

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



What's on in October in Tring Church

Services at Tring Church

Sunday 1st October

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with craft activity **
6pm Team Harvest Beer and Hymns at Long Marston Church (book on the website)

Sunday 8th October

8am Holy Communion traditional language**
10am Harvest Worship for all followed by Harvest Lunch in the Parish Hall at 12.30pm (book on the website, events page)
3pm Piano and More concert

Sunday 15th October

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with craft activity **

Sunday 22nd October

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with craft activity **

Sunday 29th October

8am Holy Communion traditional language
10am Communion with craft activity **
** Streamed service on our website and YouTube

Mid-week Services in Tring

9.15am Tuesdays

Holy Communion

10am Thursdays

Holy Communion in traditional language

Lots more going on



Mondays 3.30pm - 5pm

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

Food Bank

Monday to Friday

10am - 12noon.

Drop-off donations and collect food



Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm

Craft and a Cuppa

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

Social Coffee

Fridays, Saturdays

10am - 12 noon,

and after Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday services



Piano & more series **Sunday October 8th**



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

Free but collection for church and piano expenses

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

Finding rest for our souls



It was a glorious afternoon in August and I was on holiday, sitting on the beach in Bude, Cornwall. The sun was warming, the sand was dry and soft, the tide was on its way out and you could hear the rolling waves as steady and calming as a resting heartbeat. I reached for the book in my bag and grabbed the cold bottle of water I had packed as I looked forward to an hour of rest and relaxation: that was until I heard the excited call of my two kids: 'Dad, can you build me a sandcastle?' 'Dad, can we fly the kite?' 'Dad, can we go down to the sea?' 'Dad, I want to explore in the rock pools.' 'Dad, what's for lunch?' 'Dad, I need a wee.'

The joys of holidays as a parent are not the same joys of holidaying without children. The rest I once found sitting quietly on a beach or by a pool reading and sipping a cold drink seem a distant memory compared to the energy and activity of making memories on the beach with the kids nowadays. I'm sure some of you can relate. I wonder if, over the course of your life, the ways in which you find rest and relaxation have changed due to the circumstances and season in life you find yourself in.

The challenge comes when we find ourselves desiring rest and relaxation in certain ways but these end up being unrealistic, or worse, become an added stress.

For example, on holidays I could stubbornly sit on the beach reading my book and ignoring the kids – but then I would end up dealing with tears and tantrums as my 5-year-old and 2-year-old bickered and caused chaos without my

attention. At the end of a long day, it's easy to reach for a take-away menu or an alcoholic drink, thinking I don't have time to cook or shop and I just need to unwind – but then I would end up with indigestion and a sore head the next morning. We can be tempted to put off doing jobs that need to be done in order to watch TV or films, or read the latest novel or some other pastime – but the problem is the jobs stack up and it ends up an even bigger task.

I must admit to being guilty of doing all of the above at times in the search of rest and relaxation, but can attest to the fact they simply don't work. Sometimes what we do to find rest can cause us more stress. You see, true rest is only found in Jesus, who said 'Come to me... and I will give you rest.' (Matthew 11:28)

Rest can then become something we don't need to search for, but we receive as we come to Jesus each day. This means we trust God for our future, we're quick to turn to God with our worries, and we intentionally seek God, realising that we need his strength and provision each moment of our lives. Rest doesn't come from doing nothing, but comes from the effort of drawing close to our maker, as God draws close to us.

Don't get me wrong, making time for ourselves, engaging in our favourite hobbies, going on holidays, all have their place; but there is a depth of rest and refreshment

that can only be found by getting to know Jesus, and growing in relationship with him.

How will you find rest today, tomorrow, this week, this month? Whatever stage and season of life you're in, can I encourage you to find rest in Jesus. Take the time to pray each day and speak to him, sharing both your worries and your thanks with God. Read the Bible each day and make time to chat about it with others who also read it, and share it with your friends and family just as you would talk about any other interest. In so doing, we invite God into every aspect of our lives, we converse with him, and get to know him; and as we learn to trust him, we receive the blessing of peaceful rest in his presence, whatever the day may hold.

Psalms 62:5: 'Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.'

Many blessings,

Joe Egan

High Street Baptist Church



Please read this!

I am always delighted when someone mentions they have read something in *Comment*. It's a bonus if they like what they read, too, or feel they want to join in a conversation. It means that all those hours spent on getting your words into print have some value...

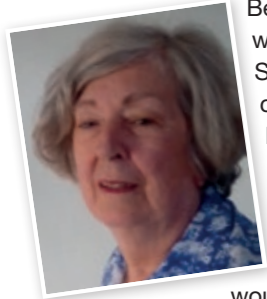
It always seems ridiculous that I am writing this at the end of August but you will read it in October. It's hard to be topical! But it reminds me that the next

edition will be for November and I will be in Frankfurt at the annual bookfair when the November magazine goes to press. I am anticipating a problem or two if *Comment* is to land on your doorstep at the right time, or at least I will be more stressed than usual just before the bookfair if I haven't done all I should to make sure Kev, our wonderful designer, has all he needs to get to press on time. If you are able to think

ahead, plan ahead, write something now that will be relevant for the November edition (think Remembrance Sunday, war, Autumn soup recipes – Advert or Christmas events to be advertised...), I will be very grateful. If, on the other hand, you have always wanted to edit a magazine or proofread it and would like to do so for just one month, please contact me!

The Editor

A jolly way to start a holiday



Before starting a walking holiday in Scotland, a then-colleague said I should read 'Touching the Void' by Joe Simpson. 'I'll lend you my copy – but I would like it back.'

I felt obliged to read the book – so I read it – returned it to my colleague and bought my own copy. When the film came out on DVD, I bought that as well.

I was so inspired by the book that some twenty years later I recommended it to John Whiteman when I joined the Tring Team Parish Sunday night Book Group. I reread the book in July this year as John had asked me to lead the discussion at the August meeting. The general consensus was that it was worth reading.

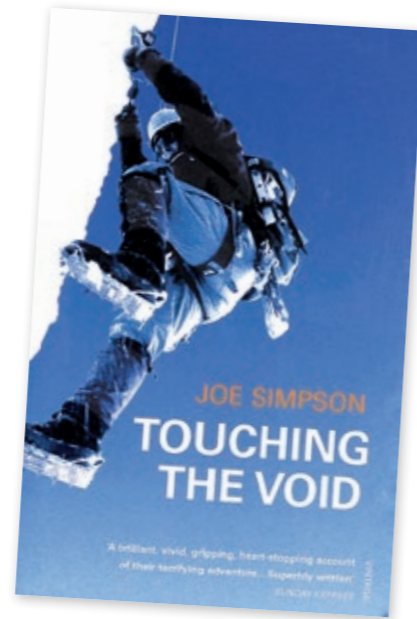
Background

Joe Simpson's father, Ian, an officer in the British Army, had postings in many different parts of the world. As a result, at the tender age of 8 years old, Joe was sent away to school. At some point he was at Ampleforth College and as a teenager, a teacher introduced him to rock climbing – he never looked back.

'Touching the Void' is set in the Peruvian Andes in 1985. Although Joe was 25 and Simon Yates, his climbing partner, 21, both were experienced climbers. The start of the book sets the scene. Their camp was twenty-eight miles of rough walking to the nearest village and surrounded by a ring of spectacular ice mountains. Unlike the Alps, there was no rescue facility. The book describes their decisions on what equipment to take and more importantly, what to leave behind. It describes their ascent of the previously unclimbed west face of the Siula Grande and Joe's accident, breaking his leg, on the descent; how Simon helped to lower him part way down and the circumstances which led Simon to cut the rope and live with the consequences. At the time, he believed Joe had died. Joe's lonely, difficult journey back to the camp is described in detail. It was an inner voice that drove him to survive – that and a large helping of grit and determination.

It is telling that 'Touching the Void' is dedicated to:

Simon Yates – for a debt I can never repay and to those friends who have gone to the mountains and have not returned.



Postscript

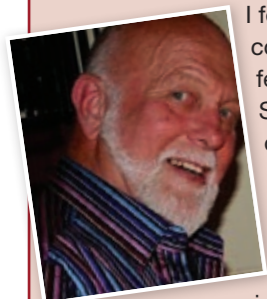
Joe underwent several operations and doctors thought he would never be able to climb again. Two years of rehabilitation later, by June 1987 Joe was in the Karakoram Himalayas, Pakistan. Joe made the decision to give up climbing when in Nepal in 2009.

Sometime after giving up climbing Joe Simpson married Corinne. He has become a successful author of several books.

Caroline Hind
St Mary's, Puttenham

PS The holiday was wet and muddy – but I didn't break a leg.

Feedback



I felt I must comment on a few articles in the September edition of 'Comment'. Firstly I would like to congratulate all who write and edit, design and

print an absolutely first-rate magazine. They deserve a medal. I have, over the past few years, sampled a number of church-related efforts and none are any way remotely similar to the standard of *Comment*. More often they are a single sheet photocopied on A4 with minimal information and that's it... So let's hear three cheers for all who contribute to the magazine of the churches in Tring.

I would also like to comment on three articles that caught my attention more than usual.

The first was 'To clap or not to

clap', reflecting my feelings exactly. In the original very first congregations, I imagine they were fairly rowdy affairs debating this new upstart religion with followers and supporters showing their appreciation of their leaders and the apostles. Why can't we show our appreciation of a long-serving individual or a good and relevant sermon, or (dare I say it, horror of horrors): ASK QUESTIONS!

The second item worthy of special mention was the one by Tom Mayhew entitled 'People struggling in Tring'. This was a very relevant, moving piece regarding the ever-present crisis, especially for older folk. We often (quite rightly) look at people struggling abroad and donate to their cause BUT at the same time often overlook what is going on by our own doorstep. Does that generous donation to the foodbank cover it? Well, it might salve a conscience here and there,

but as Tom's article shows, it hardly scratches the surface. That's the fault of the government we say, while our neighbours struggle. I am as guilty as the next man and not claiming the high ground but that article was very thought-provoking and a jog of memory to that phrase 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'.

And finally, that great article by Jon Reynolds, 'Predictable conversations: science, faith and the pursuit of truth'. I found this feature fascinating reading and very stimulating. The great shame is I could not sit down with Jon and discuss the matter at length. I am sure I would learn a great deal both of science and God, not to mention the qualities of a good malt.

They all deserve a clap.

Mac Dodge
Milestone Community Church, Orkney

Is truth-telling optional?



In a recent 'Thought for the Day' article, Graham Jones, former Bishop of Norwich wrote: 'The way we put words together, and how we marshal our knowledge and communicate it, influences both our own lives and those around us. Someone who is careless about what they say or write, and tells lies easily, soon becomes untrusted. We know that the fibber has no depth or wisdom. "You cannot rely on their word", is what we say.'

Oh, that the Bishop was correct! We want a world in which fibbers are found out, and where liars do not prosper, but it seems that telling the truth is somewhat optional in today's world. As long ago as 2016 the Oxford English Dictionary word of the year was 'post-truth'. Many of us want to hold on to what we see as objective truth, yet it seems others are less concerned by the facts but want to hold on to 'their truth' rather than what happened. Alternatively, we appear to have politicians who are happy to repeat bare-faced lies in the hope that if they repeat them enough times, they become accepted as truth. As I am writing this, Donald Trump has just been indicted for claiming that the election he lost was rigged. It might be safer to stay on the far side of the Atlantic rather than commenting on our own politicians.

Before I go any further, it might be worth noting that at best I might

claim to be a theologian; I am not an epistemologist nor a sociologist. As a theologian I am acutely aware that those with a faith will often make a truth claim which is at odds with others who make equally strong claims based on their equally strongly held beliefs. It already appears that truth is going to be more slippery than we might have wished it to be.

We therefore have to ask: is there any validity in the concept of post-truth? The validity of post-truth arguments is found in emotions and not in logic. But we should not be too quick to dismiss emotions. If we are frightened of spiders, we are frightened of them. It doesn't matter how many times someone explains there is nothing to be scared of (at least in this country), your reality is that they are scary. Truth here is shaped by our emotions and not by the facts. If we expand this slightly and imagine that we find ourselves in an online chat group such as Everything Tring, there is a good chance that in this setting we will find ourselves in a strange echo chamber where we shout into it our own perceptions and hear them bounced back even louder by those who share our views. Objectivity goes out of the window to be replaced by a cacophony of emotive self-fulfilling snapshots. This appears to be the heart of what post-truth means – it is a discourse shaped by emotional appeals rather than objective fact. Skilful politicians will quite happily appeal to our emotions if they can bypass the awkward truth, and sometimes they are actually doing the right thing by representing their electorate's feelings,

even if some of us wish they would stick to the facts and tell the truth. No fibbers, please!

It is also worth considering this idea of 'my truth' a little more. Harry Windsor seems to be the person who has most coined this phrase in his ongoing saga with his family. I suspect that we are all aware that in a bitter family dispute there are two sides to every story. However, it is also being used by Harry to claim the position of the underdog against the establishment. I find it a bit rich of him to do this considering he is the epitome of entitled, but we should be aware that for the dispossessed, truth can feel somewhat different from the truth espoused by those in positions of power. The phrase 'history is always written by the victors' is, I believe, ironically ascribed to both Winston Churchill and Hermann Goering. It reminds us that both social norms and accepted historical accounts are written by those in power. They shape our truth. The National Trust got into a lot of trouble (from some) for retelling the story of our stately homes through the lens of slavery rather than the normal narrative of wealthy English aristocrats. We are more and more aware that we have shaped our truth through a particular stream of art, literature and history. Being aware of other people's truth, especially the marginalized, is important.

I still want Graham Jones to be right. I want fibbers to be called out; but equally I am not sure I can be quite as confident as to what is truth as I used to be.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

A giant retreat!



My last Sunday in August preceded a giant retreat; or in other words, a three-month sabbatical. Sabbaticals take many different shapes and can include all sorts of things. Among other things I'll be doing some resting, drawing and studying, as well as socialising and taking the chance to worship in different buildings and denominations. A retreat

might also include any of these things. An often-repeated bit of advice is: 'If on retreat you simply need to sleep for 48 hours, then do that!'

We explored something of the pattern of one type of retreat on a Saturday in August at the Quiet Day in Puttenham. I've visited various retreat centres over the years. I remember a great art room at Loyola Hall, a beautiful chapel at Glasshampton Monastery, and a well-stocked honesty bar at Launde Abbey! We might define a retreat as time away from our normal routine with the aim of connecting with God. We don't have to

take a few days off to do this – it can be built into daily life. A mini-retreat can be anything that we find restorative: a walk, time to paint, uninterrupted space to just 'be' and be with God.

Without exception, I've always found retreats to be restorative and helpful. I highly recommend them! A good place to start is retreats.org.uk.

I look forward to catching up with you when I return from sabbatical!

Michelle Grace
Tring Team

Church choirs (or music groups)



Many churches have a choir or music group. Most churches have worship in which the congregation sings. The first record of a Christian hymn is in Matthew 26:30

'When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.' This hymn was probably a Psalm.

Singing, or chanting, in church goes back to the very earliest churches. The first century Jewish synagogue had songs led by a cantor and a male choir, and this tradition influenced the early Christian churches of Jewish origin, such as the church in Jerusalem. The Greeks had a choral tradition going back to the *lemma choros* in plays, and this tradition probably influenced the early Gentile-based churches.

Both the Jewish and Greek 'choirs' included boys. All early churches had some form of singing at their services. There are references in the early church histories of antiphonal chanting with men taking one part and women the other – but female singing slowly stopped after the 4th century when formal chants emerged that became male Gregorian chant by the 8th century. There is no record of children singing in the early church.

Gregorian chant has survived to the present day and is used in many cathedrals and monasteries, but by around AD900 a new type of singing was developed using several voice parts: this was called organum. At the start, organum was a single voice singing over the Gregorian chant but this developed into several voices with or without the chant. By the 12th century, organum was developed considerably in Paris, especially in Notre Dame by Léonin and Pérotin.

During the Renaissance sacred choral music was developed, mainly masses and motets, sung by a cappella choirs. William Byrd and Thomas Tallis were the main composers in England of this type of sacred music. Queen Elizabeth was an aficionado and Byrd was made Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. As such, he composed and also accompanied the choir on an organ.

By 1600 sacred choirs were also accompanied by other instruments

alongside the organ and complex accompanied choral music was developed – the prime example being Handel's Messiah. The size of the choir and the musicians was detailed in one newspaper

as follows: 'Yesterday there was a Rehearsal of the Coronation Anthem in Westminster-Abby, set to musick by the famous Mr Hendall: there being 40 voices, and about 160 violins, Trumpets, Hautboys, Kettle-Drums and Bass' proportionable. Norwich Gazette, 14 October 1727.

In Germany, Bach developed a similar style of church choral music and he adapted hymns to be sung with a choir and small orchestra in larger churches and cathedrals. By this stage, many smaller churches had an organ and a choir. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer in 1549 had created Morning Prayer and Evensong by amalgamating the original monastic services and both services were sung by choirs. Choral evensong is still sung in many churches and cathedrals. Boys sang in church choirs from the Middle Ages, and boys' choirs existed without adult singers. The oldest is the Thomanerchor of Leipzig: it had been in existence for 475 years when Bach became its choirmaster. In sacred choirs, the boys sang alto and soprano parts which nowadays are sung by women or girls.

Although women normally did not sing in church choirs, by 1720 Vivaldi was writing sacred music for choirs that contained girls and women. By the end of the 18th century, many Protestant church choirs contained girls and women, but the majority of Catholic churches in Britain did not use female choir members until the 20th century.

Nowadays there is a rich variety of church singing: Gregorian chant, formal eight-part choirs of males, females and children, ad hoc church choirs, music groups, congregational singing without



a choir. In addition, a lot of sacred choral music is sung by secular choirs – 'The Messiah' being a good example. Singing has been proved to be valuable for mental health and wellbeing and exercises the lungs – so in addition to offering praise, we are helping ourselves to lead healthier lives!

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

There may be many Comment readers who have belonged at one time or another to a church choir or are in one now. Please do write in with your own experiences of singing in a church choir or music group – and what you gained from it.

I was a choir member for a brief time in a small but enthusiastic church in my teens. I sat next to a robust alto, probably more than four times my age. I didn't read music but loved (and still love) to sing. I learned the alto part to some wonderful hymns over a year or two by just singing alongside her and some of these have stayed with me. It means that I suddenly fall into the alto part if we should sing one of these hymns in the Tring Team (and come a cropper if the organ should play a different note because of some more recent modification!). It can be unsettling for those around me! I also find that the songs or the music played at the beginning or ends of services stay with me through the week and find myself humming or singing phrases from the hymn or music. So don't feel unappreciated if you are in the choir or music group or play the organ, piano or an instrument: those sounds can carry us through to the next Sunday! Ed.

This is the word of the Lord



It is a great privilege to be invited to read the Epistle at the 10.00am service of Holy Communion at St Peter & St Paul but there are a few practical problems to be surmounted. I depend

on one of the helpful gentlemen on duty being able to find the wooden footstool which lifts me up an extra six inches; otherwise, the congregation is faced with the Incredible Speaking Lectern.

Check: microphone adjusted for best angle.

Check: printout, which has been prepared and marked up so as to break up St Paul's complicated sentences into shorter phrases which should come over more clearly.

I don't entirely blame St Paul for the very lengthy and complex sentences

which his letters often contain; what we have is a translation from Greek which might be much more neatly and clearly expressed in the original. Also, the Cambridge Bible Commentary, volume 1, informs us that 'instead of always writing with his own hand, Paul evidently made extensive use of his friends as secretaries, and a good deal of what we read may have been fairly freely written up by them: but his powerful thought, and what are evidently his very own phrases come irresistibly through this exciting, spirited, daring Greek.'

It would appear that the various communities to whom Paul wrote his letters placed great value on the teaching, advice and encouragement that they contained and kept the letters safely, to be frequently referred back to. So, even though one group might not have any idea how anyone else was getting on, these letters survived and were eventually collected together.

By contrast, we had a beautiful Evensong service at the beginning of February to celebrate Candlemas, the official end of the Christmas season. This festival is also known as The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The reading at this service comes out of Luke's Gospel and is a much easier piece to read. It tells the story of those two lovely, faithful oldies, Simeon and Anna, who immediately recognised that this baby was at last the Messiah for whom they had been waiting.

The reading is, however, a bit on the long side: nineteen verses. When I reached the end and said, as I had been told to, 'Here ends the lesson', the congregation responded firmly, 'Thanks be to God!'

Carole Wells
St Peter & St Paul

News from the belltower

At the end of July an impressively well-organised group of seventeen bellringers from Tring and Berkhamsted drove in companionable interest and excitement in two cars and a minibus for a long weekend of bellringing in the Lake District. They rung in twelve different belltowers including Brereton St Oswald, the belltower at our Deputy Tower Captain's old school.

Tring tower has recently been thoroughly cleaned of the dust of ages that had gathered into barely accessible corners, the children's toys evocative of the 50s, and the old yellowed lists and papers that were written long ago on

a typewriter. Another cosmetic change in the tower is a bright white board, replacing the old black one with its chalks that left marks on the backs of the unwary when they leaned against it. The joint effort of all the regulars in this tower, and the welcome visit to the Robin Hood after all the work was finished, made for a cheerful evening.

The latest piece of restoration in the tower is the improved notice board, which has been changed from dull brown to white with a handsome mulberry gloss painted sign with the yellow lettering 'Tring Belltower Society' over it, artistically bringing it forward to

the 21st century with greater appeal to modern eyes.

Hindsight is a marvellous thing: who among us has never thought 'If only I'd...' or sighed 'Why ever didn't I...?' or more poignantly, 'I really ought to have...'? My own very recent experience of the introduction to bellringing has given me pause for thought; why ever didn't I listen when a friend of many years extolled its virtues? How was I so enmeshed in the daily round and common tasks of everyday living not to try it then for myself?

But now that I have, I am very glad.
Johanna Morgan, Tring belltower

COMMENT

The magazine of the Churches in Tring

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

Aim for 400 or 800 words and please send a head and shoulders colour photo or jpg and any other photos in high resolution.

Contact comment.magazine@gmail.com



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If Einstein believed in God, then...?



When I wrote last for *Comment*, I spoke about how often people tell me how odd it is that I taught both RE and Physics – well, it happened again today. I was

waiting in a queue at Stoke Mandeville, reading a book entitled 'Einstein and Religion' and the medic asked me if it was a good read. What did I do for a living before retirement? I answered that it was interesting but not a book for bedtime or when your head is not clear. I then had a brief conversation on the topic with the audiologist, who came from South Wales, so obviously she was very intelligent.

If you read the article in the September edition of *Comment*, you will remember that the simple idea that religion had been proved wrong by 'the certain results of science' is that the results of science are provisional – they change from decade to decade. Just as our ideas about gravity have developed from the time of Newton with Einstein modifying Newton's theory, now we have discovered that Newton's ideas as modified by Einstein work well for the solar system but do not seem to work so well on the scale of galaxies.

If 'science has disproved the existence of God', why are some scientists Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc? Haven't they heard? Many scientists, including some of the very best, still believe in God. During my life I have spoken to two Nobel Prize Winners for Physics. One was a Muslim; one was a Methodist. A third, who most astronomers think should have got the Nobel Prize along with the Methodist, is a Quaker.

I very much admire Sir Arthur Eddington, the English Quaker

astronomer who 'proved' Einstein's General Theory of Relativity with an experiment during a solar eclipse. Eddington thought that the work of the New Zealand physicist Sir Ernest Rutherford on atomic structure was one of the crowning glories of 20th century science and just as great as Einstein's work. Most people, however, would go for the aforementioned Albert Einstein as the century's greatest scientist and Einstein certainly believed in God.

Einstein was born in Ulm, Germany, in 1879 into a secular Jewish family. His views were far from orthodox but are very interesting. When asked how he would define God, Einstein replied 'I'm not an atheist, and I don't think I can call myself a pantheist'. A pantheist is someone who believes that reality, the universe and the cosmos are identical to God/the Supreme Being or Entity. The physical universe is thus understood as God, rather than the creation of God as Orthodox Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc teaches. Einstein then goes on to give the following allegory:

'We are in the position of a little child entering a huge library filled with books in many languages. The child knows someone must have written these books. It does not know how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. The child dimly suspects a mysterious order in the arrangement of the books but doesn't know what it is. That, it seems to me, is the attitude of even the most intelligent human beings towards God. We see the universe marvellously arranged and obeying certain laws but only dimly understand these laws. Our limited minds grasp the mysterious force that moves the constellations.'

Writing in 1930, a Rabbi from Chicago summed up well two approaches to the universe – 'The anti-religious view of the universe looks upon the world as a clearly understood machine in which

every 'riddle' is either solved or on the way to solution. To Einstein, the universe is essentially mysterious. He confronts it with awe and reverence.'

Einstein found 'awe and wonder' not only in the universe but also in the arts, especially in music. The great scientist, author of the Special and General Theories of relativity, was also an avid music enthusiast. 'Life without playing music is inconceivable for me,' he declared. 'I live my daydreams in music.' He played the violin to a good standard and, like Sherlock Holmes (who did not play the violin well), sometimes played the violin while trying to solve a problem.

I am an admirer of Einstein, as far as my poor aged brain can understand him, but I don't agree with everything he said which I do understand. He believed in determinism in both science and religion. A determinist is one who thinks that in a situation in which a person makes a certain decision or performs a certain action, it is impossible that he or she could have made any other decision or performed any other action: they have no free will. In other words, it is never true that people could have decided or acted otherwise than they actually did. I don't believe that, and my experience suggests the opposite. In science determinism suggests all events in the universe are inevitable and none are random. Einstein thought that the then new ideas about how atoms and parts of atoms behaved in a very random way were wrong. He wrote 'I am convinced He [God] does not play dice.' At a conference in Princeton he once said on this topic. 'God is subtle, but He is not malicious.' This saying is now carved above the fireplace in the Mathematical Institute there.

Einstein was a great scientist who summed up his view by saying 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.'

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team

celebrations at St Mary's, Puttenham, and now Beer & Hymns has brought us back to All Saints Church.

Here's a question, that hymn is usually only sung at Harvest – but it speaks of seedtime, of God our maker providing for us all the time. Couldn't we sing it at other times of the year too?

Annette Reynolds, St Peter & St Paul

Postcard from Orkney



Hello again, you bronzed folk of Tring. For once in a blue moon, we have had similar weather. The surprising thing is, I didn't like it. As a seasoned sun-worshipper, I was

amazed at myself longing for the normal Orkney weather of a hot day being about 18 degrees C instead of the 20's. Am I just getting to be an old curmudgeon (an old grump). I really hope not.

We are slap bang in the middle of our tourist season both for the island and here at Whitesails. We have had three lots and now awaiting our fourth. Brilliant! When folk come to visit, it is really great. Some are newcomers and some visit regularly, but we love them all and get all the gossip from different parts of the country, plus meet up with dearly loved friends. It all adds colour to our lives. On the other hand, there is deep unrest amidst the natives, due to the enormous upsurge of cruise liners. It even made The Times newspaper on 23 August. It used to be two or three per week bringing 2,000-3,000 visitors each all efficiently handled by our coach company. Now, Orkney Council allows two to three per day bringing up to 7,000 passengers each. Whilst not every passenger gets off, there is a potential of 21,000 people visiting our little island – and that's without people visiting like our lot or those touring in camper vans. There are only 22,000 residents spread over about twenty habitable islands. Sadly, we are going to lose our glorious peace and quiet in favour of money... Rather like the



world's climate. Get out the flaming torches and pitchforks: no, not for our visitors but for our money-mad council.

Well, the polycrub is in full glory with 114 tomato plants, three courgette plants, and a batch of Cos lettuce. It is a nightmare trying to do what the books say – I am a rubbish gardener. But amazingly all are heavy with fruit. Obviously, God is smiling on my efforts as it means buckets of 'Pasata' and even more buckets of Mrs Dodge's 'Green tomato chutney' – brilliant! Before you say give some away – I tried! Nobody wants tomatoes as they have loads of their own and I cannot throw away living plants I have lovingly nurtured. 'Salad anyone?'

I have just returned from a very grueling trip south to Norfolk to my sister while poor Carrie went to The Griffin, our boat. Sadly, we have to sell her after nearly forty years. As you might imagine, clearing all our possessions and having to decide what to keep and what to dispose of is a very difficult job, especially as almost every item carries treasured memories. But it has to be done. That's life, as they say in the classics.



I have now acquired a trolley (scooter) which we have called 'Tracy': Tracy, the trolley dolly, or T.Trolley for short. Great fun. The inaugural outing was to a glass-blowing establishment in Norfolk, exhibiting all their wares on large tables in a not-so-large room. Poor sister, who ferried me to the factory to see an exhibition of glass-blowing: I think she is



still recovering. Watching a novice driver steering by little joystick between piles and piles of expensive glass... I think her eyes were closed most of the time, especially when I had to do a multi-point turn. Fortunately, I did not damage any glass, only people.

I have got T.Trolley for theatre, cinema and various exhibitions that, until now, involved a lot of walking, thus opening up a much wider world. It reminds me of a couple of lines from that old pop song 'Big John': 'If you see him coming just step aside / A lot o' men didn't and a lot o' men died'.

Well, at least until I get the hang of negotiating people who are quite unpredictable and stuck to their phone and unaware of the lethal plumber in charge of the T.Trolley.

Breaking news: Orkney Islands Council announced on 25 August they are now going to restrict the size and number of liners. They are afraid of losing votes. Me, cynical? Never.

God bless you all until next time.

**Mac Dodge
Milestone Community Church, Orkney**



Harvest home



I never feel harvest has happened if we haven't sung 'We plough the fields and scatter' which I remember from my primary school assemblies.

When Jon

and I started worshipping in this area in 1987, we made our home at All Saints, Long Marston, where there was a harvest lunch which included a delicious apple pie. Beer & Hymns was a feature of many harvest festivals where I learned that children today sing 'Cabbages and greens, broccoli and beans...'. We have attended harvest

What makes a good summer holiday?



'What was the highlight of your summer holiday last year, Zak?' asked Mel, one of Youth Concern's youth workers of a regular visitor to our Drop-in Centre.

Zak answered immediately: 'Going to the supermarket on Wednesday afternoons. It was a family outing. I loved being with everyone – and usually we bought a box of ice creams for afterwards.'

These are the sort of humbling conversations our youth workers, project workers, counsellors and volunteers have regularly. Youth Concern is what's called an open access service; we welcome all 13-25-year-olds with a connection to Aylesbury Vale, Bucks, but specialise in helping young people who face additional challenges.

In the last nine months, there has been a 156% increase in the numbers of 13-25-year-olds turning to Youth Concern for support with food poverty, money

management, strained relationships, housing, substance misuse, poor mental and sexual health, domestic and sexual abuse. Not only are the numbers of young people increasing, so is what we call the 'engagement rate', the percentage of those young people who ask for advice, help or guidance (rather than just coming for the 'fun stuff' – pool, table tennis, music studio). Engagement is up from 40% October 2022 to 80% this summer.

We wouldn't expect all our young people – on average, 102 every month – to be jetting off on holiday, but we are saddened by the increasing numbers for whom a trip to the supermarket / park / skate park / our Drop-in Centre is the highlight of their summer. This summer, Youth Concern's focus was keeping our food bank stocked, assessing referrals to our counselling service as quickly as possible, and placing insecurely housed young people through our emergency or medium-term accommodation.

Our longer-term focus is on growing our counselling offer (able to counsel fifty young people at a time with current provision, we've run at capacity for more



than seven months now) and on finding a bigger Drop-in Centre. We've outgrown our current location on Whitehill Lane, Aylesbury. In short, our priority is to be here, when young people need us most, to help Aylesbury Vale's disadvantaged 13-25-year-olds live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Hannah Asquith
High Street Baptist Church

FOTCH, fit for the future



FOTCH is now almost thirty-five years old and has achieved many of its original aims. Our support of so many development projects which have enhanced

the building of St Peter & St Paul has been a vital lifeline. Our progress towards developing the long-term significant capital sum still goes forward – increasingly likely to be needed before the century is out.

We can reflect with satisfaction on what has been achieved; we now need to ensure that we are in good shape to achieve all our aims.

The world has changed enormously since 1990 and even more so since the lockdown years. The church has changed, social attitudes have changed and Tring has grown out of all recognition as a market town. Following a strategic review, we have decided that some fairly radical action is necessary to repair the damage inflicted by the lockdown years and make FOTCH fit for the future.

Church Heritage) was born. We soon passed our membership target and our events were to prove very popular. 'We don't need to worry – we have FOTCH as our social event committee' was the way the then Rector John Payne Cook put it. Our many fundraising events from pageants to black tie dinners in the ballroom at Tring Park (with jazz and bellringers on the lawn) were a sell-out. But that was then...

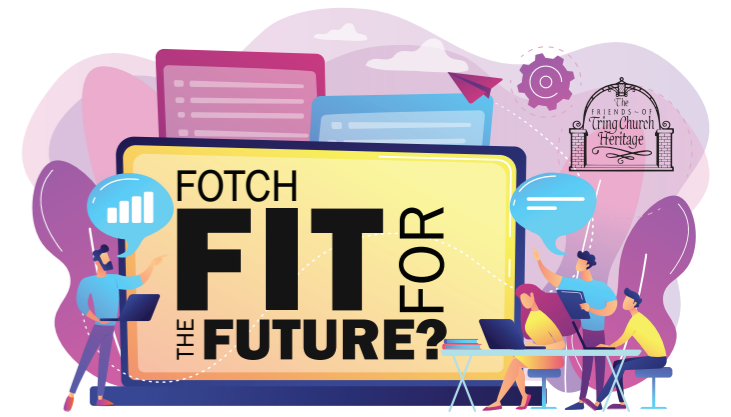
A changing world

The world has changed, Tring has changed, the church has changed and we Brits have changed... and then came Covid-19!

I have recently been reading two books which touch on the same theme. The first is called 'That Was the Church That Was' and the other is called 'Is God still an Englishman?' They both chart the massive decline in membership of our churches and the increasing secularity and diversity within our society. You might think I found the books depressing. In fact, I found them full of hope and promise. Let me offer you a quote: 'The English God appeared to be dead, but it wasn't true. He was just regenerating. This new English God wants us to work with nature, believes in fair play and good versus evil; also, in freedom of choice, mutual respect and equality... whatever we call Him, or Her, or Them.' Food for thought, reasons to be hopeful rather than fearful.

Last May we held our second Family Fun Day after lockdown and it was a great occasion: our best attendance ever, a wonderful contribution to the funds but – above all – a very happy time for every generation. It was a real family day and so many people said how happy they were to be able to come... but 'Who is FOTCH? What is FOTCH? What does FOTCH do?' were frequently asked questions. We had the answers to those questions but the overall message was clear: FOTCH is not understood as being 'The Friends of Tring Church Heritage'; nor is it seemingly perceived as relevant to the community of today.

However, the idea and concept of the



church in its green space as being the 'Heart of Tring' is attractive and believable. This applies both to those who worship there and the wider community who treasure the historic asset at the heart of their town.

The proposition that this space is the 'Green heart of Tring' and an asset for every part of the Tring community is hugely attractive. FOTCH has always been about preserving the asset for the whole community. It seems clear that we need to re-connect with all segments of our town to ensure our role is understood and valued. (Then we can confidently offer events like our postponed Auction Evening).

Who we are and what we DO

The hill we have to climb is that the majority of our community does not currently know 'who we are or what we do'. The route to the top of that hill is to re-launch 'FOTCH' (neither known nor valued by most) as an organisation that is known and valued by everyone.

We are starting to put together a plan to do just that. If you would like to be involved or make suggestions, just get in touch with either Richard Abel or myself – or any of the Trustees. We will listen and we will act. We are determined to get this right and we will do that better if we do it together. With your input we can climb that hill, achieve that relevance and get on with doing that long-term job for the heart of Tring.

Then we can truly say that after thirty-five pretty-effective years, 'The best is yet to come.' Then we really will be fit for the future. Watch this space!

Grahame Senior
FOTCH Honorary President

Please contact either Richard Abel (07283 535267) or myself (01442 822770) with all queries and suggestions.

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Glis glis



Glis glis were thought to be responsible for the recent loss of broadband in Tring for a few days and, certainly, the pictures that appeared in articles showed one in

a duct. It may have been there after the fact, as Brown Rats also damage things and have stronger teeth.

Glis glis is the only British mammal I can think of that is more commonly talked about using its scientific name rather than its English names: Edible Dormouse or Fat Dormouse. Sometimes the word European is added to the front of the English names as the Iranian Edible / Fat Dormouse (*Glis [glis] persicus*), is thought by some authorities to be a separate species and is native in Central and Western Asia.

The Edible Dormouse is native to mainland Europe from Northern Spain east through central Europe as far south as Italy, Greece and northern Turkey and into Russia and North-west Kazakhstan. It is also found naturally on Mediterranean islands, such as Crete, Sardinia, Corsica and Sicily. However, its presence in Britain is 'credited' to [Lionel] Walter Rothschild as he kept them in his private collection in Tring and in 1902 they either escaped or were introduced into the wild – accounts vary as to whether this was accidental or deliberate. Either way, they bred and established themselves in the Tring area and there are now thought to be between 10 and 23,000 in Britain occupying a roughly triangular area that includes Aylesbury, Luton and Beaconsfield.



The Edible Dormouse is so-called because they were eaten by the Romans centuries ago and apparently are still eaten in Slovenia and Croatia. It is mainly a nocturnal animal and highly arboreal and this almost certainly explains why, after more than 100 years, they aren't more widespread as continuous tracts of woodland are hard to find in the south-east. While they do favour trees, they will come down to the ground, but don't seem to like travelling far where they are more vulnerable. They prefer to move from one tree to another by running along overlapping branches or jumping gaps between branches. Their main predators are tawny owls, stoats, weasels and domestic cats, but they must be fairly hard to catch, as in the trees they can move really fast and are very acrobatic.

Soon after I moved into Tring in 1988 I became aware of Glis glis and how they go into houses and cause problems by chewing through things – in particular electrical wiring. However, at this time I knew very little about their behaviour and habits. Despite being a nuisance, they are a protected species in Britain and can

only be dealt with by licensed pest controllers.

As time passed it became clear that these animals were mainly nocturnal but are occasionally seen during the day. It also became clear to me that, while they can be a big problem if they get into your house, there are certain parts of Tring where the problem is



greatest and other parts where it seems to be non-existent. Glis glis mainly eat buds, fruits, and nuts, and beech mast. They can also be tempted to show themselves using apples as bait. To a lesser extent they also eat eggs, insects, fungi and carrion. Like our native Hazel Dormouse, they hibernate, normally from October/November to about April/May. This is dependent on temperatures as they are used to a more southerly, warmer climate so the hibernation period may change if our country continues to warm up. It is thought they have one litter of between one and thirteen young, but seven is more normal. The young are born in August and if you go into woodland that has good numbers of Beech trees, either completely deciduous woodland or deciduous mixed with conifers, then at dusk or later they can be very vocal. The best time to look for them is late August or September.

By 2003 I had heard accounts of Glis glis being seen in daylight at College Lake and in other places around Tring, but had still yet to see one myself. One of my birding friends, John Dixon, had never seen Glis glis either so, in July 2003 we went to a known site in Wendover Woods at dusk. It was a big relief to hear quite a few of what we thought were Glis

glis calling from all over the area. Seeing them, however, was quite another matter. They could move very fast, change direction in an instant and hide under layers of vegetation. We both managed to see one or two but we were a long way off having any photographs. We went back in early September and had more luck, probably because by then the less experienced youngsters were out as well: numbers were higher and they weren't as elusive as adults had been.

In 2007 a friend from St Peter & St Paul's congregation told me she thought she had Glis glis in her loft: John and I went to look to confirm her fears. Although Glis glis has the reputation for damaging houses in Tring, other rodents also cause house damage and are far more numerous and widespread in Tring. Wood Mouse and Brown Rat are common throughout Tring and a house fire near me was originally blamed on Glis glis, but when investigated, Brown Rat corpses were found in the fire. I have never heard Glis glis near my house despite being out after dark checking my moth traps and looking at Bats so they don't seem to be near me. But my friend did have Glis glis in her loft. Her house was next to Tring Park School and trees in the grounds of the school had branches overhanging and touching her roof – it was easy to see how they got in. I advised her to get the trees cut back so there was a good distance from their

branches to the roof and to get a licensed pest controller in to remove the Glis glis.

Since then, I've seen them, usually with John, on numerous occasions and in various locations and photographic techniques have been refined and photos taken. Over time we have worked out that mid-August to early October is best, usually when there is little or no wind, as finding something by movement when all the branches are moving in the wind is even more difficult. A torch with red light can be better as Glis glis aren't as sensitive or responsive to it compared to white light. A clear evening can be good as they are easier to locate by silhouette without using a torch, although they might not get active until later. If Glis glis are vocal they will soon shut up if a Tawny Owl indicates its presence by calling.

Glis glis is similar to Grey Squirrel in appearance, but smaller and has comparatively bigger, more rounded ears. The adults have tails that are darker than their bodies. They also look more mouse-like – particularly the head – and ironically their body is often greyer than



a Grey Squirrel's. Apparently, they can be kept as pets but they don't become particularly tame and are often illegally released into the wild: this might account for occasional sightings elsewhere in the country, as might mistaken-identity, of course.

I know they can be a pest at times, but it is not their fault they are here. Like Grey Squirrels and most deer, and they are one of God's creatures. Personally, I think they are attractive animals and enjoy seeing them, but I also live in a house that isn't close to a woodland or has trees near it! (The photo of the head of one peering out of the hole is mine; the others are John's and used with his permission.)

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

Tring Team Parish-ECO Group update



As you may recall, our MP was invited to join us for a discussion on climate change and the way that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) was using its influence to further sustainable projects in less developed countries. Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to arrange a mutually agreeable date and time for a meeting and so written comments have been obtained. These are summarised below:

- The UK, along with ninety other countries, has signed the Leaders Pledge for Nature. This promise commits the UK to protecting 30% of its land and sea by 2030, and safeguards biodiversity for

generations to come.

- The UK has dominated at climate summits, including COP26 and 27 and the Foreign Office continues to prioritise promoting climate action around the world.
- The FCDO has helped fund climate-conscious projects, such as the recently launched climate programme in Nigeria, which involves funding to transform Nigeria's rural economy in a sustainable way.
- The Foreign Secretary recently visited Zambia, announcing new targets for the UK-Zambia Green Growth Compact that puts climate resilience and sustainability at its heart.
- There are commitments in the UK aid strategy that include stopping climate change, promoting biodiversity, and safeguarding global health as priorities.

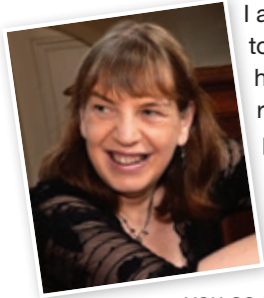
- In the coming months the FCDO will announce an International Development White Paper which will set out the long-term direction for UK International development, with the focus on tackling climate change and extreme poverty.

The Group has asked Mr Mohindra (MP) if someone in his team would be kind enough to let us know when the White Paper is published.

Readers may not be aware that there is an independent body that works to scrutinise how UK Aid is spent to ensure it is providing value for UK taxpayers and that it is being delivered to those that need it most. It is called the Independent Commission for Aid Impact and a 'Google' search will reveal a great deal of information on how taxpayers' money is spent on Aid.

Caroline Hind
Tring Team Parish-ECO Group

Piano & More plays on...



I am really pleased to say that I have had several positive responses to my plea for help with the teas at the Piano & More concerts going forward – thank

you so much to all who have said that they would be willing to lend a hand. It's not too late to email me at musalanna@annalehair.co.uk if you feel you might be able to be part of our team.

I'm also pleased to say that we have concerts booked in for the next six months! On 8 October Alison Eales, Debbie Barnes and I will be playing a programme which includes two wonderful trios for clarinet, bassoon and piano by William Hurlstone and Mikhail Glinka. Come on 12 November for another in our Young Artists series, when two young cellists from St Albans, Aidan and Alex Cham, will play solos and duets. Our usual highly popular Advent family concert will be on 10 December and then 14 January sees the highly anticipated return of Robert Salter, violin, and Kathron Sturrock, piano. On 11 February,

Alice Bishop, soprano, and David Elwin, piano, return and on 10 March we will see Alison Eales and Debbie Barnes join me in a concert of trios and duos for clarinet, bassoon and piano.

We have an eclectic mix of concerts coming up! All are free, with retiring donations welcomed, and are followed by tea and cake. We hope to see many of you at at least some of these events! More details will be available in advance of each concert on the pew sheet, in *Comment* and on the Tring Team and Piano & More websites. Thank you for your support.

Anna Le Hair
St Peter & St Paul

Piano & more series *An hour of music on Sunday afternoons*

Glinka Trio

Alison Eales Clarinet
Debbie Barnes Bassoon
Anna Le Hair Piano

Trios by Glinka and Hurlstone

Sunday 8th October
at 3pm

followed by tea and refreshments

Tring Parish Church HP23 5AE

Free admission; donations welcomed

For further details see:

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



Tring Park News



Tring Park School for the Performing Arts is celebrating following the announcement of this year's 'A' level exam results. Nearly 60% of students achieved A* to B grades, and 82% A* to C, which is above the national average of 53% and 76% respectively.

Dr Sarah Coren, Head of Sixth Form, said: 'We are so proud of our Sixth Form students and the commitment they have demonstrated to achieve such strong grades in their 'A' levels. Our students have not only excelled academically but, as their studies include significant vocational commitments which demand their time, energy, and creativity, we are particularly proud of their achievements across the board.'

Outgoing Principal, Stefan Anderson, thanked the school staff

team, describing them as 'outstanding' in their 'support and nurturing of young people'. He added: 'These results are a testament to their tireless dedication'.

The students have confirmed offers of places from top universities including Bath, Cardiff, Royal Holloway, Warwick, Leeds and the University of Miami as well as going on to performing arts establishments or directly into the industry.

The school recently announced the retirement of its long-standing principal, Stefan Anderson, following a 21-year career at the school. New principal Simon Larter-Evans stepped into the role in September.

Simon Larter-Evans said: 'It is a real



Sixth Formers with Stefan Anderson, outgoing Principal on his 21st and last 'A' level results day, with Miss Elizabeth Odell Director of Studies and Dr Sarah Coren, Head of Sixth Form

centre of excellence for young people and this year's results make me even more excited to be joining as principal at the beginning of the autumn term.'

It is also worth noting that this is the cohort who had their GCSE exams cancelled by Covid-19 and thus their educational experiences, and indeed life experiences, have been quite challenging and different from those who came before them.

Sarah Bell, Tring Park School

Honouring the past but looking to the future



Have you ever stopped to look at the door into St Peter & St Paul's Church?

It is stunning. I sometimes worry that it is overbearing and dark and that

we should have a glass door (like High Street Baptist Church) to be much more welcoming – but equally there is something imposing about the big oak doors and the triple pillars outside. However, it is only recently that it has dawned on me that what I am looking at is not in the least original. St Peter & St Paul's underwent some major restorations in the late 19th century. The 14th century porch was restored in 1880 (look at the outside and you will see the flint is very different from elsewhere on the church) and the door was replaced at the same time. Look again at the door, but this time from inside the church. Now you can see the original moulded rear arch of the south door. The stunning door to the church is not medieval, it is a Victorian pastiche.



Those who visited castles and ruins on their summer holidays will be familiar with the dilemma faced by the custodians of our history. Do you rebuild to make it look like it used to look? Do you leave it as a ruin? Or do you add distinctively modern structures onto an ancient building?



The Victorians weren't always that sympathetic to the history of the building. The oldest part of the existing church is a 13th century lancet window. It is, of course, half blocked now by the clergy vestry built across the window. Originally the north aisle would have had a great 15th century east window but the servers' vestry built in 1874 to accommodate the new organ makes this redundant. Little is recorded as to how popular this change was to the church community. However, we do know that a generation earlier they were highly resistant to having an organ at all. In 1827 an organ was installed in this musicians' gallery. According to 'The Short Guide to Tring Church' (printed in 1968), the 1827 installation of an organ in the musicians' gallery 'caused a mutiny among the singers which was resolved by the Incumbent refusing to preach if there was no singing!' I fear there would be rejoicing if I refused to preach! Ironically today there are members of the Diocesan Advisory Committee who believe that the organ is now sacrosanct and must be preserved at all costs, even though those costs are astronomically high.

Do I still like the door? I am not sure. I do wonder, however, if it is symbolic of something which is a common problem faced by churches. We are privileged to be the custodians of incredible medieval buildings but all of the history and culture which is wrapped up in these places can draw us backwards. We have a tendency to look back to a heyday of church life. We remember times when churches were filled, or we go even further back and we marvel at the massive church building programmes undertaken by the Normans. However, our faith is an incarnational faith. It might well be rooted in the life of Christ at a particular moment in history, and as such historical, but the significance of that moment in history was God revealing God's self through the culture of the day.

God is never to be frozen in the past.

We should never be tempted to re-create old-fashioned images of God or trap God in previous limited understandings of God's self-revelation. A God who lived as one of us, continues to live as one of us in the 21st century. We need to be aware of how God spoke to God's people through time, but more importantly, we need to listen to how God speaks to us now, in our culture.

I love trying to read the faith of past generations through the building we have inherited and hope, too, that St Peter & St Paul's might reflect the spirituality of the whole people of Tring moving forwards as well. It should be like our faith: a living building, ever adapting and changing, honouring the past but looking to the future.

Huw Bellis,
Tring Team



Loving earth bitesize



Tring's Loving Earth Project celebrates people, places, creatures and other things that we love but whose future is threatened by climate breakdown or pollution. This is one of the locally made Loving Earth Project textile panels accompanied by the maker's reflection. To find out more about Tring's Loving

Earth Project and see all the panels made locally, visit <https://tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/loving-earth-project>. *Comment* will be showcasing one of these wonderful and very creative panels each month for the next year or more.
Polly Eaton
High Street Baptist Church



For the sake of all our trees

*We need to heed the warning
And stop this global warming
In ways that will do our earth less harm
We must make resolutions
To stop all the pollutions
And save our world from getting
far too warm.*

*We must heed wise instruction
And clean up bad production,
Right now while we still have
some hopeful chances
The answer then, of course, is
To re-work our resources
Lest irreparable damage then
advances.*

*If not we'll lose our greenery
The beauty of our scenery
And everything will be dried up
and scorched
All withered brown and faded
All shrivelled up and jaded*

*Like tinder waiting to be torched.
If the grassland gets too dry
And a spark would happen by
There's acres have gone up in
wildfire flames*



*We'll lose flora and fauna
To this earth-wrecking trauma*

*It's time now to stop playing
stupid games.
So let's lower the degrees
For the sake of all our trees
Before what is now bad become
the worst
Their loss would be so massive
We cannot stay passive
Please do not let our trees all die
of thirst.*

*It is our human duty
To try to save earth's beauty
Before it could be lost to us for ever
So let us not be dense
Let us use some common sense
We've got to put it right, right now
or never.*

Jo Turney

Churches 'count on nature' results



As you will have read in previous issues of *Comment*, we had a week of surveying the wildlife in our five Team Parish churchyards in early June. This was not a 'field study' by scientists, but observation by those of us who are ordinary mortals. We recorded the things that we recognised, or those we found surprising, or about those we were intrigued to find out more. It didn't matter how many of each species we saw – we just had to record that we'd seen it.

Surveys like this have been going on in burial grounds for about twenty-five years, under the banner of 'Caring for God's Acre'. It has long been recognised that such places have often been left to nature for hundreds of years without too much intervention such as ploughing or fertilising. The soil and trees have had a long time to mature and there is often a wide variety of plants, fungi, lichens and other wildlife to be found living happily alongside each other. Consequently, these places are very important and valuable habitats across the whole of the UK.

We had (mostly) glorious weather during that week, which was also linked with Tring's Great Big Green Week, so we kicked off with an open session in the churchyard of St Peter & St Paul, Tring, with some experienced nature-watchers to help us identify the plants and wildlife we saw. Otherwise, observers were using their existing knowledge and various smartphone apps that could extend their understanding of their findings.

One particular app we used was iNaturalist. There was another app recommended for families, called Seek. It is simpler to use, more immediate in recognition, and gives common names only. The major benefit of using iNaturalist was that any photographs we took could be verified by experts in the iNaturalist membership. The item would be given its correct classification name and subsequently included on a national database of species – the National Biodiversity Network.

We had asked all those who were taking part to fill in a record form of plants and wildlife seen – and to tell us whether



they had forwarded photographs via the iNaturalist app. We were very pleased that twenty-seven people (children and adults) did this who, between them, made 365 records. As you can imagine, this has taken a while to collate and sort. With help from others in the Eco Church team, I compiled a spreadsheet which has allowed us to assess and group the data. Some observers took photographs which they recorded via the iNaturalist app on the day.

You might be interested to know that we have recorded the following information to share with the Caring for God's Acre charity, so that they can display it on their 'Beautiful Burial Ground' map.

Total of different species recorded across all five churches	244
Total of different species recorded in Aldbury	67
Total of different species recorded in Long Marston	43
Total of different species recorded in Puttenham	65
Total of different species recorded in Tring	36
Total of different species recorded in Wilstone	33

Thank you so much to all the people who took part in any way – whether recording, assisting or allowing areas to grow for wildlife.

Next year's event will be during the week 8 – 16 June 2024. Please put it in your diary, so that we can keep an ongoing record of biodiversity in our churchyards, and make it available for the national database. Of course, you can observe and record at any time. Perhaps you will be one of the experts of the future!

Anne Nobbs
Eco Church Group



TRING CHARITIES
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From time to time, one and two-bedroom bungalows become available to let, for people who currently live in Aldbury, Long Marston, Marsworth, Pitstone, Puttenham, Tring, Wigginton or Wilstone. Applicants, one of whom must be aged 55 or over, must not own their own home or have significant savings. Applicants will be asked to supply personal financial information to prove their beneficial status. The average weekly maintenance contribution (equivalent to "rent" for housing benefit purposes) is £107 for a one bedroom property and £126 for a two bedroom property.

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'I am the Light of the World'



In a way this is an obvious title for Jesus. The contrast between light and darkness as reflecting the contrast between good and evil is a familiar one. For

some readers this title will suggest the famous painting 'The Light of the World' by William Holman Hunt, of which the most famous version is in Keble College, Oxford. The text which inspired it is Revelation 3:20: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock'. This was a very influential picture in its time. Part of its significance is that the door in the painting has no handle and so has to be opened from the inside. Although it was inspired by that text from Revelation, the title of the picture links it to John 8:12, where Jesus declares himself to be the Light of the World.

There are many biblical contrasts between light and dark, going back to the beginning of the Bible where, in Genesis 1, the Creation story begins with the creation of light and its separation from darkness on the first day. In terms of the context of John 8, this proclamation 'I am the Light' is set in the midst of controversies with the Pharisees and we are given a time setting in that we are told (John 7:2) that the Jewish Festival of Booths (or Tabernacles) was approaching.

It has been suggested that, as

Christ being presented as the living water reflects the ceremonial use of water at the Feast of Tabernacles, so the idea of him as light may also refer to the ceremony of lighting of four golden candlesticks at that feast. There is an interesting description in the rabbinic writings about this. All four golden candlesticks had four golden bowls which were reached by ladders. 'Floating in these bowls were wicks made from the drawers and girdles of the priests; and when they were lit, it is said all Jerusalem reflected the light that burned in that part of the Temple!' This part of the Temple was the Court of Women where Jesus proclaims he is the light, not only of Jerusalem, but of the whole world. Jesus has spoken of life-giving water, and also of bread that is life-giving; now he speaks of life-giving light.

The Prologue of the Gospel of John had told us that all things come into being through the Word in whom was life and that life was the light of the world. Now in his ministry and teaching Jesus proclaims that he is the light of the world. In Psalm 27 we read 'the Lord is my light and my salvation' and in Isaiah 42:6 'the Lord has given his servant to be a light to the nations'. This is a phrase used by Luke when he tells of the infant Jesus being presented in the Temple and of Simeon's words in the Nunc Dimittis, the canticle familiar to many from the service of Evensong - 'a light to lighten the Gentiles'. Now Jesus claims this title for himself. He has,

in the Sermon on the Mount, told his hearers that they are to be the light of the world. Perhaps we need to remind ourselves that the light of the world is the light of the cosmos, that is, of all creation. But, in chapter 8, the emphasis is rather on the debate with the Pharisees as to how Jesus can 'testify on his own behalf'. Their objection is that he is making claims about himself without anyone to back him up. His answer is that the Father testifies on his behalf. Indeed, the whole chapter is part of the ongoing discussion between Jesus and his opponents about his relationship to God the Father. Significantly for these articles about the 'I am' sayings, this chapter ends with the words of Our Lord 'before Abraham was, I am'. This leads the opposition to try to stone him.

The following chapter tells of the healing of a man blind from birth. This miracle was to reveal God's works and includes the assertion of Jesus 'As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world'. This rather grand proclamation is followed by the healing of the blind man by making mud with saliva and spreading it on his eyes - a somewhat bizarre thing to do (we might think)!

All this leads on to a debate between Jesus and the Pharisees as to who he is. It ends with our being told that he came into the world for judgment 'so that those who do not see may see'. The next chapter brings us to the next 'I am' saying, namely that Jesus is the gate. **Martin Banister, St Albans Cathedral**

TRING CHARITIES (Registered Charity No 1077157)

MILLENNIUM EDUCATION FOUNDATION

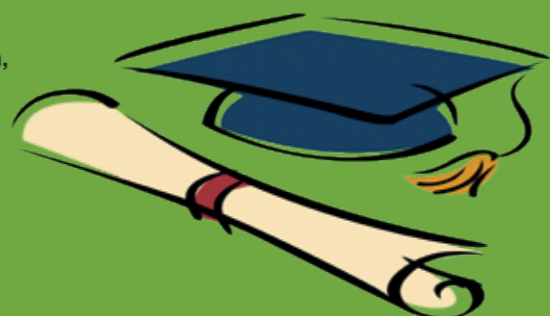
Are you hoping to go to University or College in 2023, but are concerned that financial resources might not match up to the requirements?

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

Website details: www.tringcharities.co.uk/education

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

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What is a family?



Our rather unusual summer was filled with small children. Those we have fostered over the past few years have become our extended family and we have been privileged to

be involved in their continuing growth and progress. We also had a little girl for a holiday (social workers call it respite but...) while her carers went abroad for their daughter's wedding. A fun, wasp-filled zoo, a few National Trust and English Heritage gardens, College Lake, Dunstable Downs, Tring Memorial Gardens with baby moorhens (thank you, Elizabeth Stephenson), swings and parks, her first visit to church – all made for an active week or so.

Our eldest son, whom we adopted thirty-five years ago, has recently been asking questions about his own early years; it made me wonder what these small children will make of their unusual beginnings when they are older. Some of the families (many probably) have siblings who have been adopted into different families. They may have siblings in the family into which they have been adopted but also siblings or half siblings who have been adopted into other families. Some may even have siblings who stay with their birth parents while they have

been adopted elsewhere. Once they would never have known about these other siblings until later in life when they went looking; now families who adopt are encouraged (but not forced) to make a relationship with the other families so they always know that they are there and enjoy contact with them in the same way that our children would have met up with their cousins a few times a year.

The mother of the twins we fostered told me that when she comforts her 3-year-old because she is distressed or poorly, and strokes her head or sings lullabies, that little girl says 'Netty...' (that's what they call me...) because somewhere there is rooted the memory of those pre-term months and the following eight months and the way I cared for them. I almost wept. Those lullabies and caresses were built on the memories of my own mother's care with a few of my own thrown in too. I used to sing a verse of 'Away in a Manger' as a lullaby or prayer before bed with slightly amended words and one of my adult sons tells me that he still feels soothed by the words when the more orthodox version is sung in church. Ours was: 'Be near me, Lord Jesus / I ask thee to stay / close by me for ever / and love me, I pray. / Bless all the dear children / specially Tom, James, Jo and Ben / and fit us for heaven to live with thee then./ The twins now call it the 'Jesus song'.

Of course, these blended families

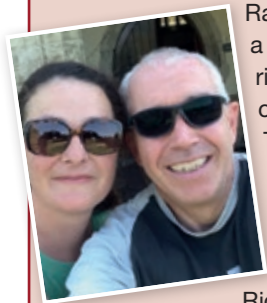
are not the only kind. There are other families who are brought together with step mums and dads and have their own stories to tell. My sister had three children when she married her second husband who also had three children – and then they had another child. In some families Nanny or Grandpa comes to live with them as the children grow up; or they make their home available to refugees who share their lives.

Are we all the richer for it? I think so. We learn so much as human beings by being open to others. Our hearts become bigger to accommodate everyone who needs our love. Our churches can be, should be, ARE, I hope, places just like that: one family of members who are all unique, different, lovely, awkward, sometimes difficult or grumpy (and that's just the rector), extrovert, introvert, all sorts – but all part of God's family, ready to welcome anyone who comes to us. Some we know better than others; some we see more than others; some we have more in common with than others; but there is room for everyone.

Finally, I asked the 8-year-old big sister of the adopted twins what was the best part of her recent action-packed holiday at Butlins, where they had gone with their cousin, aunt and uncle and grandparents. 'Spending time with all my family,' she answered.

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul

A very hot day for a cycle ride!



Rachel and I had a very, very hot ride around nine churches in the Tring area on Saturday 9 September as part of the Historic Churches Bike

Ride. Yes, it was the day when we had an unseasonal and humid 30+ degrees and brilliant blue skies.

A few highlights were: visiting St Martha's Methodist Church in Tring which was a new one for us and a delightful place. They have a fabulous patchwork quilt display on the back wall contributed to by over 200 people.

There was fantastic hospitality as usual at New Mill Baptist Church. Our

timing was impeccable as a freshly baked olive and feta cheese flan was served up with homemade meringue Bakewell slice for afters. That certainly replaced whatever calories we burnt up to that point cycling from Aldbury.

We had freshly baked lemon drizzle cake at All Saints, Long Marston, with a lovely chat to catch up on local news.

We were the first to visit St Cross, Wilstone, and read about today's local historic figure in their display copy (a chap who'd told mariners about navigating with a pin dangled over a magnet).

We sought whatever shady lanes we could find in our attempt to keep a bit cooler and Watery Lane down to Wilstone was great for that.

The only slight disappointment was that Marsworth Church wasn't open this

year – and Rachel picked up a puncture as we left Drayton Beauchamp, but we were able to deal with that without any fuss.

Ian Munroe
St John the Baptist, Aldbury



Francis of Assisi, 4 October



I really don't like the bunny – the one that sits at the feet of popular garden statues of St Francis, while small birds chirrup around his shoulders. This rather Disney-like

image of Francis of Assisi does not do justice to one of our most popular saints and, of the medieval saints, is the one we know most about.

'The deeds you do may be the only sermon some people will hear today.'

Francis (originally Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone) was born in Umbria, Italy, in 1182. His father was a wealthy cloth-merchant; his mother is said to have come from Provence in France. Francis embarked on life as a knight, but became dissatisfied with his existence of material comfort. One day when he was about 24, he was praying in the church of San Damiano, just outside Assisi, when he had a vision in which Christ spoke to him from the cross before which he was praying, saying, 'Repair my failing church which is falling into ruins'.

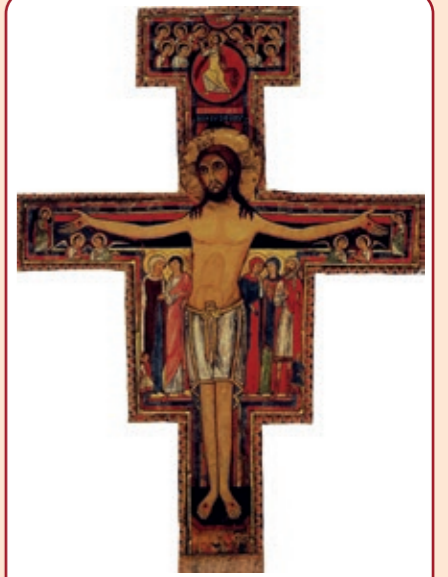
'Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.'

Francis took this literally and took cloth from his father's store to pay for the repairs to the church. There was a public falling-out in which Francis was disinherited and, recognising that he was being called to a life of poverty and preaching, Francis also renounced his family fortune. He went on to found the Order of Friars Minor (better known as Franciscans) and inspired a young woman to follow him in establishing a religious order for women (the Poor Clares).

It was Francis who first conceived that the mystery of the Incarnation could be impressed on people by its dramatic recreation in a cave with a real baby and live animals. Prior to his death, Francis received stigmata – the five wounds of Christ's crucifixion – on his hands, feet and side.

Francis – friar, deacon and founder of the Friars Minor, died on 3 October 1226.

Back to the bunny... the real reason I dislike the conventional, over-romantic image of Francis is that it misses much of his true holiness. Francis' view of animals was theological, rather than

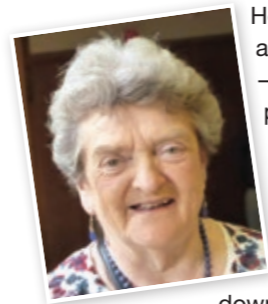


The San Damiano Cross is a large Romanesque rood cross which now hangs in the Basilica of St Clare in Assisi (there is a copy in the restored church of San Damiano). The artist is unknown. The image is of special importance to Franciscans who see it as the symbol of their mission to commit their lives and resources to renew and rebuild the church.

sentimental. His was a compassion grounded in the belief that the world is a God-ordered system in which each creature, whether cute and cuddly or not, has value in the eyes of the Creator.

Linzi James
St Peter & St Paul

Poem of the month



Here is an astonishing poem – a sonnet about prayer. It is one extended sentence, echoing the idea that prayer is unfinished and cannot be pinned

down. There is no verb, just, apparently, a list, with no connecting words, of images which define prayer. There are complex layers in it, covering the communal and the individual meeting places between the believer and God, and the two-way nature (sometimes transposed) of prayer. The imagery is both mystical ('angels' age', 'soul's blood', 'God's breath') and sensual ('softness', 'bliss', 'bird of Paradise', 'land of spices') and involves all the senses – sound, sight, taste, smell and touch. All the ideas seem to tumble out in a kind of joyful music, coming to rest in the

concluding calm of the last two words.

George Herbert was born in Montgomery in 1593 to an aristocratic family. His father died when he was 3 and his mother devoted herself to the education of her ten children. A move to Oxford brought the family into contact with John Donne, and a later move to Charing Cross allowed George to mix with all the literary and court circles of the day. He attended Westminster School and Cambridge where he excelled in Latin and Greek and became proficient in the music of the lute and viol. In 1626 he was ordained deacon; in 1629 he married and a year later accepted the living of Bemerton, near Salisbury. The language of his poetry is inventive, clear

Prayer

*Prayer the Church's banquet, Angels' age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;
Engine against th'Amighty, sinners' tower,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days-world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
Softness and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted Manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
Church bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices; something understood.*

George Herbert, 1593-1633

and strongly based on the Bible. He was frequently short of money and plagued by ill-health (probably tuberculosis). He died in 1633, aged 40, and the following year saw the first publication of some of his poetry.

Kate Banister
St Julian's, St Albans

Another St Cross



On a warm, sunny(!) day in early August, I had the chance to visit the city of Winchester, somewhere I had been before and to which I had always wanted to return. For anyone

interested in history, Winchester is just about as good as it gets. It is an ancient settlement. The first recorded church on the site of the present cathedral was built in c650 by King Cenwalh. Twenty-five years later, Winchester became a bishopric. In c828 the city became the capital of England.

On a previous visit, with a group of fellow retirees from M&S, whilst they had headed for the shops, I had gone straight to the cathedral. Begun in 1079, consecrated in 1093, like many places of worship it suffered very badly under Henry V111's Dissolution of the Monasteries and again during the English Civil War between 1642-8. But it was fully restored, often using broken masonry and stained glass which had been left behind after the destruction by parliamentary troops.

After spending time in the cathedral, I had walked along Winchester High Street to the far end where the River Itchen flows under the road. On one side there is a fully working water mill, built to utilise the fast-flowing water. On the other side is a small park, with the river as a boundary, and with a wide path running alongside.

At the entrance to the park is a signpost 'To St Cross via the water meadows': another St Cross, not Holy Cross, but St Cross. Frustratingly, I didn't have time to investigate, but determined to return at the first opportunity. Hence my visit in August, and this time the cathedral had to wait.

The path to St Cross follows the River Itchen, a clear, fast-flowing, but quite shallow waterway. Initially running through the city park, the path then narrows as it crosses a small lane lined with old buildings and the remains of Wolvesley Castle, the original home of the first bishops of Winchester. Wolvesley was never built as a castle but became increasingly fortified when Henri de Blois, appointed bishop in 1129 and half-brother to the king, changed his allegiance and chose to support the

Empress Maud for the right to rule England. Having picked the 'wrong' side, he needed a very secure residence. The current bishop lives in a much more modest house nearby, mercifully without the need for fortification.

After the castle, the path heads out of the city, alongside the river, through the most beautiful water meadows. In August they were lush and green, full of flowers and the scent of meadowsweet.

There was neither sight nor sound of the city, although it was less than five minutes walk away. The signpost had not said how far it was to St Cross, and with so many trees around it was not possible to see far ahead, so I just kept walking. After about twenty minutes, the path opened up to cross a small field, bounded on one side by a high stone wall. On the other side of the wall was a church: found it!

But St Cross in Winchester is not just a church, it is a hospital, in the original medieval sense of the word. Started in 1132 by the aforementioned Henri de Blois, it is Britain's oldest continuously running charitable institution and arguably the most beautiful group of medieval buildings still in daily use. It was built in the style of a small monastery, with the main buildings situated around an inner



quadrangle. Access is through a gate in the boundary wall, taking visitors to the outer quadrangle, passing the Hundred Men's Hall. This was the place where



every day the hospital provided food for 100 'poor men', and once they had eaten, allowed them to take any remaining food home to their families.

Beyond the hall is the entrance to the inner quadrangle, bounded on three sides by the almshouses and associated offices and on the fourth side by the church of St Cross. The current almshouses date from the 1450s and are occupied by twenty-five 'elderly' gentlemen, just as they have been since the original homes were built in 1138.

Although the residents are known as brothers, the hospital escaped Henry VIII's dissolution because it is a lay foundation, not an ecclesiastical one. The charity was, and still is, run by a master, not an abbot. The Master's House is within the medieval buildings and is

joined to the church by an ambulatory, a covered walkway, beyond which is a garden. Apart from being very lovely, the garden contains a 'stew' pond for keeping fish, originally part of the food provided for the brothers and the 'poor men'. The main source of support for the hospital came from the tithes of fifteen parishes, situated in both Hampshire and Sussex, and various annual (probably obligatory) 'donations'.

The church is the oldest building to survive from the foundation of the hospital. Started in 1158, and added to in the following centuries, it is cruciform in design. Originally dedicated to La Sainte Croix, or Sancta Crux, it was very soon anglicised to St Cross. The church has been in continuous use since the 12th century and the brothers still gather every morning to say Matins. Since 1507 the building has also functioned as the church of the parish of St Faith on the edge of the city, and there are three services on a Sunday, to which everyone is welcome. On a prayer board in the

side chapel is a lovely poem, reproduced below, with comforting words for those grieving.

Whilst welcoming visitors and offering hospitality in the café, appropriately situated in the Hundred Men's Hall, the Hospital of St Cross continues as its founder intended, caring for people and providing them with a home. It is still possible to claim the Wayfarer's Dole from the Porters' Lodge, a cup of beer and a small piece of bread.

The complex is wonderful to look at but it is also very serene and peaceful, balm for the soul. I am so glad I found it.

Alison Cockerill
St Cross, Wiltstone

Where do they go to?

Where do they go to, the people who leave?
Are they around us, in the cool evening breeze?
Do they still hear us, and watch us each day?
I'd like you to think of them with us that way.

Where do they go to, when no longer here?
I think that they stay with us, calming our fear,
Loving us always, holding our hand
Walking beside us, on grass or on sand.

Where do they go to, well, it's my belief
They watch us and help us to cope with our grief
They comfort and stay with us, through each of our days
Guiding us always through life's mortal maze.

Bunkmate responsibilities



Volunteer reflections from Summer Camp 2023

Holy Land 'complications' can seem very distant until carried in the heart of your 8-year-old camper who refuses to speak to her bunkmate because of her racial and religious background.

How could a group of American volunteers, with little exposure to the racial, religious, and social tensions of our Musalaha partners, have grounds to catalyse change?

As 'outsiders', we were learning how information alone cannot create change, but relationships can – time spent walking to breakfast talking about anime, attempting to complete a room full of French braids before pool time, or making up

bedtime stories about Oreos. Connection leads to understanding and understanding can build bridges in the most distant places. Sometimes it begins simply with joining bunkmate forces to win the cleanest room contest (which both our rooms happened to achieve)!
Sarah & Tim
(NB Google knows all about anime, French braids and Oreos!)

Musalaha's Children's Summer Camp was an incredible week. Children from Bethlehem safely entered Israel in spite of the Israeli Civil Administration ban on permits for children engaged in peace activities and we had a record attendance of Israeli children at the camp, with many saying they can't wait for next year. Pray that the relationships



formed during this week will stimulate mutual dignity and respect as each child returns to their home and family context. Pray the children will soon recognize the significance of their week spent together in a time of intensified violence and fragmentation across all communities and borders.

Colin Briant
High Street Baptist Church

Say NO to harmful pesticides!



Since being awarded Bee Friendly Town status in 2022, Tring's Justice & Peace Group have continued to strive to create more and better habitats for pollinators and wildlife in our local area. This includes ongoing efforts to improve the cutting regimes of our roadside verges. Adjusted cutting regimes can mean longer periods between cutting to offer lengthier periods for plants to flower. The group is in an ongoing dialogue with the council to suggest suitable sites which benefit wildlife without obscuring sight lines for motorists. Another aspect of improved verge management is to remove cuttings, so the soil is not enriched (which is better for wildflowers). If left, grass cuttings can create a 'thatch' of dead material which suppresses the germination of seeds and blocks low plants from sunlight. We also want to update you with our current campaign to stop the use of harmful pesticides.

What are pesticides?

Pesticides are designed to kill living things such as insects and plants considered to be weeds. They may be applied as sprays, seed-coatings or soil treatments. They can be synthetic or natural substances. Their application may be targeted or systemic (taken up by plants and spread to all parts – including pollen and nectar). They can be broad spectrum (toxic over a wide range of organisms), or selective (used

against a specific target). They can remain toxic for days or several years.

What's the problem?

Pesticides aren't just used in agriculture. A wide range of different pesticides (including insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and rodenticides) are used in our towns and cities. In fact, other than residues in food, the most usual way for the majority of people in the UK to be exposed to pesticides is through spending time in urban, public areas. Local councils are one of the main users: spraying pesticides in parks, playgrounds and other green spaces. Glyphosate is the pesticide most widely used by local authorities in the UK. This chemical has been linked to serious human health problems, including cancers and birth defects.

Harm to humans

Pesticides harm non-target species, including humans. Children are particularly vulnerable to the negative health impacts associated with pesticides as they are more likely to play in areas that have been treated, such as parks and schools.

Harm to insects and loss of biodiversity

Insects are killed when exposed to a lethal dose of insecticides. Non-lethal, lower-level exposure will still have detrimental effects, e.g. neonicotinoids at sub-lethal exposure have negatively affected the ability of bumblebees to navigate, forage efficiently, reproduce successfully and overcome other stresses (like food shortages or pathogens).

Due to habitat loss and the large quantities of pesticides used in UK agriculture, wildlife such as bees, birds and hedgehogs are increasingly seeking refuge in our towns and cities. However, the overuse of pesticides is destroying many of the areas where they forage for food and



contaminating the natural resources they depend upon.

You might ask, is there an alternative to pesticides? The resounding answer is 'yes'! Over forty towns/councils/counties in the UK have already committed to going pesticide-free. These councils have all adopted non-chemical alternatives, ranging from high-tech solutions such as hot foam machines to traditional methods including hand weeding and mulching. You can read more about it here: <https://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free-towns-success-stories>.

What can I do?

We are inviting you to protect nature by stopping the use of harmful pesticides (e.g. RoundUp) in your own garden and getting involved in our campaign. We are aiming to collect as many signatures as possible on our creative hexagon petitions and present them to our local councillors and MP. Collect a petition to share in your workplace or school or with friends and return them to us filled up! Petitions will be available at our stall at the Apple Day on Saturday 1 October (from 10.00am to 4.00pm) at Jeacock's Orchard, Cow Lane, Tring (or email Polly at sustainabletringthing@gmail.com).

You can find out more about pesticides and take part in national campaigns to reduce their use here: <https://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free/>, <https://www.soilassociation.org/causes-campaigns/reducing-pesticides/the-solution/>, <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/pesticide-position>.

Polly Eaton
Justice & Peace Group

Confessions of an introvert



In clearing my mother's house after her death, one thing I took away was my old school reports which she had kept in the loft. At first it was amusing to read them: 'Bellis has still not achieved his 1-metre high jump' sort of thing. However, the more I read, the more I found them upsetting to read. It was clear that, although I was progressing well academically, my teachers saw me as a socially awkward child who would have to change if he were ever to get on in life. I don't recall these comments at the time but seeing them written down in black and white disturbed me. I threw the rest of the reports away.

Having a three-month sabbatical, as I did after Easter, is a wonderful privilege. It was also a huge blessing for a socially awkward adult: three months where I didn't have to initiate any conversations. In that sense it was a huge blessing. I suspect I did have to ask myself, should I have taken my teachers' advice and learned to change my personality, or is it OK to be introverted?

I think I have long since made peace with myself and am happy with the person that God made, for better or for worse. Being an introvert doesn't mean I want to be alone. Going away walking by myself always reminds me how much I need other people. I really value community, and I have learnt to compensate for my shortcomings. The best way to enjoy a social gathering is to have a job; and nothing beats hiding behind a BBQ. I may not want to be chatty but I have made sure we have coffee after the midweek communion services so that those people who want to talk can come together; and the

Sunday breakfast after the early morning service is an important part of my week, but maybe I don't always show this. Bringing other people together can be a joy, as long as I am not meant to chat.

When out walking in the hills it is always a pleasure to acknowledge other walkers as they pass by. For me, a nod or a hello is fine, and it is a joy in the north to hear the greeting of 'Eh up'; but equally I can physically cringe at the over-friendly person who suddenly wants a whole conversation – don't you know I am here to get away from all those words?! It makes me realise I probably give off these strong vibes as I am walking down the street in Tring. Internally I might be thinking: 'Oh look, it is so and so, I wonder how they are.' Externally I am probably looking like: 'I wish you would go away.'

If that is the case, should introverts always learn to 'get over' themselves? Should they stop being self-obsessed and just get chatting to others, even when a companionable silence seems fine to them? When is it rude to keep silent and not initiate conversation? I am torn. I am a great believer in the diversity of people and we should all be allowed to be ourselves whether that is chatty or quiet. I am also aware that we all have a deep need to both know God and be known by God, and it can sometimes be hard to accept that we are known. It is especially hard to believe we are known when we are ignored by people (and the church). I doubt there is a right answer, but from a personal level, love you as I do, I can also confess how nice it was to have a time without words, and how great it is to be part of a community made up of extroverts, introverts and everyone in between.

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

Although many of you won't believe me, I am also an introvert, so I have huge sympathy for Huw. It is why I like being Editor of Comment in a room without people rather than someone in a public role. I was once given the initials INTJ in a work context with the corollary 'but I have never met an introvert before who talks so much!'

When my husband was a young classroom teacher I was often invited to social events where I stood in a corner as if invisible while others were loud and over enthusiastic all around me. Later I was invited to clerical dinner events where I was seated next to complete strangers, usually members of the clergy who had been made canons in the Church of England. Once I was put next to the before-dinner speaker, who happened to be Sir Tim Rice. Fortunately, I knew enough about his lyrics for various musicals to be able to hold some sort of relevant conversation, but then he asked me about my children – and he got me on my specialist subject. He was fascinated – or seemed to be! – by the fact that our eldest son was adopted. I have no idea what I ate that evening but I learned an important lesson for anyone who would rather hide away than be trapped with someone where you don't know how to talk to them. Ask them about themselves. Most people will delight in someone taking an interest in them and you may even find some common ground to share. Even if not, they will feel happier after the conversation than they did before and you will have survived the encounter. I found that a previous Bishop of St Albans, Christopher Herbert, not only shared my interest in family history but had ancestors who lived in the same tiny village in Herefordshire. The current Bishop Alan Smith shares my passion for fostering and its importance. Other people are, after all, human beings too! Ed.



Parish registers

Baptisms

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

Ellie Muston
Olivia Muston
Aidan Burrows

Funerals

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

David John Winfield
Paula Jane Payne 45
Margaret Emily Lewis 91
Robert (Bob) Macintosh
Sheila Rose Whitehead 80
Barry Child 64
Janet Elizabeth Ridgway 83

Tweet of the month



If I were to ask, 'What do you think of when I mention the word "Pitta"?' you might think I meant a middle-eastern flatbread; of course, as I am asking the question, it must be

a trick question and thus a bird of some sort. You are right!

Pittas are a family of birds found in Africa, Asia, some Pacific islands and down to Australia. The word Pitta is a word from the Telegu language, which is spoken in southern India and apparently means 'small bird', although one source suggests it means 'pretty bauble' and given that Pittas are often referred to as 'jewels of the forest', the latter definition seems more appropriate, given the gaudy appearance of most Pittas and their preference for breeding in forest habitats.

I first saw Indian Pitta while wintering in Goa at a place called Fort Aguada Marsh. It is well-known among birdwatchers as being the local village's toilet as they didn't have running water

in their homes at that time so you had to be very careful where you stood (and it helped if you had a poor sense of smell!). My next Indian Pittas were a complete contrast: fifteen singing males sat up in trees in Chitwan National Park in Nepal – far more pleasant – and we also saw a Sloth Bear on the same day, so pretty memorable.

Most Pittas live in forests or jungle and feed off insects, which they find by hopping round on the ground. This makes them very difficult to see most of the time and so are particularly sought out by keen birdwatchers. This was exemplified by my experiences in Borneo when the tour group I was with checked the same area of jungle for Blue-headed Pitta and Black-crowned Pitta over several days. I had a simple strategy, find a view into the jungle that allowed me to see a long way along the ground and then wait for a Pitta to hop across that strip of ground. Eventually it worked and I was the only one to see both species.

My most recent Pitta experiences were in Sri Lanka this year and they were certainly varied. Early in our tour, on a

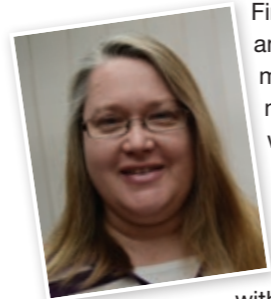


night drive, I was using my thermal imager and spotted a heat source high in a tree. Shining a torch on it revealed an Indian Pitta. We were all very surprised at that to say the least, more so when this happened again the following night. Finally, on the last day of the tour, I saw one and managed to get photographs of it.

Pittas can bring beauty, light and joy to the darkest forest in much the same way that the light of Christ can bring beauty, light and joy to even the darkest places in our lives, if we but let him.

**Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul**

The waiting game



Finding myself with an unexpectedly free morning, I asked myself, what better way to spend it than writing an article for *Comment*?

As a teacher, with two school-aged children, summer holidays are normally packed with visits to relations, a trip away, plus other family activities and some schoolwork to get ahead when the new school year comes round (far too quickly). A bit like 'Twixmas' (the time between Christmas and New Year) I usually have only a hazy idea of the day and date during the summer, measured in visits, e.g. 'After a week in Cornwall, we'll be at home for a few days before going on holiday; then your cousins are coming to visit; then we'll pop down to Grandpa's after visiting your other cousins in Wales; then we have a week at home, when we'll do new shoes and haircuts, then I go back on the Monday and your term starts the following Wednesday.' Then off we go again, back into school routine.

This summer has been different. I had the double whammy, as many others have no doubt, of having one child doing GCSEs and the eldest doing A Levels, which has meant that although they have been off for a long time, we had to be about on both results days in August. The eldest also had his driving test at the beginning of my summer holiday, which necessitated making several practice journeys familiarising himself (and myself) with the roads in the town of said test. As he took the test in his own car, I needed to accompany him to the test centre. All of these commitments, plus a special family birthday event to attend and a choir concert, has meant that great chunks of time, where I seem to drive endlessly around the country, are not available to us this year.

Instead, this summer seems to have been a summer of preparation: preparing the eldest for the driving test and advising on how (in my opinion) to best deal with unexpected incidents that occur when other humans are out and about in their cars.

I have discovered that I am not very good at waiting for results. I suspect few of us are. As 'results days' grew closer, both boys reported that they were convinced that they had failed everything and would have to consider new careers. During the eldest's driving test, I took a meaty tome to read in the waiting area but had to keep glancing up every time a car returned to the test centre, or I heard footsteps. I may have managed to read a couple of pages, but not much of it went in and I had to reread it later. Hurdle 1 of the summer achieved, and he passed his driving test! Now, however, there is a different sort of waiting to get used to – the waiting to hear his key in the lock when he has been out and about driving back at night before I can go to sleep.

Now to wait for the A level results. About two weeks before the results were due, the media started to announce that A level results would be harsher than previous years (going back to pre-pandemic boundaries) and that a lot of students would be disappointed with grades. Frankly, this was not helpful. My Facebook feed became flooded with useful (or panic-inducing) tips on how to apply through Clearing, despite nobody having their results yet. The eldest and I came up with Plans A, B, C, D and E and decided that we would only need to panic if Plan E didn't work.

'I don't want to read all of this stuff about Clearing yet,' I complained on the phone to my sister. 'What I need to do is find out from UCAS how Clearing works, should we need Plans C or beyond.'

Somebody, and I suspect it was Siri, was listening in on my iPad, and the first post I had up when I next looked at

Facebook, was a post from UCAS – a podcast for parents on 'How to Navigate Clearing'. It was indeed very useful, and I made a list of what we would need to do on the Big Day. We were prepared. By the time of the Big Day, we knew the eldest could log onto the UCAS website to view his offers at 8.15am and could then go and collect his results from school from 8.30am. I had already written down the phone numbers of universities and names of courses that he was interested in applying for, and even an aide memoire of salient points to ask universities about. We knew that we needed to be making phone calls by about 10.00am. Mobile phones were charged, the house phone dusted off, ready for use, and I already made my list. My job was to research universities and other courses. Even the youngest got out of bed to look useful.

Of course, due to high volume on website, UCAS took ages to load.

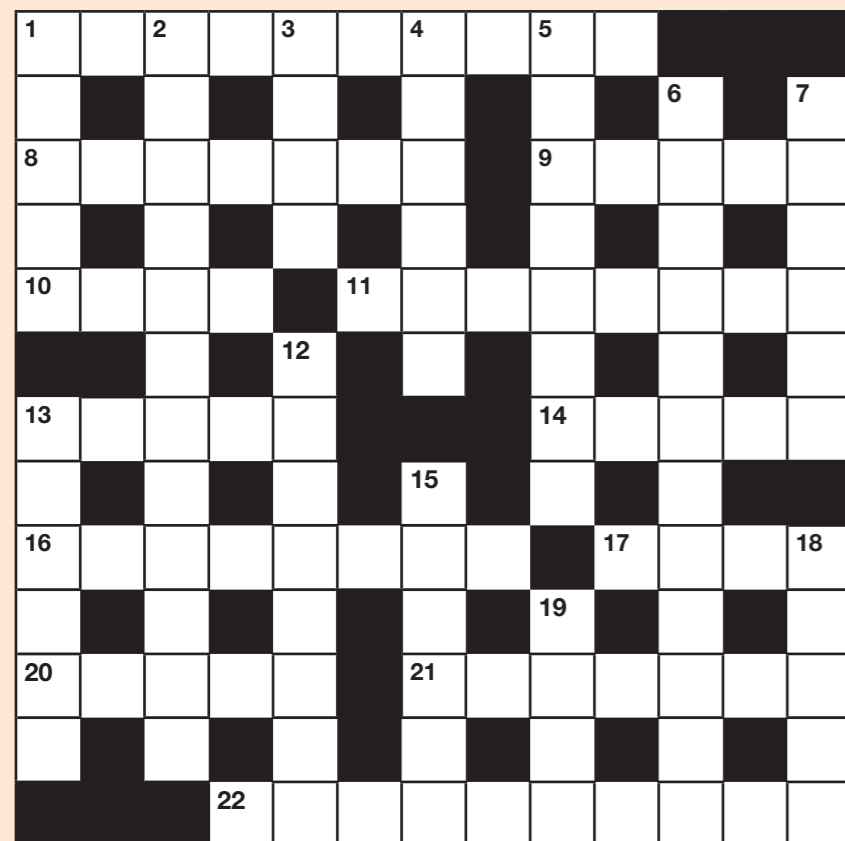
'Not to worry! We will go and get your results and then we know where you can start,' I told him.

Suddenly, the eldest received an email from UCAS, congratulating him on getting into his first choice of university. Grades still unknown, but obviously good enough. I, meanwhile, found myself with no plans. I refer you back to the beginning of my article. Hurdle 2 achieved! Now just to wait for GCSEs the next week.

A friend of mine once advised me to pack an overnight bag for any A & E visit – if you have it, you won't need it, she maintained. Just as the umbrella brought for the wedding, just in case, being prepared has meant that although other plans exist, Plan B was not needed. Perhaps the knowledge that a Plan B existed was enough. Update: GCSEs successfully accomplished by child 2. No need for Plan B here either.

**Gill Kinsey
St Peter & St Paul's**

Crossword



ACROSS

1. Cathedral official (10)
8. Musical compositions (7)
9. Sounds from the church bells (5)
10. Morally bad (4)
11. Eternal (8)
13. Designated (5)
14. Lake of the desert (5)
16. Religion of Rome (8)
17. Serene (4)
20. Lovely smell (5)
21. e.g. Praise and thanksgiving (7)
22. Canticle (10)

DOWN

1. Passageway in church (5)
2. Ceremony of belief (12)
3. Obligation (4)
4. Distinct idea (6)
5. Greek church (8)
6. Early half of the Bible (3) (9)
7. Lyrics in 6 above (6)
12. Speaker in favour of (8)
13. Sweet drink (6)
15. Easy (6)
18. Led the Israelites out of Egypt (5)
19. Wise men (4)

Answers page 30

Quiet Days

Need space to contemplate?

Quiet Time at St Martha's is now replaced by Quiet Days in Puttenham.
Thank you, Everyone, for using St Martha's as a space to think and pray.



In memory of June Hazel Honey

The first encounter with June, for many people, was with her voice; swiftly to be followed by meeting the lovely lady who was the source of that glorious sound. That was my experience of June when we first met in St Peter & Paul's Church in the 1980s. 'That voice' was universally considered to be what helped other people in the church to sing the right notes and keep in tune.

June was born on 17 June 1933 in Hackney and lived her early life there along with her sister Joyce. She was a London girl, proudly rooted in the strength and stoicism of Londoners through a wartime childhood, and teenage years growing up in the world of post-war strictures. She was a good student and passed her examinations well – before taking on her first career as a typist. This eventually took her to an exciting role in the Daily Mirror, in those days one of our most influential newspapers. She married her first husband at the age of 29 in 1962 and soon gave up work to concentrate on homemaking and singing.

From the very youngest years June sang like an angel and her greatest ambition was to become a professional singer. She trained hard and had some wonderful tutors, one of whom told her that the life of a professional singer was very challenging and you needed to be tough and sharp-elbowed to survive. Sharp in every other way, June was never 'sharp-elbowed' and tempered her ambition with kind consideration for all around her. Very possibly that stemmed from her other great passion in life – her deep Christian faith. Christianity was always her rock.

From an early age she sang in many choirs and at 15 was a soloist with the Hackney Choir. Even then her voice stood out and she was selected to sing as a soloist at Guild Dinners in the City

from 1948 onwards. Throughout her long life, June sang with countless choirs, ranging from Canterbury Cathedral and Eton College to the lovely little church at Buckland where she continued to sing at Evensong until 2010.

She had an exciting life as a young married woman and even spent a year of that time with her husband living and working in Los Angeles. Sadly, her first husband died tragically young and June returned to her life as a working woman. She ended up working for the Baltic Sea and Timber Company, owned by Russians.

In 1981 she was attending a classical concert at the Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank which was very crowded. In the interval she was sitting alone at a table for two when an elegant gentleman approached and asked 'Do you mind if I sit here?' Enter Claude! Soon afterwards Claude and June were regular concertgoers and a shared love of music blossomed into love. They were married in Beaconsfield in June 1982. The civil ceremony was followed by a blessing at St Botolph's in Aldgate as both had found that, as well as a love of music, they shared a deep and traditional faith. The ceremony at St Botolph's was followed by luncheon at the Tower Hotel in St Katherine's Dock which was graced by a 25-gun salute from the nearby Tower Battery during lunch. (Claude never revealed whether he had fixed that or it was just serendipity!) The newly-weds (who had been living in Windsor and Gerard's Cross respectively) then moved to Tring. They have lived there happily together in Donkey Lane for the past forty years.

June and Claude were able to be involved in many charitable causes and endeavours in the 1980s and 90s, such as The Church Urban Fund and the Friends of Tring Church Heritage.



(Left to right) Marc Clift, Prue Senior, Joan Hollingsworth, Eric Hollingsworth, June Honey, Jean Clift, Claude Honey, Grahame Senior

Fundraising events, concerts and dinners were very popular and June was often the star attraction at these performances. A collection of programmes for events at the Victoria Hall, St Peter & St Paul's, Tring Park, etc during this period shows just how often June's singing was in demand. On the hospitality front,



Claude joined with Eric Hollingsworth, Marc Clift and myself to form 'Les Quatre Cuisiniers', a group of enthusiastic cooks who created meals for charity events, often for upwards of 100 guests.

Hospitality, friendship and cooking – all in a good cause – were the passions that bound us together. On these occasions Claude specialised in the puddings and June provided the elegant entertainment.

June was known for being meticulous not only in her elegant dress sense but also in her good manners, kindness, courtesy and respect for the feelings and opinions of others. As a member of one of the Tring Team house groups (the Greenways Group), June's opinions were clear and very devout – always with respect for the views of others. At home in any company, she was effortlessly tolerant towards the rich variety of her fellow-pilgrims, and June was always kind, bringing grace to every occasion.

Sadly for those of us in Tring, June and Claude chose to leave the worship at St Peter & St Paul with its somewhat progressive liturgy and worship style for the more traditional services at St Peter's in Berkhamsted. They have been greatly missed in Tring but I know that they have been warmly welcomed and felt comfortable and valued in Berkhamsted. One of the very best things about our Anglican Community is that it is such a broad church where every individual can find a comfortable and congenial place to worship.

We had a great deal of fun together and we share many wonderful memories. These are greatly to be treasured and will echo long into the future. June died on 27 July. She will be sorely missed.

**Grahame Senior
St Peter & St Paul
(& Les Quatre Cuisiniers)**

In memory of Sheila Rose Whitehead

Sheila was born and brought up in Uxbridge until the family moved to neighbouring Hillingdon. Her father was a telephone engineer who served with the Royal Signals during the war. She was very proud of the fact he had survived the beaches of Dunkirk and later in the war had been responsible for maintaining telecommunications on Malta's airfield during the siege.

She attended Swakeleys School, then Harrow Arts School before studying printing at Twickenham College. Prevented from joining the industry by the then current attitudes, she instead joined the Harrow Council Parks Dept as a landscape draughtsman. The Council had a policy of floral displays in its many parks and of exhibiting at shows. Each spring Sheila would announce proudly that she was bedding out with the gardeners. Her draughting skills came to the notice of the Deputy Borough Engineer who had her transferred to his drawing office where she met me. After a long courtship, we married in 1969 and settled in Tring.

Her association with St John Ambulance Brigade had begun on reaching her 20s, initially with the Uxbridge Nursing Division where she progressed to being the Divisional Officer in 1968. As well as supporting events and training locally, the Division was often called on to support first aid at the West End theatres and London's processional events, one such being Churchill's funeral. In due course she was transferred to the Hertfordshire County and the Tring Division where she quickly found herself as the officer looking after the newly founded Cadet Division. In 1981 when the Divisional Superintendent Jim Rance retired, Sheila found herself in command of what was now the Tring Quadrilateral Division and looking after St John's numerous contributions to the town's activities and, when called upon, to those further afield.



During the next thirty years Sheila accumulated an astonishing portfolio of courses successfully completed and certificates gained for every imaginable aspect of St John's work. She became a County Staff Officer and a Trainer, then a Trainer of Trainers. During the period 1998 to 2006, her Special Service Certificates credited her with well over 6000 hours of voluntary work for the community. She received the Service Medal of the Order of St John to which were added, as the years progressed, six bars. Her achievements included the direction of first aid at the Herts Show and similar events in the County; and the planning, preparing and setting up of the County's contribution to the St John Centenary Celebration in Hyde Park in Summer 1987, for which she received a Personal Commendation.

There were also special duties for the national body with a planned three-week tour with a Hertfordshire colleague around the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean, instructing and certifying the First Aid Trainers in the main centres. After a week on St Kitts, they waited at the airport for the flight to Monserrat but the warning of Hurricane Hugo arrived first. They were marooned on St Kitts for another week before hiring a light plane to get them to the main island of Antigua. There the Royal Navy rescued them two days later and took them to Puerto Rico where they caught a flight home. A couple of years later a similar tour was arranged for Kenya, this time trouble free.

Her appointments and honours continued to grow. With the Brigade in Hertfordshire, she became Chairman of Instructors Group in 1987, Assistant County Commissioner in 1990, Deputy Commissioner in 1998 and County Commissioner (Operations) in 1999, a position she held till 2007. The Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem honoured her as a Serving Sister in 1980, as an Officer of the Order in 1986 and as a Sister Commander of the Order in 1998, the latter with the Queen's approval.

Her volunteering went beyond St John. For several summers in her 20s, she assisted for a fortnight's camp at the Shaftesbury Society's Dovercourt Holiday Camp for the disabled. The participants were generally from London's East End and would gather at Liverpool Street for the special train and a sing-song journey. When they heard about it, Harrow Council awarded her special leave to attend.



During these years she was successfully bringing up a family. Helen and then Mark graduated to Tring St John following the family tradition of service, and on to careers as a Radiographer and a Paramedic respectively. Family holidays were usually in the more rugged parts of the country: Pembrokeshire, The Peak District, The Lake District, The Yorkshire Moors, Perthshire and perhaps the favourite, Cornwall. One of her great ambitions was met when we retraced her father's footsteps to Malta. She was also continuing to support first aid at the town's events and to further first aid training and certification with various institutions in the town. She became involved with various local organisations supporting family life: The Geranium Club for the Blind, The Mothers Union, The Young Wives, The Child Contact Centre – and reflecting her early career, The Tring Floral Art Society.

St Peter & St Paul's Church played an increasing role in her life. She became a contributing member of the Parish Choir, the TRingers, the Saturday Lunch Club, the Food Bank, she organised the distribution of *Comment* and helped with the refreshments for the Piano & More Concerts. Finally, she enjoyed a hobby activity outside the town, singing with the Aylesbury Festival Choir.

In later life she did sometimes find time to relax in front of the TV. She was a fan of the soaps, loved a detective drama, and quizzes, especially 'Pointless'. Just once in a while she would reflect her art student days and share my love of jazz and enjoy an evening at The Stables with the Temperance Seven.

She will be much missed by family, church and Tring alike.

Brian Whitehead, husband

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

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August

Crossword puzzle answers

From page 26

ACROSS

1. ARCHDEACON
8. SONATAS
9. TOLLS
10. EVIL
11. IMMORTAL
13. NAMED
14. OASIS
16. CATHOLIC
17. CALM
20. AROMA
21. PRAYERS
22. BENEDICTUS

DOWN

1. AISLE
2. CONFIRMATION
3. DUTY
4. ASSUME
5. ORTHODOX
6. OLD TESTAMENT
7. PSALMS
12. ADVOCATE
13. NECTAR
15. SIMPLE
18. MOSES
19. MAGI

High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



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



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tringbaptistchurch



High Street Baptist Church



Harvest Celebrations in Tring Team Parish

St Cross Wilstone

Tuesday 12th September 11.30am Patronal Harvest service followed by a finger buffet lunch

Everyone welcome, for the buffet, please book with Alison-824394, or Olga-822894, £4 each

St Mary's Puttenham

Sunday 24th September 1.30pm for 1.45pm - Harvest Lunch in Cecilia Hall
Tickets £12.50 from Christine via 07514 548289 or email christine.rutter2@gmail.com followed by 3.30pm Harvest Evensong in the church

St John the Baptist Aldbury

Sunday 1st October, 11am Harvest Festival starting at the Allotments, followed by a bring & share harvest lunch in the churchyard or church if wet, everyone welcome

All Saints Long Marston

Sunday 1st October 6pm Beer and Hymns for the all the parish.

We sing our favourite harvest hymns, drink Tring Brewery beer, enjoy harvest food and give thanks for the harvest. Booking is needed for catering purposes on the website, events page or speak to a member of the admin or clergy team.

Please arrange lifts with each other or request a lift when you book.

St Peter and St Paul Tring

Sunday 8th October Harvest Worship for All at 10am

(collecting gifts for DENS) followed by Harvest Lunch in the Parish Hall at 12.30pm please book on the website, events page.

Raising money for The Bishop of St Albans' Harvest Appeal
Cracking Food Poverty Together

This year's Harvest Appeal supports Mission Direct's work in Kumi, Uganda, by providing materially poor families with chickens.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

Come and celebrate Apple Day

Craft displays

Plant sale

Stalls

Refreshments

Nature activities

Music

Puppet show

Apple Day
Sunday 1 October
10am-4pm
Jeacock's Orchard, Cow Lane, Tring



Living God's Love
In the Tring Team Parish
Harvest FESTIVAL
2023

Sunday 1st October 6pm at
All Saints' Church, Long Marston -
but still with the great
Tring Brewery beer!
Harvest food served as well!

Sing your favourite Harvest Hymns as we give thanks for the Harvest, and collecting for the Bishop's appeal, Cracking Food Poverty Together.

Booking is needed for catering purposes.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

01442 822170



HARVEST Lunch

Sunday 8th October 12.30pm

Tring Parish Hall

Come and enjoy a two-course Harvest Lunch with an apple theme as we celebrate the harvest and the Tring Apple Fayre.

Booking is needed to help us cater.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events

Any surplus profits will go to the Bishop's appeal, Cracking Food Poverty together.

