard was buzzing with people of all ages, people happy to be in the stunning surroundings of this historic orchard and heritage bungalow. More chairs were found for those enjoying their refreshments. Music started. There was so much to do and see: stalls and craft demonstrations; apple pressing; puppet shows; and dancing.



Tring's Justice & Peace Group had a stall to promote their LOAF campaign. Some intrigue had been built up on social media to provoke thought as to what the letters might mean. All was revealed at the Apple Day! LOAF stands for Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly, Fairly traded. It is a principle developed by Green Christian to help us think about the food we buy and encourage ethical decision-making. Following the celebration of Harvest in most churches, the Apple Fayre is a continuation of all things autumnal, highlighting our connection to the earth through the food we eat. It was the perfect time to highlight that as God's stewards on earth, we are responsible for the flourishing of the whole earth community. We can do this by considering what we put into the earth and what we remove. Living sustainably means being able to maintain life over a period of time: not just surviving but living. The Green Christian movement advocates the LOAF principle as a holistic way to serve God and neighbour,

by thinking about the lives of those who grow our food and the animals we choose to consume.

Tring's Justice & Peace Group have regularly updated a guide to local stockists of Fairtrade and organic produce to help the local people source these products. There was plenty of time to chat about these ideas as young children enjoyed playing with the farm toys or doing appley craft. (In fact, some parents had trouble moving their young people away!)

As well as great timing for thinking about this topic, the Apple Day was the perfect environment too. Jeacock's Orchard has its roots dating back to the 1920s when it was established as part of the Land Settlement Movement for soldiers returning from WWI. Children were eager to try out the manual apple press and sample the freshly juiced fruit. Children asked, 'Where do I get the apples?' and the pressers told them to 'look around!' and collect them from the ground or trees. Pressing apples to make juice in an orchard was the epitome of 'local'!

The Apple Day was a gloriously wholesome day reminding us of our connection to seasons, food and community. The pace was gentle and the apples were plentiful – see you there next year!

Polly Eaton
Tring Justice and Peace Group



Read more about the fascinating history of Jeacock's Orchard here:
<https://tringlocalhistorymuseum.org.uk/history/land-settlement-movement-1922.html>

Read more about LOAF here:

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/loaf-principles/>

Find out more about the work of Tring's Justice & Peace Group here:

<http://www.justiceandpeacetring.org>

and follow them on Facebook.

Find out more about Tring's Own Apple Fayre:

<https://www.tringtogether.org.uk/apple-fayre>

Precious in God's sight



One of the worst results from all the suffering which has afflicted mankind in various ways in the past, and certainly does in the present, is the effect

it has on the young generation. Certainly babies and the very young are utterly dependent on adult help, particularly their parents or family members. Teenagers are a little more able to fend for themselves, but are likely to suffer from emotional issues. Adults and those in their final years suffer in different ways and for various reasons, but usually know where to get help or take action.

Children cannot take action by themselves; cannot provide money or skills to help in times of crises. War, as it is in Ukraine now, is one obvious cause of suffering, but famine, natural disasters and even domestic breakdowns and many other reasons often mean that children are separated from their parents or their family group either by death or from confusion from what is happening.

A separated child stands helpless, maybe alone, absolutely frightened, unable to survive the many dangers without help from someone or an organisation. They stand vulnerable, at the mercy of starvation, the weather, predators (leading to slavery) which could lead to their future being completely ruined or they may even lose their life. There are now 100 million people in refugee camps or something similar. Assuming about one in three in that number are children, it shows the scale of a situation for any one of those children whose future is bleak and uncertain. All the potential in each one may be lost.

There are many organisations working hard to alleviate this situation of 'lost' children all over the world. U.N.I.C.E.F is clearly the most influential but is probably overwhelmed by sheer numbers. Global Care for Children is a charitable organisation doing their best to help. The organisation I have followed since its inception in 1992 is called TOYBOX which has now built up to rescue children in about eight countries.

The story started when a couple went out from the UK to Guatemala to help with youth work. It didn't take long for them to realise the plight of many children in that country as they encountered many children on the streets, some as young

as 4 and 5. They were forced out of their homes by absent fathers, alcoholism, abuse and – just not wanted!

They would try to make a living doing very menial jobs, but were often chased away by the national police who treated them as 'nuisances.' They would become prey for drug gangs and predators, but had no one to go to for help.

The couple were so troubled by this that they tried to win the confidence of these children and provide some sort of shelter and basic food for them. Because this involved money, they appealed for help firstly from the UK, then elsewhere, as the title 'TOYBOX' gave them some official authority. Places of refuge were set for these vulnerable children and volunteers started to arrive to help.

The charity has spread to other countries with the same aims. In each country TOYBOX has discovered that 'street children' had no identity

because they had no birth certificate. This would certainly prevent any future progress for getting a job etc. So a lot of effort has been made in recent years to remedy this – with some success. Each child is now recognised by the state as a 'person!'

The charity was based for a while in Amersham, but the headquarters are now in Milton Keynes. Others have taken over the responsibility for the work.

Jesus said to those who provided food, shelter and who visited the sick etc. that 'even as you have done it for the least of these, you have done it unto me'. Some people may think that children are the least in the light of world events, but every child was, and still is, precious in God's sight. Let us remember every effort that is being made to help even one child to have a future it deserves.

John Young
Akeman Street Baptist

TRING TEAM PARISH

Friday 11th November - Armistice Day

**11am Act of Remembrance outside at
Tring War Memorial**

**3.30pm Holy Communion for Remembrance
St Mary's Puttenham**

13th November - Remembrance Sunday

**10.45am Service of Remembrance outside at
Tring War Memorial**

**10.50am Act of Remembrance outside at
Long Marston War Memorial**

**10.50am Act of Remembrance outside at
Wilstone War Memorial**

**10.50am Service of Remembrance
inside Aldbury Church.**

All Welcome.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

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Children in church



One of my clear memories of childhood churchgoing is that of the church bag.

It was an old handbag of my mother's, kept in the cupboard in the hall, which contained books and silent toys that were only used at church. The idea was that they would have some novelty and keep us amused for longer than toys we played with all the time. I can also remember sitting in a pew with my two sisters, while my mother walked around outside the church with my baby brother so that he did not disturb others. I am sure that many of you have similar memories about being a child in church, or looking after children there.

Children in church has always been a big discussion and attitudes have changed over time. Church has always aimed to be multi-generational; but how many of us can say that our experience has reflected that? Sunday Schools started out as places of education, and also childcare, and parents sent their children there without necessarily going to church themselves. Those were also the days when there were far fewer social activities for children. Our recent experience of Sunday clubs has been the children leaving the main service to be 'taught' and to have fun elsewhere, and then to join the service later. But that requires volunteers, which we do not currently have.

There is also the view that actually, we need to worship together. Keeping children separate and then expecting them to sit through a service they have not grown up with when they reach the age of 11 or so does not seem logical. So much of what we learn from others is by modelled behaviour; what we do as adults in church is a learning process for the children.

There is a value in being together, in hearing the same words, in singing the same songs, in going up to communion together. For many families who are separated by work and school during the week, it also seems vital that if they have chosen to spend time at church on their weekend, then it should be a shared experience. They can then talk about

what the service was like, who was in the prayers, which songs were sung and so on, as well as the deep theological questions. We also all know that one can get value from something that you do not fully understand – watching others worship and pray; hearing words that sound beautiful even if you can't read them yet; knowing that this is a place of love and care.

Our churches are also amazing buildings to be in, and from which to learn. I spent a lot of my father's sermons reading the table of kindred and affinity in the back of the prayerbook; we played number games with the hymn board; we looked up at the roof and the carvings; we watched the organist's hands and feet dancing on the pedal and console as he played. And this was all part of our worship.

Many congregations have invested money in Children's and Family Workers to make sure that provision is suitable and attractive. Our parish thought about this some years ago, and that was when we made the decision to invest in school chaplaincy – it is always hard to get young people to go to church, so why not go to them? The worship that we do in school is very pared down, but it has to be right for ages from 11 upwards, as staff are part of the congregation and community as well. All ages have to be considered.

Planning worship has to be done with all ages and capabilities in mind, no matter what age or stage: are we accessible in terms of entry, seating, sound? Is there space for wheelchairs and buggies? Can toddlers and the infirm move around safely? Sometimes people struggle with the noise of children in church, and yet whistling hearing aids and loud conversations during communion seem acceptable. As was once said in a training course I attended, noise and disturbance are two different things.

In St Peter & St Paul's Church, we have moved our children's provision to the Lady Chapel,

as it is easy access; it means that the parents, too, are part of what is happening and can see screens and join in; and as ministers, one of our favourite things is to see children standing by the Lady altar, with play-doh or models in hand, singing along to hymns. They are fully part of what is happening and it is appropriate for them, which is what we want for all of us.

A question that has been asked recently is why we do not bring up the children at the end to show the adults what they have done. The answer to that is: Would you like to do that as adults, to come to the front and tell everyone else what you have learnt in the service? What they do there is to help their worship and not to be 'show and tell' for us. It would also stop the shy children taking part, and mean that the big personalities were always on show! But you are always welcome to look at what has been done at the end, and to ask the children about it.

Having all of us worshipping together brings to mind for me two important points: one is that we are models of faith, but that the influence can go both ways; the other is to ask 'Do you want children in church to have what you had as a worshipping child, or to have something different?'

I think I would rather have had my mother with me (and I am sure she would rather have been inside particularly on bad-weather days), but I am very grateful for the church bag, which I can still see very clearly in my mind's eye. What we are offering now is just an updated version of that bag.

Jane Banister
Tring Team

Jane Ducklin
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From old ways to the new realities...



The caring community of Tring has always been a stronghold of support for the Children's Society. The Church of England Children's

Society is one of the longest-standing charities within our community. It focuses on the wellbeing of the coming generations who will have to handle whatever the world throws at them. Our children are our future and we need to cherish and nourish them with wisdom and love. That has always been the mission of the Children's Society, with particular reference to the more disadvantaged and vulnerable among our youth.

Over the years it has metamorphosed from running orphanages and organising adoptions into becoming the frontline of defence and protection. It joins together all the public sector agencies and resources to protect our young people. What it does – and needs to keep on doing – is hugely important to us all.



The Good Childhood Report 2022

This latest report on the state of our young people in health and wellbeing has just been published and can easily be obtained from the Children's Society at <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>. It makes sobering reading but also offers considerable scope for hope.

Prue and I have had a long involvement with the Children's Society in Tring for more than forty years. When

we started out it was a question of pounding the streets and organising house to house collections. Twenty-five years ago when that method of organising support became less effective (and less socially acceptable) we started organising the huge resource

of 'box holders'. These stalwarts pledged themselves to supporting the Society year in, year out, with both small change (which always adds up) and larger donations. In June this year we had our 25th annual Box Holders Garden Day and it was interesting to reflect how the character has changed. We no longer had a roomful of diligent counters emptying the boxes and totting up the totals; most of the donations came in the form of cheques or transfers and had already been pledged. Interestingly enough

the total from this method was very much the same as it used to be for the boxes. What had not changed at all was the sense of celebratory common purpose among those who attended. Some had been doing the same thing for the same length of time as ourselves. There was a real 'party' atmosphere.

After twenty-five years it seems time to move on to a different system. Coins are no longer anything like so present in our daily lives and electronic systems make everything a lot simpler (when they work!). Like all such charities, the Children's Society is at something of a crossroads trying to make the most of the huge well-spring of energy and affection for supporting the Society and at the same time keeping up with modern methodologies. We will be sending out an email shortly to all



the people on our list. We are offering everyone the chance to keep on with a box if you wish to or to transfer to a different method of giving if that seems simpler.

What is certain is that we need to try to keep the sense of community and common purpose which has been so productive and helpful over the years. We will almost certainly try to arrange some kind of gathering as a group next summer and we will definitely be doing our best to connect our local group to the national organisation and ensure that the flow of funds continues.

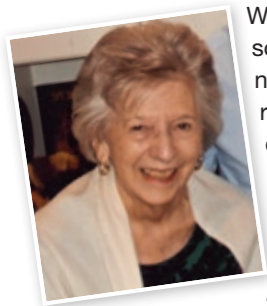
What the Children's Society does creates a vital bridge between our most worried and vulnerable young people and their future. It gives them time and space to cross over current troubles into useful and effective citizenship once they become adults and independent. What could be better or more worthwhile than that?

If you'd like any further information or have any suggestions – and particularly if you would like to volunteer to get involved – please do get in touch.

Prue & Grahame Senior
St Peter & St Paul



Our Russian holiday



With Russia sadly so much in the news, I thought I'd read through the diary I kept of a holiday there in 2004, hoping to resurrect some good memories.

Since we were on summer time in the UK, Russia was only three hours ahead of us. The flight took about three and a half hours, but passed quickly with frequent drinks served as well as lunch, and on arrival we were surprised at how little red tape there was. There was no customs declaration to fill in, just the immigration form we'd completed on the flight which had to be kept in our passports until we left the country.

It was an hour and a half's coach drive from the airport to our hotel, and during it our guide, Anatoley, told us something about the country, such as that the Russian name for the town is Moskva, the same as the river. Towns in Russia have always been called after rivers and still are. (As in Spanish, the 'v' in Russian words seems to be pronounced 'b'. Anatoley also pronounced Kiev as 'Keeve' (!), though, later, Ilyona didn't.)

We didn't arrive at the hotel till nearly 10.00pm local time and went straight to the restaurant for a much-delayed supper – a salad of tomatoes, peppers and cucumber followed by peppered steak, rice and vegetables. The pudding was a sweet, sponge-based concoction which we later encountered on many occasions.

After breakfast the next morning we set off for Moscow proper, Anatoley warning us that there are very few public loos: 'Russians only go to the lavatory once a day!'

Moscow is 857 years old, having been established in 1147, and we heard about the brother princes Vladimir and Norski. Apparently the clinking of glasses dates from the time of the princes, who were often all brothers ruling different parts of the country. Cups were filled to overflowing then crashed into each other so that the liquid overflowed and mixed. By this means, if one cup was poisoned, everyone would get a share of the liquid!

The Russians were under the yoke of the Mongols and Tartars until in 1380 there was an uprising against the Tartars. The country continued to be ruled by

princes, who were 'crowned' wearing a fur hat with a jewelled top, until in the 16th century, Ivan the Terrible (pronounced Yvonne, which confused me at first!) proclaimed himself the first Tsar, from the Latin word Caesar. It was Peter the Great who, after touring Europe, introduced the crown for his own coronation.

From the 18th to the 20th century, St Petersburg was the capital. Then in 1918, soon after the previous year's revolution, it reverted to Moscow. Having been the capital of the Soviet Republic, it's now the capital of the Russian Federation, whose flag, which flies from most buildings, has horizontal bands of white, blue and red. There are 15 million people living here, which is about 10% of the population.

All the notices and billboards along the way are, of course, in Cyrillic, giving a feeling of alienation since it's impossible even to pick out letters. We were told we could take photos of almost everything except men in uniform, particularly the police, and monks and nuns. Having passed the KGB headquarters, the Lubyanka, we stopped on the embankment of the river to photograph the wonderful Kremlin panorama on the other side. The sun was out and all the golden globes were gleaming.

Anatoley prefers to think of it as a Kremlin rather than the Kremlin as it's known in the west, since every Russian city over 500 years old has a kremlin. The word means fortified area within a wall and it's like a town inside. It has always been the seat of power, and the Tsars used to live in it, but since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 the President works there but lives elsewhere.

Our next photo stop was to snap a 20th century monument – a huge grey statue of Peter the Great which had started out as one to honour Christopher Columbus! Then it was realised he had no connection with Moscow, so his face was remodelled as Peter's! But the ship depicted is still a Spanish galleon and the map he's holding is of America. The statue is known locally as Peter the Columbus!

The name Red Square has nothing to do with Communism; it's been called that since the 16th century. The Russian word for 'red' is very like that for 'beauty' and it actually means the beautiful square. We got out of the coach here and went to look at the church of St Basil and the huge GUM department store

(pronounced GOOM). That evening we had a night tour of Moscow, which was transformed with lights, and stopped for a picnic by the lake where Tchaikovsky wrote Swan Lake.

The next morning we returned to Moscow for a visit to the Kremlin, during which we learned a great deal more Russian history and saw the Coronation dress of Catherine the Great and dozens of carriages owned by tsarinas, one of which was a sled. That evening we went to the circus, which several of us were dubious about. We hated the animal acts involving bears, lions and tigers, but the high-wire acts were brilliant.

The following day we visited Red Square and Lenin's tomb. The Soviets realised that having stamped out religion they needed a substitute symbol, so Lenin (real name Vladimir Ulyanov), who died in 1924, was embalmed and made into a kind of god. They erected a granite pyramid mausoleum and there he has stayed for about eighty years, apart from being evacuated to the Urals during the war. There are special machines under the floor that control the temperature and once a year the tomb is closed for a month to re-embalm the body and give him a new suit!! It was a very odd experience to file past the glass coffin in which he lay. He looked very small!

Later we walked through the cemetery at the foot of the Kremlin walls (which from that angle looked very high). There were amazingly lifelike bronze statues of



revolutionary heroes as well as Stalin, Brezhnev and Yuri Gagarin the cosmonaut, who died in his 30s while testing planes.

As something of a contrast, we next visited the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, which was holding a special two-hour service. The iconostasis (wall of icons) is in the shape of a chapel within the church. The Patriarch always comes here to celebrate Christmas and on other special occasions. The interior is

lovely and the service was very moving. All the women had their heads covered and there was a lot of genuflecting and crossing. The choir is always out of sight and unaccompanied.

Later we visited the metro. Moscow's was the fifth underground train system, ours being the first. Each of the forty-three stations is different and linked to a theme or place. We got off after three stops at the Kiev station, which is decorated by panels of typical Kiev pursuits, frescoes, Ukraine embroidery and national dances. It was built in 1955, twenty years after the first station. Another stop brought us to the newest, Victory Park, built in 2000. There was a huge picture illustrating the victory over Nazi Germany, with the date 1945 underneath. We then emerged from the underground up a very long and almost vertical escalator lit by globe lights, and had a few minutes in Victory Park itself. I took photos of the war memorial and the floral clock, which is only there in the summer.

Next we drove to the Novodevichy Convent by Swan Lake, behind which is a cemetery detailing the history of Russia, with statues depicting what they did when alive. No one has been buried in Red Square since Gorbachev and only very special people are buried in this graveyard. We saw the graves of Shostakovich, Stalin's wife, Nikita Khrushchev and Raisa Gorbachev. After a very early dinner we set off to the Bolshoi Theatre to see the ballet, which actually wasn't a complete ballet but scenes from several. It was fabulous. We were intrigued to find that people seemed to come to see one act only, then left, handed in their tickets and their seats were taken by someone else. Two seats in the row behind us had three separate lots of people. When we went to the back of the auditorium during the interval,



someone tried to take my ticket. We realised later they must have thought we were leaving.

The following day we set off very early for a long drive to the famous Trinity-St Sergio Monastery which was 75km away. We were told that the priests dressed in black are celibate and rise in church hierarchy. Those in white lead normal lives and have families, but are

supposed to set an example to the people. There were two factories in the town, one making the Matryoshka nesting dolls and the other electric light bulbs. Tatiana, whom Anatoley knew, came up selling dolls that she'd made herself. I bought one, and she signed her name and the date on the bottom of it. It's prettier than the usual ones in the shops.

The drive back was a nightmare, nose-to-tail traffic after a nasty accident, and we were afraid we might

miss the train to St Petersburg. I passed the time by reading the English version of the Moscow Times, which was free on a stand at the hotel. I was surprised to find it portrayed Putin in a less than favourable light, and there was a story about an editor of some newspaper being sacked because he'd criticised the government. (Plus ça change!)

Anthea Fraser, St Peter & St Paul

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 High Street Baptist Church

The weirdest day of my life revisited



Regular readers of *Comment* in possession of a good memory will recall that last summer I wrote about the day as a student teacher when I visited Rye in Sussex. In that town lived the retired theologian the Revd Dr Alec Vidler, Dean of King's College, Cambridge and author of one of our course books, 'The Church in the Age of Revolution'. Half way through his disquisition (I bet the Editor will not allow me that word) a mighty rip was heard, Dr Vidler's deckchair cloth split in two and the eminent

Cambridge theologian was wedged into his deckchair with no hope of unaided exit from his predicament. The Principal Lecturer in Theology, one Dr Lorna Kendall, encouraged two of us to remove Dr Vidler, at which point the Dean's Jack Russell bit her leg.

During our recent holiday in East Sussex, Annette and I had a look round the local parish church, St Mary's (very much worth a look, as is the nearby Mermaid Inn) and then its graveyard. On the quaint road outside was an interesting-looking house called The Stone House. It looked as old as the church. We wondered if it was an old Rectory, a pilgrims' hostel or possibly a monks' dormitory. As we speculated, who should appear but the owner, key

in hand, and we asked her the story. She revealed that the answer was unknown but that the house had been in the family for generations and she had inherited it from (yes, you guessed it) Alec Vidler. I then explained my story and she laughed and said



the family still received small royalty cheques from the sales of 'The Church in the Age of Revolution' and his other books. We were then invited in (!) for a quick tour of the house and gardens which I last saw in the summer of 1976.

It was very discombobulating (I bet the Editor will not allow me that word either) to have two such weird experiences (probably just pure coincidence) so I did what I did in 1976 and repaired to the bar of the Mermaid Inn for a nerve-calming tincture.

Jon Reynolds
Tring Team



Communion table or altar



The earliest forms of altar were wooden tables in the very early house churches and marble tops put on the tombs of martyrs from the early 2nd century. The bread and wine for a communion service were placed on the altar, the bread and wine were consecrated. Consecration is the solemn dedication to a special purpose or service, so the placing of the bread and wine with the attribution to the last supper was in effect a consecration. These early altars were also a communion table.

The very earliest churches are described in Acts: 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer' (Acts 2:42); 'They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts' (Acts 2:46). This was an early 'love feast' or Agape and the table was used for the meal as well as the communion. It would appear that the communion was part of the meal in the early church.

The catacombs in Rome contain many Christian frescos depicting this Agape. Perhaps the most famous is the Fractio Panis which shows a long table with seven people – six men and a woman. In front of them are two plates, one has five loaves of bread and the other two fish. This symbolizes the feeding of the 5000. At the end of the table the

presbyter or priest holds a small loaf and he has a cup of wine in front of him.

As churches began to be built to replace the early house churches, they also tended to have a permanent wooden altar in the choir or apse. These wooden altars continued for hundreds of years, although in Gaul, the Council of Epaon in 517 forbade the consecration of any altars in Gaul other than those made of stone. In 1076 Bishop Lanfranc decreed that the Anglo-Saxon wooden altars should become stone ones. The original stone altar was a plain slab incised with five consecration crosses, one at the centre and one at each corner symbolizing the five wounds of Christ. At the Reformation these stone altars were broken up and replaced by wooden communion tables. The Puritan reformers wanted the communion tables to be moved into the main body of the church, but Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, had altar rails constructed in churches to prevent this – they also kept away dogs who were inclined to desecrate the table! In many large churches, someone was appointed to remove dogs from the church each day.

As the altar rail separated the congregation from the altar table, people stood or knelt at the rail to receive

communion. Nowadays churches may or may not have an altar rail and they may have a communion table or an altar. At Turvey Abbey, where I am an oblate, the altar is a simple large plank of wood supported on three logs that have had their bark removed and been polished – so it is a simple wooden table that serves as an altar. The altar or communion table now takes many forms irrespective of denomination. One difference is that in Catholic, Anglican and Methodist churches the place for the communion table or altar tends to be fixed – in Baptist churches it tends to be a table that can be used for other purposes and is not normally permanently placed. Of course, there are exceptions to this in many churches.

Personally, I would like to return to an Agape meal as a form of communion – I attended these many years ago at both St Martha's and St Peter & St Paul's churches. My favourite was breakfast sitting around the table, with communion taking place in the middle of breakfast with a very simple service including the lighting of a candle in the middle of the table. I wonder if we are still doing this in any churches?

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church



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The Comment time capsule



Wait ten years and two articles about the same event come along (see Thelma Fisher's article about her visit to Oberammergau in the October edition of *Comment*). Has any *Comment* reader seen it in a

previous decade?

If you look at the historical records of the parish church of Tring, one of the things you inadvertently discover is something of social history as well as what were the main concerns, priorities, activities, dilemmas facing Christian people at that time. In the 1914-1918 editions we heard about the progress of the 'Great' war and it seems right and entirely appropriate that over the

last few years we have heard about the climate emergency, gender issues, fair trade, the invasion of Ukraine, refugees, the Grenfell disaster, the death of a monarch... What else would we want to have recorded in this magazine like those time capsules that 'Blue Peter' used to plant?

The Editor

Oberammergau – at last!



I had looked forward to seeing the Passion Play in Oberammergau ever since I first heard about it as a teenager very many years ago. It only happens

every ten years and we finally decided to book for one of the 2020 performances. As with so much else planned for that year, it was postponed and rescheduled for this year. Fortunately, our booking was maintained and we opted to travel out by train and to have a package that included two nights' B&B accommodation at a guest house in the centre of town, together with evening meals and lunches in local restaurants.

We were rewarded with a memorable few days and I am really pleased that, although it was delayed by two years (as were the 1920 performances, for a very similar reason), I have now seen the

world-famous Passion Play in the 21st century, with changes that have seen it move away from exclusively Catholic performers and a rather antisemitic emphasis, to a much more inclusive, thoughtful and contemporary production.

Its scale, on a vast stage with hundreds of performers of all ages, and with live animals – a donkey, sheep, goats, doves, horses and camels – adding to the realism, was truly impressive and the interspersing of scenes relating the gospel story, from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem up to the resurrection, with living tableaux of Old Testament scenes, each having a connection to the ongoing Passion narrative, was extremely clever.

Oberammergau was unforgettable and I would be very happy to go again in 2030. For a flavour of the experience, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woVOraMCVgs>.

Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church



Acceptance



We read much today about the need to value all, to be inclusive. Usually, this seems to be with reference to matters of race or sexuality. I'd like to suggest that those of us who have

special or additional needs also need informed understanding and acceptance; particularly when several needs are hidden and not immediately obvious.

I was 12ish when my cousin Stephen was born, the third child in an academically able family. Stephen was a beautiful child, with blue eyes and a mass of fair curls. When he was 2, I remember my mother (herself an educationalist) asking why my cousin was not reacting to planes flying overhead. As he grew older, his behaviour and development grew more atypical. Stephen could speak, but his language only echoed those around him, his 'boisterous behaviour' meant he could not attend the local primary school. In teenage years his family habitually wore crash helmets in the house to stop Stephen pulling out their hair. I was to learn what 'Profoundly Autistic' meant. And yet in the wake of destruction that followed, from Stephen emerged an extraordinary talent – from a very early age he could (and can) play any tune on any instrument, never having had music lessons. He is a savant – what an extraordinary gift to be celebrated. Sadly, my aunt could never accept that his difficulties were not somehow her fault.

Stephen's story fascinated me as I grew up and trained to be a teacher. Eventually I wrote my thesis on teaching

autistic children, having watched, fascinated, as a Special School teacher taught a class of autistic children that tables come in a range of different sizes and shapes. The children had huge difficulties generalising.

After several years of teaching in main stream, I eventually joined an inclusive school, which was to considerably broaden my understanding of children's needs and of their way of thinking. I began to understand dyslexia, dyspraxia, speech and language problems far more than I had and en route, to discover that I am also dyslexic, if mildly. That knowledge explained quite a lot – why as a school girl I could get full marks in a spelling test, but not remember how to spell any of the words a week later: why I could never take dictation (I just wrote scribbles), couldn't organise my thoughts on paper easily, and why to this day I have no sense of direction! (Satnavs are a wonderful invention!)

I was so fortunate: my teaching parents could help me to achieve, although I don't think they knew the word dyslexia. Intuitively, my mother understood that people like me need to understand the whole concept first. Chiefly I was so fortunate because my parents never let me feel a failure – although their praise had to be earned, they always looked for what I might be good at, and encouraged me. I find it so sad when I meet people who frequently say 'I'm not bright;' or 'I'm stupid, I can't do that.' It suggests to me that we need to explain more, so that people understand and don't unwittingly put others down.

Probably the people who need understanding most are the high

functioning autistic people in our midst. In a previous church I knew a young family who had the reputation of being out of control and a nuisance. It was thought that their parents were 'hopeless'. Some families even left because they didn't want their children to be with them. My experience allowed me to watch and befriend this family of three girls. As I watched, it became obvious that the middle child could not bear loud noises (hand dryers, food mixers), hated strong smells (perfume, cloves which are used in Christingles). She could not cope with change (we moved the table they used in church with awful consequences), and was obsessive about friendships and literal in her understanding. Her younger sister ran, very fast, round church constantly, only following her own agenda. The eldest girl is hugely anxious, which makes her appear withdrawn and sullen. Girls mask autism better than boys, but investigations are now ongoing for autism for the middle child, and ADHD and autism for the younger. I am so sad that people shunned the mother instead of offering help. This is only one example of several, including a most unpopular adult, who again showed behaviours reminiscent of being 'on the spectrum'. Dropping one's voice and being calm showed a very different side to this chap's personality.

I feel that we all have a huge need for education in these areas – to understand and put in place some simple steps which help so much. We all need acceptance, and we all grow in it.

Nicci Boddam-Whetham
St Peter & St Paul

WI CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

Victoria Hall
19 November 2022
10.00-12.00 noon

Raffle ★ Cakes ★ Preserves
Tombola ★ Jewellery ★ Refreshments

ALL WELCOME!

Useful contacts

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www.stmarthas-tring.org.uk
www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
www.newmillbaptist.org.uk
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Articles, photos and publicity adverts for the next edition should arrive with the Editor no later than the 1st of the previous month.

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August



Services at Tring Church

Sunday 6th November

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

Friday 11th November Armistice Day

11am Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial

Sunday 13th November Remembrance Sunday

8am Holy Communion traditional language **
10am Worship for all (short)

10.45am Remembrance Service at the War Memorial

Sunday 20th November

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

Sunday 28th November

8am Holy Communion traditional language **
10am Communion Together

** Streamed service on our website and YouTube

Mid-week Services in Tring

9.15am Tuesdays
Holy Communion

10am Thursdays
Holy Communion in traditional language

What's on in November in Tring Church

Lots more going on



Mondays 3.30pm - 5pm
Youth Café in term time
Toast, chat etc for secondary school kids

Tuesdays

10am - 12noon
Baby/toddler/carer drop-in for chat, a cuppa and toys for the little ones.



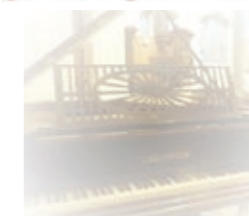
Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm
Craft and a Cuppa
Drop in for chat, cuppa and bring a craft to do if you want to

Social Coffee

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



Piano & more series



Sunday November 13th
3pm for an hour's concert of music followed by refreshments
Free but collection for church and piano expenses

Crossword puzzle answers From page 14

ACROSS

1. VERSES
5. ASCEND
8. COMMANDMENTS
9. HONEST
11. ECHO
14. WINDSOR CASTLE
15. STEW
16. INDIGO
18. PRESBYTERIAN
20. CATTLE
21. DEVILS

DOWN

2. ECONOMIST
3. SUM
4. SANCTION
5. ACME
6. CONFESSED
7. NHS
10. ENDOWMENT
12. HOLY GRAIL
13. SCRIPTED
17. ABLE
18. PEA
19. REV

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

Save the Date
Saturday 26th November
 Tring *enjoying life* Together
Christmas Festival
 Tring Town Centre & Victoria Hall, 3.30pm - 8.30pm

@tringtogether f tringtogether tring_together www.tringtogether.org.uk

TRING TEAM PARISH
Living God's Love

All Souls

Sunday 6th November
4pm Service in Tring Church
 followed by refreshments

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

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

You are also invited to add names to a list of the departed which will be in Tring Church from the beginning of October, or add them at the service.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

Baby & Toddler Drop In
 St Peter & St Paul's Church, Tring
 Every Tuesday, 10am - 12pm
 including school holidays
 Tea & coffee served

Everyone welcome!

Simply turn up, or contact Jane if you have any queries:
jane@tringteamparish.org.uk
 01442 822170

Tring Team Parish
 An inclusive church
Living God's Love
tringteamparish.org.uk

Kindly Sponsored by:

SPONSORED SLEEPOUT

**HOBBS HILL WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL,
 HEMEL HEMPTREAD
 FRIDAY 25TH NOVEMBER**

The Youth Café are sleeping out to raise money for DENS.
 Look for sponsor forms, or include 'Sleepout' when you give online at tringteamparish.org.uk or by card reader in church.

Or join them & get sponsored?

SPEAK TO HUW OR MICHELLE TO FIND OUT MORE.