

# COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



**Tring Team Parish**

[www.tringteamparish.org.uk](http://www.tringteamparish.org.uk)

Aldbury, Long Marston, Puttenham, Tring and Wilstone Churches.

Please visit our website for everything.

Services - Resources - Pastoral Care Support - And Much More!

**It's ok to contact any of the clergy**

**Team Rector** Revd Huw Bellis 01442 822170 or 07411483229 [huw@tringteamparish.org.uk](mailto:huw@tringteamparish.org.uk)

**Team Vicar** Revd Jane Banister 01442 822170 Long Marston and Wilstone: [jane@tringteamparish.org.uk](mailto:jane@tringteamparish.org.uk)

**Team Vicar** Revd Michelle Grace 01442 851200 Aldbury: [michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk](mailto:michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk)

**Curate** Revd Sarah Marshall 07538 888502 [sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk](mailto:sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk)

**Open Churches for Services**

We have services in our five churches throughout the month, **subject to current government restrictions**. You need to book through our website, to allow space and for NHS Test and Trace.

[www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events](http://www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events).

Aldbury, Sundays at 10am, and 1st Sunday at 8am  
Tring Sundays 8am\* & 10am\*, once a month zoom Worship for All 3pm,  
Tuesdays 9.15am, Thursdays 10am  
Long Marston Sundays at 10am or 6pm.  
Wilstone Tuesday at 10am,  
Puttenham 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month 3.30pm.  
\* denotes live-stream service on our website or YouTube

**Open Churches for individual Prayer**

Tring Church open daily, 10am - 12noon

Wilstone and Long Marston Churches open Sundays (daylight hours).

Aldbury Church open daily, 11am - 3pm

**Happy Easter!**



*'Don't be afraid. I know you're looking for Jesus the Nazarene, the one they nailed on the cross. He's been raised up; he's here no longer.'*  
Mark 16:6

The resurrection offers us a symbol of transformation. The essence of any miracle story is that it shatters normal expectations and explanations, and the miracle of the resurrection is no exception. Amongst other things, the resurrection is about the possibility of new life, renewal and re-creation. 'I came that you might have life in all its fullness', said Jesus Christ, pointing to something that runs deep – fullness of joy, fullness of purpose, fullness of life. The resurrection story invites us to lean into the God of plenty.

But we might well ask, how can I lean into the God of plenty at a time when life feels so un-plenty? So restricted? So wearisome? So...lacking? All fair questions worth acknowledging and exploring.

We do well to call to mind people and places in past and present where there has been, or is, severe lack: where children go hungry, where women live in fear, where young boys are made to fight in the wars of grown-up boys who

oppress and intimidate. Even in these places of corruption and horror people have managed to celebrate God's love; even when all around them has seemed dark.

Sometimes, before we can glimpse hope or light we need to lament. Lamenting releases something in us: naming our pain, our fear, our anger before God, is a necessary part of being human. We don't need to make excuses for God – what sort of God wants anything other than goodness and wholeness for humanity? And what sort of God can't take our rage? Lament is just saying it how it is. In lament there's no need to qualify anything, no need to resolve the prayer into something positive. We can just say it how it is. God can take it. If you need it, the psalmists will help you find your voice – they've given us a whole library of lamenting voices.

And, when we're ready to do something other than lament, what then?

It's at that point that we may be able to recall times past when we've known goodness, when we've glimpsed light in the darkness, when something has shifted in our spirit and we've known a spark of hopefulness.

In conversations recently, a common theme is the naming of the hopeful. It might be seeing the face of a loved one, albeit on Zoom, it might be the gradual lengthening of daylight hours – a sign that

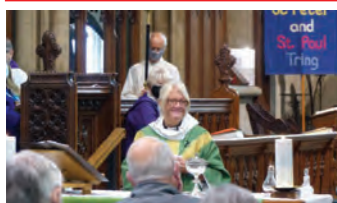
more sunlight is on the way. People have spoken of the delight at seeing daffodils in flower, emerging into the gloom – that perennial promise of spring suddenly being almost within reach. And we've acknowledged together our thankfulness for homes and heat and food and the phone and the internet; we've voiced our joy at living in a place of beauty. This isn't just positive thinking – which can be deceiving – this is the expressing of hope, of looking forward, confident in the knowledge that spring will come, the trees will bud and burst into life again, the flowers will shine bright and we will feel the warmth of the sun on our faces once more.

As ever, God's world reminds us of the pattern of our remembering and celebrating the life of Christ: a Christ who knows how hard it is to be a person, a Christ who brought life and light and hope, the Christ who is at the centre of our resurrection hope, the miracle that life can overcome death, and light still shines in the darkness.

We do well to lament when we need to lament, hope when we need to hope, and rejoice when we need to rejoice.

May you know God with you in your lamenting, hoping and rejoicing, this Easter and always.

Peace,  
**Michelle Grace**  
Tring Team



**Join in with our worship on the web. Some streamed, some recorded.** Services featuring our clergy and others coming into your home! Different styles, something for all ages and activities for families. Access to daily prayer and services from the Church of England.

**Pastoral Care and Support**

We are here for you, please contact any of our clergy. - Keep in contact with church friends - Prayer support and resources - Protecting your mental health, lots of ideas about staying focussed and in balance.



**The Foodbank in Tring Church is open on weekdays, 10am - 12noon, to collect food and to drop-off food donations.**  
[www.dens.org.uk](http://www.dens.org.uk)



**Twins in training!**

We mentioned before that we were hoping for sponsors to raise money for Christian Aid during Christian Aid Week in May. Of course – you can sponsor us as soon as you like!

We began training on a warmish Saturday at the end of February with a three mile walk up a number of hills on rather muddy, rugged ground. I have to say that although the sun was shining, the birds were singing and there was lots to see, we both slept from beginning to end. Maybe by May we will be a little more alert and take more in! But the important thing is that we plan to walk (or be walked) for a whole marathon in stretches that allow us to be fed and watered at suitable intervals, given our very young and tender age (currently five months old).

You can give via our Just Giving page or via the Tring Team Scheme if you give that way already (but please tell nice Mr Hoare it's the twins sponsorship money and whether it can be Giftaided). You can even contact the Editor who will make sure it gets to the right place if neither of these work for you. A kind donor has offered to match all we raise!

Christian Aid, like so many charities, are in huge need to help all those children who have so little. Most of us have so much. Let's share it.

**The twins**  
**St Peter & St Paul**



# The power of music



Years ago, when my dear mum was disappearing into dementia, it became clear to us that there was some magic about music, in that – though

she wasn't sure who we were (just that she felt loved by us) – when a favourite tune was played, she could sing all the words. And, when she got to a stage where she had lost some of her inhibitions, music would entice her to get up and dance – freely and without self-consciousness, and in spite of arthritis!

Like me, you may have been watching Breakfast TV in the Autumn, and witnessed the piano teacher, Paul Harvey, who retained the ability, with dementia, to perform an old 'party trick': to improvise a tune based around four given notes. His proud son made a video of him doing this and it 'went viral'. The story continued with the BBC Philharmonic orchestrating the piece and playing it 'virtually' with Paul – taking it to Number 1! Proceeds from the sale of the music have gone to the charity, 'Music for Dementia'. The Charity's Director, Grace Meadows, pointed out that, 'Music is most effective when it's personalised and meaningful.' They have a radio station (M4D Radio) designed to provide era-specific music for people living with dementia, and their carers.

I like to listen to Woman's Hour, when I can. I don't often get to hear it, but when I'm at home, it's a favourite programme. It has been so, since listening in childhood with Mum, and – while my own children were small – when it took me to a place where I would have the feeling of being surrounded by 'friends' though working at home, alone. One day in January, a particular interview stopped me in my tracks. It was with Clemency Burton-Hill, an erstwhile musician and BBC Presenter, who had had a catastrophic frontal lobe brain-bleed exactly one year before, while lecturing in New York. She spent seventeen days in a coma, and, when she came round, had no speech and little movement. She explained how she had had to learn to speak again from scratch, and told of the part that music had played and continues to play in her healing and recovery. She stressed that it

was not just classical music playing 24/7, when she was so ill, but an eclectic mix of all her favourites, which she described as a 'source of strength'. (She also told of having been presented, within her coma, with a clear choice – stronger than any dream or memory – and she chose Life, even though it would be difficult.) She still struggles with speech and concentration, and talks of good days and bad days in a slow recovery that is not linear. It must have been a particularly hard struggle for her, facing those challenges during the pandemic. But she is home now, with her husband, James, and two young sons.

Then, more recently, I was moved to tears seeing a 2019 film of a former ballerina with New York City ballet, Marta C. Gonzalez, in the late stages of dementia, sad and very weak, and being filmed as part of a Spanish study into the effects of music on people in old age, or with life-limiting conditions. The research organisation's name, in translation, is 'Music to Awaken' and its Director, a psychologist named Pepe Olmedo spoke of memories revived in her and her transformation on listening to a piece of music (Swan Lake) that she had danced to – indeed, in which she had performed the lead, in the 1960s. She started tentatively moving a hand, then began using her arms just as she would have when dancing that part. Gradually her head lifted, her neck lengthened and visual expressions appeared. She showed pride, and pleasure – tears, too. Feeling such emotional benefits from music, Pepe Olmedo suggested, is important so that people feel alive. Watch it on You Tube if you can. It's beautiful. Her carer encourages her to continue with her first halting arm movements by a simple kiss on the hand, such as a leading man may once have given.

Where am I going with this? I've known for years that music can alter my mood, or sympathise with it! It can lift spirits or help me to express how I'm feeling. I'm not much of a musician but I love to dance – or at least, these days, move to music. Within Riding for the Disabled, it has been clear to me that riders who are nervous or very focused on 'results' can forget their preoccupations and simply enjoy the experience of moving with the horse when the right music plays. I've seen, too, how music in a classroom situation can be calming, or can help people to focus, or even to remember. (Think of

singing times tables!)

It seems that music has been with us since prehistory, and is something that prefigures speech, in the sing-song way that parents communicate with babies. The music we love, in particular, fires up many different parts of our brain, so that – even when parts are damaged – a music-memory remains intact somewhere. I personally think poetry is akin to this – and prayer. Is that something to do with the language, or the state of mind when using it? Or maybe there's a certain musicality in the rhythms, rhymes and repetitions? I'll leave that for you to muse on.

With music in mind, I thought I would tell you that, during Advent & Christmas, Malcolm and I decided to follow an old book we had that reflected daily on a different reading and a relevant piece of devotional music. We used technology to listen to these, or we just sang the more mainstream hymns that we knew. It felt a very 'mindful' experience and led us gently through a somewhat turbulent Advent with changing rules and plans, along with the sort of concerns everyone has had during the pandemic, about work and loved ones, our country, humanity and the whole Earth. The book ('O Come, EMMANUEL' by Gordon Giles) came to an end at Epiphany, and we were missing that shared time.

By a strange coincidence, on looking for more information about Clemmie Burton-Hill, after hearing her on Woman's Hour, it turned out she had written a book in 2017 called 'Year of Wonder – Classical Music for Every Day'. So now we have a copy of the book and a Spotify account, so that we can read about a different piece and listen to it together each day throughout the year.

In each of the situations I spoke of at the beginning of this article, the people involved may have been 'lost' to themselves in some way, but were in a position of being loved and supported, as well as finding a connection with music. I wonder how much of a quantifiable factor that is? Is joy in music intrinsically linked with a feeling of being loved from cradle onwards? Is there a strong sense of belonging to a greater whole when sharing music?

It is sad that, during this last year, it has been considered unsafe to sing together in public. (I'm so glad nobody told the birds that!) Musical events have moved online or been recorded at a safe

social distance for TV. Pubs and clubs are closed, where groups might have sung together (I'm thinking of the joy of Harvest songs at Tring Brewery, for instance.) Church services can play recorded music, and piano and organ music is still being included in our services, but for those who worship through singing, whether

in congregation or choir, an element is necessarily missing.

One last thought. Music can help us remember, experience emotion, calm the mind, overcome fears, feed the soul and maybe even set us on a path to physical healing and a sense of being alive. Perhaps, fundamentally, there is

something about experiencing music that gives us hope.

I'm reminded of Emily Dickinson's poem: 'Hope is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul / And sings the tune without the words / And never stops at all...'

Anne Nobbs, St Peter & St Paul

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## Celebrating milestones in lockdown

This past year has affected everyone celebrating birthdays and anniversaries. But when they are significant milestones, then it seems much harder to mark the day significantly.

In our own family we have missed a Ruby Wedding, a wedding (twice, as the second time only had twelve people), a 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and a 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. So the challenge for us was how to mark our



and close friends, many living quite a distance away. Our three girls had planned a montage of photos from every year of our marriage which was shared as a game of bingo on Zoom! Lots of laughter and a few tears, and a glass or two of fizz! We finished with a meal from Crockers in Tring so I think, in the circumstances, we have made some really happy memories of a beautiful day!



Golden Wedding in March in a way that was not like just another Saturday at home.

The gathering of the clan of seventeen close family members at one of our favourite restaurants was certainly out, so plan B was put in place once Boris had spelled out the lockdown

roadmap. Walking was permitted in small groups so John and I could split up and each walk with one of our local daughters. We booked tickets to the grounds of Waddesdon Manor for the morning and we managed a sneaky glass of prosecco on the terrace! The gardens looked beautiful with the daffodils in bloom so they helped to make our day a golden one.

In the afternoon we had a Zoom gathering of family

And thanks to all our family and friends for their messages of support and congratulations!

Janet Goodyer  
St Peter & St Paul



# Learning from Saint Melangell



You know those ethical dilemma stories about five people in a hot air balloon: one has to be thrown overboard to save the others, so which one would you vote off? If push came to shove, I would save the life of a human over an animal, but beyond that I don't really know. I could formulate arguments to save the doctor or the teacher or the child. But how can one life really be more valuable than another? God certainly doesn't think so. Each one of us is precious to him.

In Psalm 139 the author marvels at how each of us has been made and intricately formed by God. God knows us so well, he not only knows what we are about to say, he knew us when we were inside the womb. Verses 13-14: 'Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. I thank you, High God – you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvellously made!

So why would I save a human over an animal? Well, I do believe we are able to have a relationship with God that is different from other animals. Jesus Christ came to save us from our sin, not the sins of dolphins or cats. However, Genesis 1:26 tells us we may 'rule' over the animals and I think this verse risks being taken out of context: 'Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."' It doesn't say 'exploit' or utilise animals to your own ends. It certainly doesn't advocate the kind of carelessness we have shown for creation that we can see in our world today.

I am not a vegetarian, but we don't eat much meat. We tend to buy ethically sourced meat or fish (or the reduced for quick sale!). I like cats and dogs to look at but, being allergic to them, I don't touch them and am generally fairly indifferent to them. (I have always had a particular affinity for reptiles and bees though!) However, my daughter has challenged my nonchalance to animals as she adores pretty much every single one. If she is not cuddling, feeding, drawing, photographing or attempting



to rescue a real-life animal she will be swooning over 'cute baby goat' social media posts. However, I have a great deal of appreciation for creation in its entirety and always believed that watching nature documentaries is a great way to develop this appreciation in children. We sit and watch 'Perfect Planet' as a family and ooh and ahh at the wonder of creation.

I was listening to the Sunday Worship on Radio 4 a few weeks ago. The service was led by Martin Palmer, environmentalist and religious historian, and centred on worship and creation. He told the story of Saint Melangell. I'd never heard of her and was intrigued! The shrine of St Melangell is found in Pennant Melangell in Wales, situated at the head of the Tenant Valley. I wanted to find out more. I discovered lots of variations on the story and some wonderful images on various websites (sadly, original sources were not often cited, so I have given the reference of where I found them). If you don't know the story, here is a summary.

'Saint Melangell was a female saint of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. According to tradition she came here from Ireland and lived as a hermit in the valley. One day, Brochwel, Prince of Powys, was hunting and pursued a hare which took refuge under Melangell's cloak. The Prince's hounds fled, and he was moved by her courage and sanctity. He gave her the valley as a place of sanctuary, and Melangell became abbess of a small religious community. After her death, her memory continued to be honoured, and Pennant Melangell has been a place of pilgrimage for many centuries' (<https://stmelangell.org/saint-melangell/>).

The church and shrine fell into disrepair during the last century, but after the community pulled together to renovate the chapel it is now an active community and visitor centre, with accommodation for those who wish to retreat there. Today, the valley remains a place of pilgrimage and nature conservation.

How much of this story is legend and folklore, and how much is fact we will never really know. Today, St Melangell is the patron saint of hares, rabbits, small animals – how appropriate to think of her at Easter! She reminds me that God is indeed creator of all the earth and everything in it.

**Polly Eaton**  
High Street Baptist Church

# Making a joyful noise!



If, like me, you enjoy worshipping God in song, you will have found the last year frustrating not to mention a little empty.

From the Good Friday hymns on the Walk of Witness to the joyful noise of triumph and celebration on Easter Day, singing is so much a part of what constitutes worship.

Now of course, singing without godly behaviour is not what God wants. 'Take away from me the noise of your songs,' says Amos 5:23-24, 'I will not listen to your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'

The Psalmist certainly thought singing was part of worship: 'Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!' says Psalm 100.

The apostle Paul even sang hymns

while in prison, according to Acts 16:25.

We all know why we haven't been allowed to sing in our churches in the last year. But what would you like to sing when you can do so again safely? What would your choice of hymns be on your first Sunday back with permission to sing? Let me know and I will print it next time. If you can give reasons – even better!

**The Editor**

# Does God suffer?



Much has been said about the fact that we have been living through an unprecedented period of history. In relative terms, we have suffered this past year.

However, I would suggest that this suffering is only relative. We have not enjoyed as many freedoms as usual, and maybe I am very blessed and privileged, but I am hard pushed to say that I have suffered.

I have suffered the grief of both of my parents dying (aged 58 and 75) but I have always understood the pain of grief to be the cost of love. The benefits of having been loved and having loved my parents far outweighs the pain of grief. There seems to be a huge difference between this 'normal' human experience and the kind of suffering involved with deliberate torture and brutal murder of Jesus.

I ask this question because this year we, as an Anglican church, have been studying Mark's Gospel. If you only browse through Mark, one thing will stand out very quickly. Mark is very keen on the idea that Jesus must suffer: 'the Son of Man must undergo great suffering' (Mark 8:31). Mark's central question in his Gospel is a question for the disciples and for us: 'Who was this Jesus?' He answers it by saying that he is the Messiah, but not a conquering-hero-Messiah but a suffering-Messiah. The danger is that it makes it sound as though God wants Jesus to suffer. If so, you, like me, might have some issues we want to take up with God. There is a

difference between taking seriously the existence of suffering as a consequence of free will and there being a plan for suffering.

Classical theology has a suggestion about why Jesus had to suffer. Origen (late 2<sup>nd</sup> century) suggested that a ransom needed to be paid to someone (the devil) to set us free – the suffering is the devil's price. The idea of ransom being paid for by pain and suffering doesn't work for me.

In more recent times modern theologians interpret the victory on the cross as a victory over forces which threaten to deprive us of authentic existence. The reality of all life, as we have seen, includes some suffering; and this suffering can deny us the fullness of life. In order not to be trapped by suffering, we need to die with Christ and to rise with him to new life. We need to share his victory over suffering. It is not that suffering is necessary, but suffering is part of our experience. Suffering it is not part of God's desire for us. Instead, the suffering of Jesus shone a spotlight on all that was wrong with corrupt powers of the time and continues to shine a light on our corrupted world. In suffering, Jesus stands in solidarity with us.

However, what if we take it one step further? Rather than asking why Jesus had to suffer, what happens if we ask: does God suffer? Part of the answer to this is found by examining what we mean by love. Does God love impassibly, that is: in a way that is incapable of sharing in our suffering or feeling pain (or for that matter our joys)? Or by loving us, does God share in our feelings? Can you love without sharing

the awareness of another's suffering and thus participate in it? If God suffers, it seems even more unlikely then that God's plan is for us to suffer. God didn't send someone else to suffer, instead God reveals that by loving us God suffers with us – that is what love is. God does not inflict suffering. A suffering God shares the consequences of the risks of freedom. Moreover, if the world is a living organism, a community which is growing and developing in mutual relationship rather than a machine, then it seems God can only fulfil his purposes for creation by acting and suffering within it rather than remaining invulnerable and detached.

So where does that leave us? Have you suffered through the pandemic? If so, that was not God's purpose. God's purpose is always life, but where there is suffering God suffers with us. If you have suffered the grief of pain and loss, hopefully you can understand this in terms of the cost of having loved in the first place.

So where does that leave us with the Son of Man having to undergo great suffering? I don't think I can accept that God wanted anyone to be tortured and murdered. God's plan was to reveal that God loves us. Of course, humanity showed its infinite ability to mess things up, but was that really the plan?

**Huw Bellis**  
Tring Team

# Origins of Easter



The first source of reference for Easter is the writings of the Venerable Bede who was a British monk around AD700. He wrote about a large number of subjects, but wrote in detail about Easter's origins and date in his 'The Reckoning of Time'.

Bede believed that the name derived from the goddess Eostre, who had been celebrated in England at beginning of spring. Eostre, or Eastro in Northumbrian, is derived from the German goddess Ostara who gave her name to the Old High German month Ôstarmânoth and Eosturmonath in Old English. This month roughly coincides with today's April. By Bede's time the festival for Eostre had been replaced by the Christian Paschal (or Passover) month.

Bede discussed whether Easter should coincide with Passover which was a Jewish festival, and was celebrated by some early Christians from the second century, meaning it could fall on different days of the week depending on the Jewish calendar – or did it have to be on a Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection? However, language experts today cannot confirm Bede's theories. 'Easter is a very old word. It goes back to the earliest varieties of Old English,' says Cliff Sofield, a lexicographer for the Oxford English Dictionary. There is now widespread consensus that the word derives from the Christian designation of Easter week as 'in albis', a Latin phrase that was understood as the plural of alba ('dawn') and became eostarum in Old High German.

The actual date for Easter was one that divided Eastern and Western churches (as did the date for Christmas) in the Paschal controversy, which was not resolved until a few years after Bede's death in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The exact date was not resolved until the Council of Nicaea in AD325 which decreed that Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox (21 March). Easter, therefore, can fall on any Sunday between 22 March and 25 April.

The Eastern Orthodox calculation is based on the Revised Julian Calendar rather than the Gregorian calendar (which is thirteen days ahead of the former) used

by the western churches, with the result that the Orthodox Easter celebration usually occurs later than that celebrated by Protestants and Roman Catholics. The Orthodox Church also prohibits Easter from being celebrated before or at the same time as Passover.

On Easter Sunday, High Street Baptist Church holds a 7.00am service on Pitstone Hill followed by an egg rolling competition down the hill. The competition is hotly contested with prizes for the best decorated egg, and the furthest rolling egg (which has almost, but not quite, reached the car park!).

The origin of the Easter egg (chicken not chocolate) is again in our pagan past. Christians see the egg as symbolic of Jesus rising from the tomb and his resurrection – the tomb being cracked open as an egg is cracked open by the chick. This use of eggs dates back to the early church in Britain and egg painting started in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. These early painted eggs were often simply coloured red to symbolise the blood shed by Jesus

on the cross. Eggs were forbidden during Lent, so a painted one celebrated being allowed to eat eggs again. Although eggs were forbidden in Lent, the hens kept laying! It may be that hard boiled eggs were used as a method of preserving these eggs until Easter.

The Germans (from whom we seem to inherit a lot of customs) believed that the egg was laid by an egg-laying Easter hare called 'Osterhase' or 'Oschter Haws'. This eventually transformed into our Easter bunny. It is thought that the traditional Easter egg hunt was started in the US by German immigrants. The Easter egg tradition in Germany is believed by religious historians to have originated in the Greek Christian Churches of Mesopotamia, spread to Russia and then to Germany.

So maybe this Easter you can make your Easter Sunday breakfast really traditional by eating red dyed hard-boiled eggs!

**John Allan**  
High Street Baptist Church

# An Easter Poem



Does this poem look strange on the page? That's deliberate – it is a so-called shaped poem which uses the shape of a bird flying eastwards across the

page in the direction of the rising sun. This pattern reflects the movement of time described in the two verses and picks up the principal image of the larks, echoed in the words 'rise', 'harmoniously', 'sing', 'flight', 'imp' and 'wing'. The author traces the time between the fall of Adam and the redemption of Christ, the sin of the world overcome by the Easter Resurrection.

Who was responsible for this masterly combination of form and thought in a short poem about Easter? George Herbert (1593-1633) is probably one of the best known religious writers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and a contemporary of John Donne and Frances Bacon. Primarily a poet, both in Latin and English, he was also an accomplished player of the lute and the viol. None of his English poems was published in his lifetime and none can be precisely dated. Several of them may be familiar to readers as hymns.

George Herbert was born in Montgomery, the fourth son of a local

squire and landowner – the family was well known for their generous hospitality to rich and poor. His father died when George was 3 and, after some years living near Shrewsbury and then Oxford (where his mother first met John Donne), the family of ten children moved to London, to a house near Charing Cross

where they mixed with the writers, musicians and gentry of the day.

George attended Westminster School, where he was rigorously trained and excelled in Latin and Greek and music. He then went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he spent fifteen years, first as an undergraduate, then as Fellow and Tutor, ending up as Public Orator.

During this time there were periods of uncertainty and unhappiness – four of his siblings died, money was short and he suffered bouts of ill health, probably tuberculosis. He seems to have been torn between following a worldly path and giving his life to the church. However, he continued to find comfort in writing poetry on religious themes – some full of anger and doubt, others cheerful and full of hope, all of them, though apparently simple, yet intricate in technique and metrical forms.

In this poem, as in many others, he talks directly with God. He was made deacon in 1626, married in 1629 and ordained priest in 1630. Appointed vicar of Bremerton, near Salisbury, he spent the last three years of his life as a very active parish priest caring for his parishioners, teaching them the Christian faith and keeping open house, for 'Love is his business'. He died in 1633, aged 40.

**Kate Banister**  
St Julian's, St Albans  
Next time – a poem by Philip Larkin.

## Easter Wings

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,  
Though foolishly he lost the same,  
Decaying more and more,  
Till he became  
Most poor;  
With thee  
O let me rise,  
As larks, harmoniously,  
And sing this day thy victories.  
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.  
My tender Age in sorrow did begin:  
And still with sicknesses and shame  
Thou didst so punish sin  
That I became  
Most thin.  
With thee  
Let me combine,  
And feel this day thy victory:  
For if I imp\* my wing on thine,  
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

*imp – a term from falconry meaning to 'engraft feathers in a damaged wing to restore or improve its power of flight'*

## Good Fridays, past and present

*I think I've overdone the buns again.  
That seems to be my way;  
I'll give you all a little glimpse  
Into my previous Good Friday.*

*I got up nice and early  
To go to St Martha's the pretty way  
Or High Street if it's our turn –  
We have hymns, a sermon and pray.*

*Then out come trays of hot cross buns  
Followed by cups of coffee or tea.  
We then assemble for the Walk  
Following the Cross, that's special for me.*

*Down in Dolphin Square, we all meet up  
And worship together like others do,  
Then we process into the Church Yard  
For some Drama and worship too.*

*Then most of us go into the church  
And what in there do we see  
But tables full of hot cross buns  
Complete with mugs of coffee or tea.*

*We rushed home to have a bowl of soup  
Then went off to Berkhamsted too  
For the 3.00pm Service – don't be late –  
We must be there by half past two.*

*We met my in-laws in the church,  
The service lasts until half past four.  
We drive off up to their house  
And meet them at the door.*

*'We've put the grill on,' they say.  
'Butter and jam is ready too.  
Sit down and have a hot cross bun  
Is that tea too strong for you?'*

*After a while we get up to leave.  
'What are you having for your tea?'  
'Fish' we replied and my husband said  
'It's Good Friday, what else could it be?'*

*On the way home, one of us would say,  
'Do we really want cod or plaice?'  
Shall we just settle down with a cooling drink  
Let's have a little bit of space.'*

*This year, I will miss the tradition  
But I will do the Walk of Witness and then  
Remember those who have gone before.  
But next year we'll have buns again.*

**Thelma Fisher**  
High Street Baptist Church

# The good old days?



Although I am not prone to looking back to the 'Good Old Days', as Easter approaches I can't help but look back to Holy Week and Easter day in my teens where I was a server at a church where it was important for servers to do everything properly.

In the Church of England, ever since Cranmer's first Book of Common Prayer (1549), many ancient liturgical practices and traditions were abandoned – no candles at Candlemas, no ashes on Ash Wednesday, no palms on Palm Sunday, no Easter Candles, no anointing and so on.

The revised (1662) Book of Common Prayer continued in this way and it was only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that any serious changes in Anglican worship were authorised. But a number of clergy of the Oxford Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century wanted to supplement worship. One way of doing this was to go back to medieval pre-Reformation forms of worship. Another way was to look at what the Roman Catholic Church was doing, particularly the Liturgical Movement in Europe.

I was brought up on the English Missal, a book containing a form of the Holy Communion service in which words of the Book of Common Prayer were supplemented by translations from the Latin, plus the restoration of the ceremonies connected with them as part of acts of worship. All this changed when the Church of England's liturgical revision produced the Alternative Service Book and then Common Worship, with many other forms of service, particularly to enrich the church's year. It means that candles, ashes, palms and oil are now widely used and no longer considered solely Anglo-Catholic or High Church. This is also the case with anointing as part of some sacraments and ceremonies.

When I was a server, Palm Sunday was a long service. (My father always noted the length in the Service Register!) It started with the Blessing and Distribution of Palms which were received while kneeling at the Communion rail, some people kissing both palm and the hand of the priest. Then came the Palm Gospel and

Procession outside the church and knocking to enter the West door. Inside the Mass proper started with the Collect and Reading, or Singing, of the Passion.

On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening in Holy Week, the service of Tenebrae was used, fourteen psalms and the Benedictus. At the end of each psalm a candle on a special holder was put out so the service ended in darkness. Then after these services, we rehearsed the ceremonies for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

On Maundy Thursday there was a Solemn Mass at 6.30am. In those days there were no evening celebrations as the rule of fasting before receiving Communion was still strictly observed. At the end the Blessed Sacrament was taken in procession under a canopy to the Altar of Repose – a side altar decorated with many candles and flowers – where a Watch of Prayer was kept through the night ('Could you not watch with me one hour?') There were always enough names on the rota for the twenty-four hours of the Watch. Strangely enough, as I remember, there was never a 'Washing of the Feet' in those days. After the Procession, the altars were stripped while the congregation recited Psalm 22, so all was left bare (except the altar of Repose), ready for Good Friday.

On Good Friday morning at around 9.30am the Liturgy of the Day began. This consisted of the first part of the Communion service – the Collect, Epistle and the Solemn reading of the Passion. Then came the Solemn Collects – prayers for Church and State and also for various sorts of unbelievers. This last in later years had to be much modified to be more acceptable and tolerant! The next part was the Veneration of the Cross, which our medieval forefathers called 'Creeping to the Cross'. All the crosses were unveiled, including the great Rood Cross, and one was made available for people to come and venerate by kissing. The Reproaches were sung – words from the Old Testament on the theme of 'O my people, what have I done unto Thee', a reference to God's people's disobedience. The final part of this service was the Communion, but only the priest received the sacrament which had been brought from the Altar of Repose. The service ended abruptly



which aptly symbolised the feeling of desolation.

Finally on Holy Saturday at about 11.00am the Easter Vigil was begun. It will be noticed that all these services anticipated the actual times and this was put right in subsequent revisions. For the Easter Vigil included the first Mass of Easter (on the Saturday) so one's Easter Communion was received way before Easter Day! Looking back, how strange some practices now seem.

The Easter Vigil was, of course, originally held through the night or at a time to end with dawn. It included a number of elements, rather too many for ordinary parish use, or at least until selections were made. First came the 'Blessing of the new Fire', a service which properly was held after night had fallen. As we look back it was clearly a bit of a nonsense to do this at midday. Then the Paschal Candle was blessed and marked with the sign of the Cross, the date and Alpha and Omega. The Candle was then carried into the church and the Paschal Proclamation sung. There followed a series of readings from Genesis to the Gospel. The Litany of the Saints took us to the font and the Blessing of Baptismal Water and the Renewal of Baptismal Vows. Finally, at last, the first Eucharist of Easter and the receiving of one's Easter Communion.

I started by mentioning the 'Good Old Days'. In fact, while they made a big impression on me, things have improved greatly in the observance of Holy Week. Strangely I never washed feet on Maundy Thursday until I retired. And only in retirement have I led and preached at a Three Hour service on Good Friday.

But, meanwhile, whatever we do in Holy Week worship, the main thing is that it all leads up to the glories of Easter. Happy Eastertide!

**Martin Banister**  
**St Albans Cathedral**

Sitting at the back of the church  
Behind the old and the young and the ones in the middle.  
There is Me. Sitting at the back, on a cold hard pew.  
Listening to the words of the guy at the front...  
The one with the weird robes and the stiff collar and the purple scarf.  
Strange clothes So strange.  
And he's telling us that God is always there.  
Always. What an odd word.  
It is forever and for the rest of time.  
It is since the beginning and then before that too.  
It was and is and is to come.  
Because God never leaves. He is there whenever we call. He is in everything that we see.  
Or so the Priest says. And everything that we don't.  
Because. I ask myself, where is God when I am sad?



# Lost and found

Hello everyone! I thought I'd include one of my poems for this month's article! I found out last week that this poem won the 'National Spirited Arts competition' on the subject 'Where is God?' so that was a nice surprise!

**Fern Asquith**  
**High Street Baptist Church**

Yes, tell me, where is the Everlasting Father,  
When the T I D E S of S  
Sorrow  
Threaten to P U L L me under?  
You heard me. Where is the Prince of Peace, when I can hardly  
Summon The Strength To Face  
The world?  
For I Am Lost  
And the Good Shepherd  
Is Nowhere To Be Found.

# Good news for Charlie and Chloe!

You may remember that Charlie Dickenson wrote an article in *Comment* last year when he told us of his faith journey and subsequent Confirmation. Charlie and Chloe have become faithful and regular members of the Parish Church in Tring. He also mentioned that he and Chloe were planning to be married in 2020...


Like so many others, their plans were changed because of government restrictions (more than once by the sound of things!). The good news is that their banns were called in St Peter &

St Paul's on 7, 14 and 21 February and their wedding day is now set, come what may, for 24 April. We wish them a very special wedding day and a happy life together to come.

Maybe next month we will have some photos to celebrate with them...  
**The Editor**



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## Easter – not for the children



I would like to begin with a poem by Steve Turner.

*Christmas is really for the children.  
Especially for children who like animals, stables, stars and babies wrapped in swaddling clothes.  
Then there are wise men kings in fine robes, humble shepherds and a hint of rich perfume.  
Easter is not really for the children unless accompanied by a cream filled egg.  
It has whips, blood, nails, A spear and allegations of body snatching.  
It involves politics, God and the sins of the world.  
It is not good for people Of a nervous disposition.  
They would do better to Think on rabbits, chickens And the first snowdrop Of spring.  
Or they'd do better to wait for a rerun of Christmas without asking too many questions about what Jesus did when he grew up or whether there's any connection.*

This is one way of summing up two of the most important festivals in the church's year and the two occasions when the 'general public' are often motivated to

attend church services. How correct is Steve Turner in saying that Easter is 'not good for people / of a nervous disposition'? Are many people really too scared or too unsure of themselves to want to avoid any difficult or challenging questions? Why do people come to church on these festivals and does the church do enough to welcome them? Do the regular attendees of church services do enough to encourage the 'visitors' to come back?

I have always enjoyed the Easter services; I love Easter hymns (and I can even tolerate waving yellow Hallelujah flags in St Peter & St Paul's), but of course the Easter celebration should mean much more than this. And I don't mean having Easter eggs or being able to eat chocolate or drink wine again after a Lent where these things were given up!

What do you feel during the Easter service itself or afterwards as you leave church? Feeling happy and joyful and maybe thankful probably feature. I specially remember two Easter Sunday morning services I attended. One was in the local Roman Catholic church in Villingen where my son and his family live. The church was full as ours usually is, but there were several clergymen (I actually found myself wondering where they had all come from) and every acolyte on the church's list. There were lots of candles, too much incense (for me), a sermon of which I couldn't understand a word, but a beautiful, joyful atmosphere which all contributed to making it one of my most memorable Easter services ever.

The second service was in a Southern Baptist Church in North Carolina in the 1960s which I mentioned in a previous article; hardly any ceremony at all, but absolutely overflowing with the joy of being alive and celebrating something very special.

Growing up in Lancashire I attended a Church of England Junior School and the highlight of the end of the spring term was the Maundy Thursday 'breaking up' service. The whole school was marched over to church; but the highlight was as we left; everyone was given a hot cross bun which we were allowed to take back to school and have with our bottle of milk. As I write this now it sounds pathetic, but we always regarded it as very special.

Another very local tradition was 'having new' for Easter. This involved getting a brand-new outfit, which was worn for the first time at the Easter Sunday Service. Was my new outfit more important than the service I attended to display it for the first time? Did the fact that I 'looked better than...' mean more than the celebration of Christ's rising from the dead? To a child (girl?) of a certain age, I imagine it did!

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have very different traditions. For young children, bringing a daffodil to decorate the Easter Cross can help them begin to understand from an early age the significance of the cross; and for older children and teenagers, the Easter Monday Pilgrimage to St Alban's Abbey becomes a very important way of demonstrating their faith along with hundreds of others.

For me personally the service I always enjoy most is the Maundy Thursday evening service and the ceremonies that immediately follow it. Sitting in a darkened church which is gradually stripped of all trappings and listening to the beautiful chanting is an inspiring preparation for all that is to ensue in the following days. I sometimes wonder if this means that 'actions' and 'ceremonies' have too much significance for me, but as Easter approaches, no doubt we shall all have our different feelings about it.

**Dorothy Townshend, St Peter & St Paul**

## FOTCH 100 Club Spring Draw



The second draw of Year 16 took place during lockdown which meant that the normal Spring Lunch had to be postponed.

I am happy to say that the numbers were drawn

under strict security by the ministry team and the winners are 3<sup>rd</sup> prize £25 number 30 – John Hawkes; 2<sup>nd</sup> prize £75 number 78 – Phil Lawrence; 1<sup>st</sup> prize £150 number 88 – Libby McKerrow.

Congratulations to these wise investors and many thanks to all who support the 100 Club – a vital source of revenue for the Friends of Tring Church Heritage in this time. Please look out for

your chance to renew for Year 17! Hopefully the next draw will take place in a full social environment at the Autumn Lunch!

**Grahame Senior**  
FOTCH Honorary President



# Climbing the Hill of Sion to Resurrection



If Tring Team Parish could lay claim to a truly world-class local artist, it is arguably Stanley Spencer. Born and raised, married and buried just over the Chiltern Ridge in Cookham, Spencer was the quintessential

Englishman of a certain class at a turbulent time in our history – the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This era uniquely features not just one, but two World Wars, the death of the class system, the end of Imperialism, the flowering of socialism and the rise of the common man – finally fed up with ‘being lions led by donkeys’. Like the traditional ‘Curate’s egg’ – and just about every human being – Spencer was good in parts and equally frustratingly bad in others. He sometimes was comfortable and friendly and at other times outrageously challenging, but he loved people and he loved God.

The first painting he ever exhibited was called ‘John Donne arriving in heaven’ – the type of rather pretentious but deeply committed title every Grammar School boy who has embarked on a career in the arts will recognise. It is a marvellous though slightly clumsy piece of work (painted at Art School in 1911). It reveals Spencer’s life-long fascination with the impact religion has on human beings. Belief and unbelief are entwined in his life’s work like roses among brambles.

If you are looking for some glorious and accomplished artworks by the Great Masters, ostensibly glorifying God – but just as often serving the ambitions of a powerful patron – Spencer may not be for you. If you are looking for evidence of the life-long struggle by the ordinary human to come to terms with mortality and the remote possibility of there being something out there bigger and better, Spencer may be just the thing you need.

## A journey to the Cross – and Resurrection

He is particularly relevant to the Easter season. Resurrection is a recurring theme throughout his career and it features in his major paintings time and time again. It is perhaps significant that he did not attempt to portray the agony of the crucifixion itself until the very end of his own life.

His Resurrection works can make wonderful and hopeful viewing; his Crucifixion is possibly the most uncomfortable depiction of man’s capacity for casual inhumanity that has ever been exhibited. It is disturbing and, quite literally, shocking.

## Resurrection after Resurrection

The first articulation of his vision of Resurrection is arguably the most famous and celebrated. It was painted between 1924 and 1927 and it was the centrepiece of his

first major exhibition. ‘The Resurrection – Cookham’ was received with rave reviews and shows the Resurrection taking place in the churchyard at Cookham. It is a huge work and today hangs in the Tate Gallery. It is a very literal interpretation of the promised return of humanity in exactly the same form and condition that they departed this life and many of the individuals featured are actual characters from Spencer’s lifetime. It is a huge work of imagination, faith and skill.

In parallel with this hopeful and positive vision, Spencer was working on an even bigger project which took his brutal experiences of the First World War to a new and hopeful conclusion in the Sandham Chapel at Burghclere.

His ‘Resurrection of the Soldiers’ is the focal point of the collection of seventeen paintings which are a cathartic outcome of Spencer’s personal experiences of war. They are available to see today exactly as they were painted in situ by Spencer. The vision of the legions of soldiers rising from their graves and the forests of white crosses that surround them seems both surreal and achingly hopeful. The rest of the chapel paintings focus on the ordinary everyday life of those soldiers and have a comforting familiarity. The resurrection vision surrounding the altar draws the eye beyond the everyday and upwards towards the hoped-for promise of eternal life...

Seeing it today after so much more war and destruction and persecution has taken place in the intervening years is a very moving experience, one that is available very easily if you live in Tring.

## What happened next?

The everyday life of an artist with all its twists and turns, highs and lows, surprises and disappointments is what happened next.

Spencer was at times feted and at other times fell out of favour. He was much criticised by his fellow-artists and sometimes considered rather uninspiring. His personal life was the usual messy affair of the tortured, conflicted artist. Some of his unflinching representations of the human nude were even described as obscene. There is little doubt, however, that the example of self-portraits and lovers was something of a trailblazer for both Bacon and Freud.

Like all dedicated, driven artists he pursued his visions single-mindedly and often lost friends and wives and lovers in the process.

What did not fail him was his unique commitment to the unfathomable mysteries of religion and the tantalizing nature of the relationship between humanity and God.

Like John Donne before him, he was enslaved by many ordinary human weaknesses but fascinated by the unknowable nature of God. Throughout his work there are glimpses of what might be... of what possibilities God may have in store for us.

During World War II Spencer was commissioned to paint a whole series of pictures in Port Glasgow on the Clyde. In 1945 at the end of the war his fortunes were at a low ebb but he retained an idea which had come to him whilst in Port Glasgow. On an evening walk he had glimpsed a sunlit cemetery on a hill and this re-kindled his visionary spirit with a distant memory of a phrase that resurrection would be ‘like climbing the Hill of Sion’.

He produced two more huge paintings ‘Resurrection – the Hill of Sion’ and ‘Resurrection – Port Glasgow’ along with smaller accompanying canvasses which showed everyday meetings and reunions of ordinary humans finding each other again in the unexpected event of resurrection. They are glorious images of the endless flowering of hope that is possible in every human breast and were intended to be shown in one collection.

Sadly, this magnificent vision was never fully realised and the whole sequence was never exhibited together. The ‘Resurrection – Port Glasgow’ canvas was finally exhibited in Glasgow in 2000 to huge acclaim.

Throughout his life Resurrection remained the enduring vision that brought together Spencer’s ability to portray ordinary humans with vitality and hope with the promised possibility of something wonderful happening to humanity that would make it all worthwhile. In reality Resurrection is a possibility only for God.

## The final vision

As we journey through Lent we are again reminded that Christ knew that every step of the way was a journey closer to the Cross. Jesus knew that Resurrection could only become reality after the agony and pain of Crucifixion.

Stanley Spencer did not paint the Crucifixion event until almost the end of his life and he produced it in 1957 just after he was knighted and when he already knew that he was dying. It is a remarkable and rather shocking image of the ordinary casual cruelty of which human beings are capable – the common man doing what he is commanded to do and killing to order.

I defy anyone to look at it without a shudder of horror at how capable we sadly are at dispensing cruelty to others. It does not portray a glorious execution so much as a messy painful botch-up.

So let us end with the Easter vision of Spencer’s Resurrection paintings when hope springs from the grave and life is renewed – through God’s grace on a sunny Easter morning. The vision that engaged Stanley Spencer with a life-long fascination.

Perhaps we can all imagine climbing that Hill of Sion and finally finding the perfect peace that lies at the top.

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

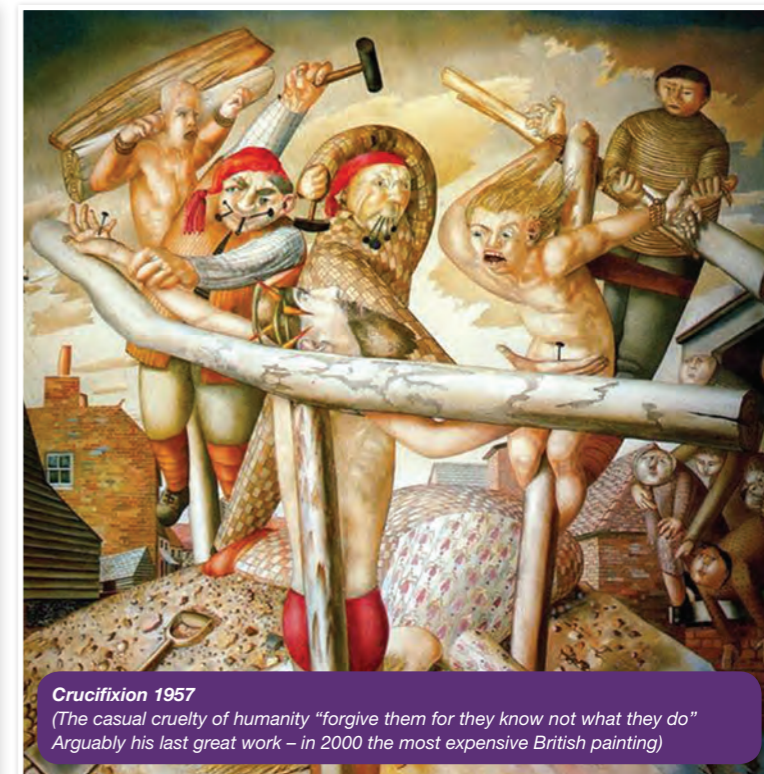
# Sir Stanley Spencer’s road to the Hill of Sion – An Artist’s Journey to Resurrection



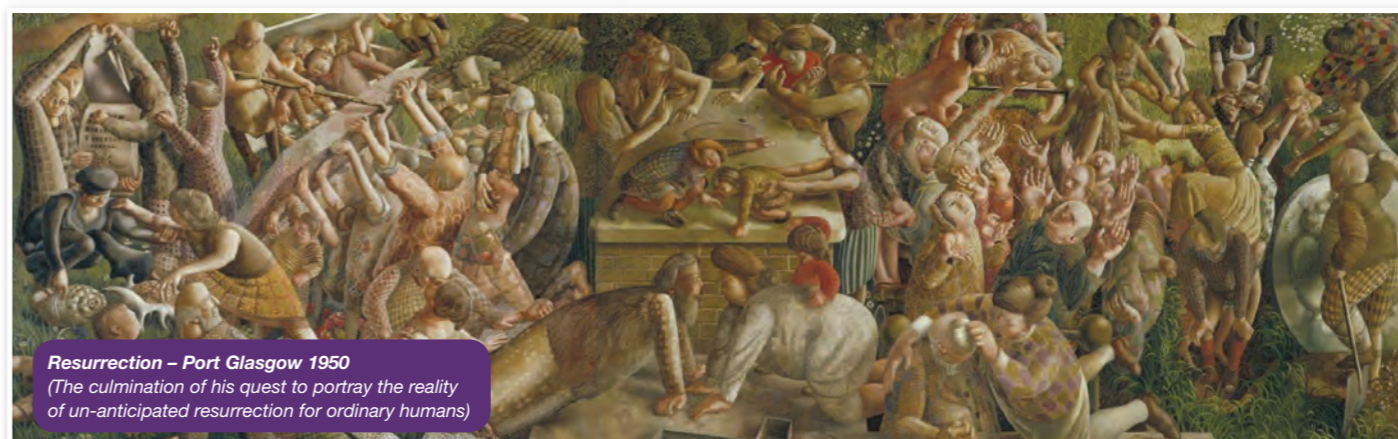
**Resurrection – Cookham 1924 - 1927**  
(The Painting that first brought him acclaim)



**Resurrection of the Soldiers 1927**  
(The Central Mural of Burghclere Chapel – a testament to the sacrifice of soldiers)



**Crucifixion 1957**  
(The casual cruelty of humanity “forgive them for they know not what they do” Arguably his last great work – in 2000 the most expensive British painting)



**Resurrection – Port Glasgow 1950**  
(The culmination of his quest to portray the reality of un-anticipated resurrection for ordinary humans)



# Easter musical favourites



One of the challenges I face in being asked to select 'favourite' items is that there is so much to choose from and I like almost all of it! So the list below is those items that have come to mind now, and for various different reasons, as you can see.

Easter is clearly a time for great celebration in the cycle of seasons of the church year, so it is no surprise that many of the items on this list are quite flamboyant in style. But there are also some more contemplative items included by virtue of their beautiful music and relevance to Easter. A few of the items on the list are strictly limited to being sung on Easter Day itself, whereas many would be relevant at any time during the Easter season, and a few are suitable for use at any time of celebration.

This Easter will be the second in a row to have to make do with very limited vocal music being performed. The only item on the list below that you are likely to be able to hear sung this year is the

Exsultet. So I look forward to seeing you at the 6.00am service at St Peter & St Paul's on Easter Day to listen to it!

### The Exsultet

Beautiful plainchant music and words, and a privilege to be able to sing it each year – at the Parish Church we are even moving into the 21st century this year with a new version featuring contemporary language.

### Hymn: Jesus Christ is risen today

The name says it all, Easter Day would just not be complete without singing this.

### Hymn: The strife is o'er, the battle done

This is a tremendous rousing hymn used, to good effect, in the Easter daybreak service to mark the transition from the darkness of Good Friday to the joy of Easter day.

### Hymn: Thine be the glory

This is a good excuse for playing the organ very loudly!

### Hymn: In the garden Mary lingers

The relatively recent words of this tell the Easter story in a fresh way.

**Hymn: Now the green blade riseth**  
Tells the Easter story quietly and gently (which is a nice change), but the last verse is my favourite - so poignant.

### O rejoice that the Lord has arisen (Mascagni)

Beautiful work for Chorus and Soprano Solo.

### Morning of the Day of Days (Malcolm Williamson)

Some quite unusual music in this but it's a good telling of the Easter morning story.

### Christians, shout for joy and gladness (Bach)

Probably not as popular as it deserves, a lovely short-ish item celebrating the joy of Easter.

### The Halleluiah Chorus (Handel)

Probably not strictly an Easter item but when performed on its own it is a magnificent celebration fitting for many a celebratory day, none more fitting than Easter Day!

**Cliff Brown**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

# Letter from Orkney



There has been a huge amount written over the last year about the difficulties being experienced by folk during the Covid-19 pandemic. I've had a few ups and downs, but these were put into perspective when Mac was taken to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary – again – and I was unable to be with him at a profoundly challenging time for him.

This time Mac suffered a brain stem stroke – he goes to extreme lengths to get out of his turn writing for this august publication. The stroke has left him with extreme muscle weakness in his left arm, left leg and a little difficulty with speaking, which this does not sit well with someone who loves to chat and express his views on life, the universe and everything.

The value of Zoom calls for us was again highlighted, demonstrated by Mac being able to join in our usual weekly quiz here in Orkney, and the Lent House

Group Zoom call while lying alone in his hospital room. This would not have happened in 'normal' times so that was a small positive.

Another bright spot for me has been Jasper, the Labrador, who has given me a reason to get up and out in the morning, gives me a sense of normality and generally keeps me going. However, the helplessness I feel at not being able to be with Mac and be his advocate while he is in hospital is profound. It has highlighted how cruel this pandemic is at keeping us apart from loved ones at the very time they need us most. I know there are people in Tring in the same situation and I have a strong sense of empathy for them.

The kindness of so many people and the prayers which have been sent, including from St Peter & St Paul, for which I give thanks, have reinforced by belief in the goodness of folk. I pray that by the time this piece is published, Mac will be firmly on his road to recovery and the world will be a better, brighter and more hopeful place for us all.

**Carrie Dodge**  
**St Mary's, Stromness**

# STOP PRESS!

*Just before we went to press, we learned that Mac had indeed been transferred from Aberdeen to Balfour Hospital in Kirkwall, Orkney. He is making progress with physiotherapy (slower than he would like...). They discovered a blood clot on his lung which has now been fixed and there is a chance that he will be back at home with Carrie and Jasper shortly after this edition of Comment magazine reaches you.*

**The Editor**



# Ready to be radically welcoming?



The Consultation on Emerging Strategy for Growth closed on 28 February. We eagerly await the outcome of this as it is likely to have a very large effect on us.

It seems likely that Tring will need to accommodate some 2,730 new homes. There is a vague possibility (but much less likely) that they will revert to a plan which saw a whole new settlement of 3,800 homes in Long Marston! Presumably this Long Marston development is no longer on the cards, but given that it was even considered shows that significant new housing is needed in our area; and Tring has been earmarked for it.

It means that Tring will continue to change and develop. It is hard to describe Tring as a farming town anymore. Losing two more family-run farms, Dunsley Farm and Cow Lane Farm, will confirm this. However, Tring is in no ways unique here. The small UK family farm has been on the decline post-WWII, with the number of holdings of 20 hectares or less vanishing from 158,000 in 1950 to 38,500 in 2015. While these farms may be tiny on a commercial scale, the trend follows through to those of 40, 50, and 60 hectares too.

According to a Defra report released last year, farms of these sizes have more than halved in number in the past sixty

years. I have a sneaking suspicion that the big posters around town saying 'Save our Farms' are more concerned about preventing development than actually supporting the financial viability of family farms. Personally, I like having a working farm at the entrance to our town. That is because Phil sells us hay for our sheep, and piglets to raise (as well as the eggs, of course!), but that is a little niche. I also rather like having fields to walk the dog in, but I don't have to walk too much further to get into open countryside.

I know some people have had concerns about the nature of the consultation in a global pandemic. Equally there are real concerns about how the infrastructure and services will be able to cope with the development and it would be good to hear more about how this will be dealt with. There is also significant concern that Tring will lose its community feel. I have been massively

struck by someone saying that we need to frame all of this debate in terms of a ministry of welcome. We need to reflect the radical welcome which God offers to each of us. If we are radically welcoming, then community will continue.

I was very privileged in my upbringing. I grew up in rural Hampshire, in market garden country. Housing was cheaper in our unpopular village compared with the neighbouring ones. My parents had no connection with the land (a health visitor and a magistrate's clerk) so living where we did was always a life style choice. It meant for me that holiday jobs were courgette picking, hay carting, pulling wild oats out of wheat fields and the like. However, I haven't opted for rural ministry because ministry is still about people and being in a town, there are people. Much as I love farms and the countryside, people are more important. It isn't 2,730 homes, it is people. I hope that if the development does go ahead that we can offer a radical welcome and that our town and churches thrive.

**Huw Bellis**  
**Tring Team**

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**Barry Child**  
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# Remember

*March 2020 the world stood on its head  
As we listened in shock to the rising numbers of dead.  
A change to our lives, one like never before,  
Huge losses of lives behind closed hospital doors  
Somebody's father or mother, another man's wife  
Covid-19 pandemic has taken over everyone's life.  
'Go to work, don't go to work!'  
'Help! I'm confused  
What is the right thing?  
I'm just not amused.'  
Days become weeks and merge into one,  
The streets are all empty, my walk today is done.  
Lonely faces stand at windows, looking out for a smile,  
Months and months of solitude – that's not a little while.  
Families are devastated by this life-changing pandemic:  
It's taking no prisoners, not even the medics.  
We clap for the nation on Thursdays at 7.00  
So many have passed, are they smiling in heaven?*

*Another daily update, the world's standing still.  
No news on the vaccine or a miracle pill!  
Boris reminds us 'hands face space'  
But still no news on track and trace!  
Schools shut, stay at home, each day the same  
PPE, visors, no 'rule of six', it's insane!  
Testing sites, loo roll fights, 2 metre distance –  
'Please stay safe' it's so hard with all of the resistance.  
Excitement for Christmas, a new 'rule of six'  
Bad idea Boris, Covid loves people to mix.  
Hooray for a vaccine, risk groups 1-9  
Get the nation a vaccine, its gonna be fine.  
Rainbows in windows, the NHS shines  
Our nation's true heroes through these Covid times...*

**Sarah Ormonde, supplied by Dorothy Townshend**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

# My life in eight churches

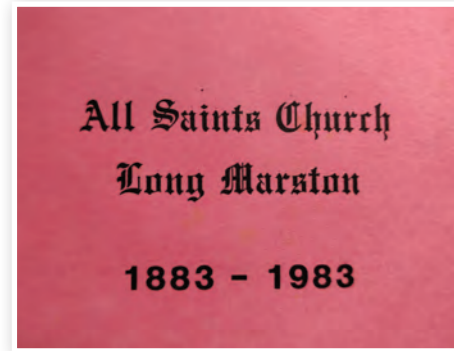


Here are eight of my favourite churches, in response to the Editor's request for a Desert Island Discs of churches.

First up is St Peter & St Paul, Tring. This photograph is of Steffi Buse and me in the snow in January. This is my 'happy place'; my home church.

Next is All Saints, Long Marston. I have chosen this church because I've always found it very friendly and welcoming, especially since the 'red heaters' were installed. I think I have a soft spot for All Saints because my great-great-grandfather, Henry Fincher, owned the company that built the church in 1883 (Ref All Saints Church, Long Marston, by M C Vincent).

I worked for a short time in Hong Kong in 2012 and I was amazed by the Cathedral. First, my memory is that it was surrounded by skyscrapers. Secondly, it had televisions, suspended from the ceiling, all the way down the south and north aisles. I remember thinking that this would never be allowed at home. However, despite the chaos of the city, the Cathedral was an oasis of calm and coolness on a hot day.



Next comes St Michael's on North Hill, Minehead. I've been taking part in a summer classical musical festival, based on Exmoor for forty years. (Forty years!? How on earth did that happen?) The orchestral musicians are given B&B by the great and the good of the town and I have very fond memories of attending 8.00am BCP at St Michael's with my hosts, Mr and Mrs Brown. The views from North Hill over Minehead are beautiful.



And now for something completely different. The photograph of the blue door is the church on Agathi Beach in Rhodes where the church has been hollowed out of a cliff face. Everything is so relaxed here that the door is simply fastened with string. Ayia Agathi makes me think about how the church must have been when Christians first met together in Greece. It is tiny, probably six people would squeeze in, but it still has a sense of God.



And finally, back to St Peter & St Paul. I was 'hatched and matched' in this church and I am very keen also to be 'dispatched' from here. (And, a final reminder to my family, remember that I would like the glass carriage and the black plumed horses!)

In 2017, Barry and I went to Rome and, like hundreds of others, toured the Vatican. The Sistine Chapel was phenomenal, but my favourite memory is of the enormous cherubs in St Paul's Basilica. Despite being absolutely crammed full of people, St Paul's still has a serene atmosphere.



And this delicious feeling of God being present is also in abundance at my seventh church, the Anglican Shrine to our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk. Like most visitors, I took a photo of Jesus' ascension, with his feet disappearing through the ceiling. However, my favourite item on display was a stainless-steel catering urn of Holy Water available in the foyer. It included the health and safety sign 'Don't try and move this urn, it is heavy'.



Our busyness is true as much in our working and home lives as it is in our community and spiritual lives. We are frequently too busy with many things, but

**Vivianne Child**  
St Peter & St Paul



# Who packs your parachute?



In the 80s Madonna sang: 'I am a material girl in a material world'. In recent years I think we could change that to say, 'I am a busy girl in a busy world'.

You would think that in the last year the Covid-19 pandemic has forced many to stop or slow down. But home schooling, working from home and all those jobs that you just never got around to put paid to that. Most people seem intent on rushing back to the busyness as quickly as possible.

Busyness seems to be the disease of our modern age: so much to do, with so little time to do it and only little me here to do it all.

Let's be serious, some people are very good at being busy. Some of us love it and are busy at being busy. I know I can be! We can create our own work and we become busy at being 'people pleasers', trying to make everyone happy.

We can become lost in our busyness; we are indispensable, irreplaceable, and even self-righteous in our busyness. The whole world would collapse or descend into chaos if it were not for us.

Really? In truth, if you want to know how indispensable you really are, try this: place both your hands in a bucket of water, when you take them out, the gap that is left behind is the gap you will leave.

Our busyness is true as much in our working and home lives as it is in our community and spiritual lives. We are frequently too busy with many things, but

are we spending time to listen, to think, to reflect, to meditate, to pray, to stop, look around us and appreciate? Or are we too busy?

Now don't get me wrong, action is good. However, what we 'think' is essential is not always the most important thing. How do we know when we have it right? Sometimes we have to stop and take stock, otherwise our actions can just be self-perpetuating.

Sometimes we will never realise what work we have done, what effect we have on others, and more importantly, the effect they have on us.

If Covid-19 has done anything, it has awakened us to the fact that there are those who are truly busy, made us appreciate some of those forgotten heroes, as we stopped to clap for the NHS and care workers.

But there are countless others who work tirelessly, those unsung heroes in our midst, those who labour in the background, never noticed with little or no recognition of the role they play in our communities or our private lives.

Captain Charlie Plumb was a US Naval pilot who flew the F-4 Phantom on seventy-four successful combat missions over Vietnam. On his 75<sup>th</sup> mission, with only five days before he was to return home, Plumb was shot down, captured, tortured, and imprisoned in an 8 foot x 8 foot cell where he spent the next six years. Many years after being repatriated to the US, Plumb was sat in a Kansas City restaurant with his wife, when a man approached him and said:

'You're Captain Plumb. You flew jet fighters in Vietnam. You were on the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot

down. You parachuted into enemy hands and spent six years as a prisoner of war.'

Plumb said, 'How in the world did you know all that?' He replied, 'Because I packed your parachute.'

Plumb was speechless. He staggered to his feet and embraced the man who said, 'I guess it worked'.

Plumb didn't get much sleep that night. He kept thinking about the man, kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform. He wondered how many times he passed him on board the Kitty Hawk, wondered how many times he might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning', 'How are you?' or anything. How many hours had that man spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of that ship weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of those chutes? Yet he had not noticed, couldn't have cared less, until the day his parachute saved his life.

How many times has God used us as the catalyst to change another's life, to support or even save them? Who are the people behind the scenes in your life, day in, day out, working in so many small unnoticed ways? Who are the unsung heroes quietly working away in your life, making everything possible for you, always there to catch you if you fall?

So this Easter, as we come nearer to the end of lockdown and we rush to restore our former busy 'normal' life, take a break from your busyness; stop, look around you, listen with the ear of your heart, and consider, where is Christ at work in my life?

Who is packing your parachute?

**Padre Neil Galloway**  
**Chaplain RAF Halton**

## A star in Tring!

Congratulations to Tom Mayhew, ex-Tring School student – and proud parents Alan and Gillian of Akeman Street Baptist Church – who landed a comedy spot on Radio 4 in February which continued for four episodes.

Called 'Tom Mayhew is Benefit Scum', all the material was written and performed by stand-up comedian Tom. The show started life on the Edinburgh fringe and is based on his experience of the benefits system. In it he mentions that when he was jobless in 2010, he found his Pokemon cards were worth more than his A Level certificates.

Tom has also been a script writer for

Radio 4's News Quiz in the past.

When I first met Tom more than 11 years ago, I hope he won't mind saying he was very shy. He has eaten pizza in my house many a time, did some work experience at a little known publishing house in Tring; and when that same young man greeted me in Tring High Street a few years ago, he HUGGED me because he had learned that we were to become foster carers – and he thoroughly approved. Tom is also best friend to our son Jon who used to do comedy podcasts with him when he started out.

**The Editor**



# Dreams come true



As many *Comment* readers will know, I play and teach the piano, and in 2017 I inaugurated the 'Piano and More' series in St Peter & St Paul's Church, which has proved to be

highly successful.

So how did my career in music come about, and what led me to Tring?

As a baby I was apparently fascinated by listening to my great uncle Jack and my mother playing the piano, mostly dance music and popular songs and standards of the day – and as soon as I could, I tried to play what I had heard, well before I could read music, which I learnt to do at the age of 5 when I started piano lessons.

One of my earliest memories is of sitting on the piano stool making up my own tunes, enjoying the sensation and the sound of my fingers on the keys, and I especially remember being struck by a piece my mother played a lot called 'Cast your fate to the wind', which had an arresting blue and white stripy front page!



When I was around 8, we had to write a story at school about what we wanted to do when we grew up, and I remember drawing a picture of me on a stage at a piano to head up what I wrote. Later, as a teenager, I wrote another story; at an unspecified later point in my life, after a glittering career as a concert pianist, I



would live in a nice house with a grand piano, and people would come from far and wide to learn with me and I would be called 'Madame Anna'!

I cut my musical teeth, as it were, playing the piano from the age of 8 for several years at the Young Families Eucharist at St Andrews, our church in Bedford. Each week I would play a different piece at the beginning and end of the service, as well as during communion, and I would sometimes improvise too. I also participated in our local competitive music festival, often performing in the Winners Concerts, which were scary, but once I was up on the stage in the Corn Exchange at the big black piano, I was fine! I am naturally a very shy person, which some people reading this may find hard to believe, but I've worked on it over the years, and found that playing the piano is a way I can express myself.

I studied music for four years at Edinburgh University and then completed a two-year postgraduate diploma in performance at the Royal College of Music in London. During that time, I won scholarships to spend two wonderful summers in Bayreuth and Salzburg studying piano accompaniment. Then I was ready to hit the big bad world!

I spent my 20s living in London, earning my living through teaching piano and playing background music in hotels and restaurants (including the Basil Hotel in Knightsbridge, where I sometimes got big tips for playing requested tunes, and Ashleys restaurant in Soho, where the

entire cast of *East Enders* once came in). I also made some money accompanying ballet classes in South Kensington.

My love of performing was not neglected, and I gave many recitals in churches and halls, but they were mostly unpaid, and I had to pay my rent somehow! I toured with the Lewis London Ballet throughout the UK and the Channel Islands during this time, as part of a small chamber ensemble, which I enjoyed, although my shyness held me back a little. I was still very much lacking in self-confidence then. But one day I woke up and thought that unless I did something about it, things would never change, so I booked myself on to a summer school in the Lake District, and then in subsequent years on summer schools in Aberystwyth and Keele, and then started working as a House Pianist at AIMS International summer school for singers, which I did for many years. I made it my business to meet people, take initiatives and play everywhere I could, paid or not. This all led to me making lifelong friends – indeed, I met my lovely husband Edmund at an annual chamber music weekend – and getting to know a lot of repertoire as well as building my career.

Playing the piano has taken me to many different places. I have played orchestral piano on the stage at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, and I've played piano concertos in many venues, including St Martin in the Fields. I have performed in festivals in Croatia, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Wales and France, as well as performing at the

Edinburgh and Buxton Fringe festivals, mainly accompanying choirs and singers. Playing the chamber organ in Granada Cathedral stands out, but I also have memories of concerts in small village churches, with cats basking outside (and sometimes wandering in), and in so many halls and churches in interesting parts of towns and cities.



My first continental concert was accompanying a small group of singers in the tiny village church of Ménil – Hermei in Normandy. I was surprised by people wandering around during the concert, taking photos and stretching their legs, but they all seemed very appreciative and I will never forget the party afterwards, which it seemed as though the whole village attended, with trestle tables in the street and much wine, food, merriment and warm hospitality.

Another memorable tour was of part of New Zealand in 2014 with my friend and duo partner, violinist Arwen Newband. Arwen's parents still live in Auckland, where we gave a couple of recitals. We also gave a concert in Nelson Cathedral, on the South Island, which was a wonderful venue.

In 2015 I became an examiner for the ABRSM graded music exams, and spent the summer of 2019 examining in Kuala Lumpur. I nearly didn't go – six weeks seemed a long time to be away – but I'm so glad I did; it was a fabulous experience! This year, I have examined in Hong Kong, Cyprus and Sri Lanka, as well as a return trip to Malaysia – but only remotely, of course!

So, what brought me to Tring? Well, having spent my 30s mostly in Woking, I moved to Apsley, near Hemel Hempstead, in 2001, and taught piano and accompanied at Tring Park School as well as doing many other things, and made a life for myself in this area of the country. Edmund and I got married in 2009, and just at the right moment as we were planning where to live, I discovered that musical friends who were living here (I had been to gatherings at their house and always loved it) were downsizing and moving. We

bought their house, have lived here ever since and been very happy. I now have a lovely music studio, I finally bought my Steinway grand piano, and I feel very much part of the musical fabric of the town.

I have never wanted to do anything else other than earn my living through playing the piano, and to bring pleasure to people through my playing. I aim to move an audience, for people to feel different after they have heard me play from what they did before, and I hope I achieve that sometimes. I have always felt as though the piano is an integral

part of me. I feel incredibly lucky, and so blessed, to be here, now, and to be able to earn my living doing something I enjoy so much. I haven't had an especially glittering career, but I've had a very interesting one – indeed, I am still having it – I haven't hung up my performing fingers yet! I feel that I am playing better than ever now, and that maybe the best is yet to come – who knows?

My childhood dream has become my reality, but I have never yet been addressed as Madame Anna – thank goodness!

**Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul**



# Heart to God and hand to man



As we all know there has been nothing like the Covid-19 pandemic in living memory when in March 2020, the whole country was placed into lockdown.

We had to come to terms with life being quite different. Many of the things we had taken for granted were no longer available to us. This included access to worship. This had to evolve in a very short time to enable people to be able to connect with worship in a different way.

Our leaders in the Salvation Army, Dunstable, Majors Steve and Lindsay Brevitt produced paper copies of a guide to worship called 'Stay Connected', the first one being sent out on Sunday 22 March, Mother's Day. At this time, Major Steve had the virus and his family were in isolation.

'Stay connected' contained Bible readings, suggested hymns, prayers, reflections and Christian music to listen to and activities for the children. These are still being produced at the time of writing and we now have the Sunday service streamed on YouTube. Arrangements were also made for people to be contacted by telephone regularly to ensure they were OK.

Prior to the lockdown our hall was not only used for Sunday worship but also for different activities in the week. Most of these had to close, including our Soup Kitchen, which enabled people to come for a hot meal and access to a shower. However, our Community Services, run by Jim Dawson our Community Care Team Coordinator, were still allowed to function.

## Community Care Team

Jim told me that during the pandemic, people in the local community in Dunstable and the surrounding areas sought help from The Salvation Army. Many – for the first time in their lives – found themselves in difficulties. We saw many people who were previously homeless being temporarily housed in the new shelters operated by Central Beds Council and some people were moved into permanent housing.

The needs were and continue to be various and numerous, including the

requirement for Emergency Food Parcels (the number of these given out went from 221 in 2019 to 492 in 2020), Utility Top Ups, Clothes, Toiletries, and a hot shower, all of which we can provide at The Salvation Army Hall. Some people who were recently housed requested help with acquiring basic cooking utensils such as pots and pans, plates, knives and forks, as well as toasters, kettles, and bedding. Many of these had to be purchased from Salvation Army Community Care funds.

We also saw an increase in demand for food bank vouchers. Food banks in Dunstable increased the number of times people can access supplies from the food bank from three times during a 6-month period to five times.

Thanks to the generosity of members of the local community, including individuals, businesses, churches, faith groups, schools, and The Salvation Army Regional Division, we have been able to offer help to those in need throughout the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. We continue to operate Drop-in sessions four days a week at Dunstable, where the local community can access services and we hope to re-open our Soup Kitchen when we can.

## Debt Advice

Fiona Simpson is our Debt Advice Coordinator. She told me that the Debt Advice Service run by the Salvation Army in Dunstable offers free and confidential advice to people who find themselves experiencing financial difficulties. This service is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and we are members of Advice UK and Community Money Advice. When a person comes for advice, we look at a way to help them to self-manage their money so that they feel more in control of their lives. We believe in giving the clients a hand-up rather than a handout. We will work on their behalf with creditors to agree a repayment plan that is affordable to each individual. Clients tell us they are now sleeping at night and feel much less stressed now they are getting help to manage their debts.

We have seen the impact that critical illness disability or brain injury can have on a person and/or the family. A person who has had a good salary and managed their finances well can suddenly find themselves in financial crisis because of

having to suddenly manage on benefits. This has happened more and more during the pandemic.

We have worked with people who have fled domestic violence and only have the clothes they are standing in, some with little children. These people are referred through the women's refuge. We have also received referrals from the stroke association, home start, family workers, social workers and many others. We work with people who have mental health issues and addictions. Additionally, some of the clients have initially come into the centre for food parcels and the Community Care team have referred them on to us.

We are keen that the people who come to us walk away feeling that someone really cares. Working closely with the community Care Team, we are able to offer food parcels, food vouchers and a Christmas Hamper to our clients if required. We also signpost them to other agencies if we feel that would be helpful, such as a GP for counselling. In addition to all this we offer budgeting courses to help people manage their money better.

Here is the testimony of one of the clients: 'When I first came for support from the Salvation Army, I felt like a broken person. I didn't know where to start with all this debt over me. I've been diagnosed with depression and anxiety but coming to the Salvation Army with a large amount of debt turned my life upside-down. Meeting these amazing people has turned my life around. Now I'm debt free and on fewer tablets. I'm no longer on sleeping tablets and I couldn't have done it without the amazing advisers and all the support from the Salvation Army. I was in a very dark place and now I can see the light. The main point of this is to tell people: please don't suffer in silence. There are people out there who can help – just ask. The advisers have never criticised or judged me. They didn't make me feel like it was my fault. This has been amazing, not just because the debt advice advisers have been my counsellors, but they have helped me understand the reasons why I got in debt in the first place; and when you find out what makes you sad or why this has happened, then you can sort the issue out. I love these people to bits. My home is now a happy home, all thanks to the Salvation Army, my friends.'

## Over 75 Group

In normal circumstances a group runs at the Corps on each Thursday. These are the over-75s, a group who spend the day together and enjoy food, friendship, and fellowship. This facility is partially financed by Central Beds and managed by Elsie Haldane, Over-75s coordinator, along with her volunteers. Elsie visits the home of each person who wishes to join the group, to assess their needs and to get to know them. There is sometimes a waiting list.

The day starts at 10.00am when they arrive at the hall having been brought in by Dial a Ride to be met at the door or outside by the volunteers.

At this point they start with a cup of tea and a biscuit or two and possibly a good chat before taking part in the activities if they want to. This could involve a quiz, games, and many other things Elsie has arranged.

Lunch comes next, a two-course meal at the hall. The meals are varied and healthy and cooked on the premises. The afternoon may include a chat with a police officer on how to stay safe. Meeting a dog brought in by the owner for them to stroke and even playing a game with a full-size parachute (I have asked if I can go in when they next play that game). Elsie has rung each member of the group weekly during the pandemic, to have a chat and make sure they are all safe and well. I know that sometimes she has arrived with little gifts to cheer them up.

I am sure they are all looking forward to the time they can meet up with their friends.

## Alcoholics Anonymous

This is another group that has been able to meet in our hall. It was decided that this essential service should continue for

the health and wellbeing of the clients. The meetings are run by AA on Thursday evenings.

## Hope for the future

The Salvation Army began its social work in Britain in 1884. Sadly the need is still there and continues to grow in our society today. There is no doubt that after we have come out of the pandemic there will still be a need. The Salvation Army will still be there with help, as I know churches of all denominations will be too.

We do not know what the 'new normality' will be, but we do know that God will be with us. In Jeremiah 29 verse 11 we are told: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you HOPE and a future."

**Pam Everton**  
**Salvation Army**  
**Dunstable**

# The great pork pie



A couple of months ago I shared with *Comment* readers my new found hobby – sausage making. In recent months it has taken a new direction – the pork pie. If you have ever been to a

FOTCH lunch, you will know that they are catered for by the amazing Barry Child, and Barry frequently makes a large raised pie for this. I tapped his brains and got myself a starting recipe and have been tinkering ever since.

My father was a great pork pie aficionado. His idea of a working lunch was a cup of coffee and a pork pie from the supermarket. I think of him when I make a family-sized raised pie. His eyes would pop out of his head! It turns out that my father-in-law is a particular lover of a game pie. I have some muntjac haunches in the freezer ready to make him one as soon as we are able to see each other again. However, the younger generation of cousins are all in agreement that the favourite is the gala pie. I think I have cracked it!

## Ingredients

- 250g plain flour
- 100g lard
- 100ml water
- 500g sausage meat
- 2 shelled hard-boiled eggs
- egg wash to glaze the pie

## Equipment

- Saucepan
- Food processor (not essential)
- Small loaf tin
- Cling film

## Instructions

It really is very simple. Heat the water and lard together until the lard is melted and then mix with the flour in a food processor until you have a pastry (the food processor is so you don't burn your hands, it's much easier to handle the pastry when it is still very warm). Roll out the pastry and line the well-greased loaf tin with it (saving enough for the lid). Add a layer of sausage meat, then the two shelled eggs, cover with the remaining sausage meat and add a pastry lid.

The quicker you work the better because as soon as the pastry cools down it is harder to work with. Glaze with egg wash and cook in a moderate oven.

I would give you timings, but I can never remember. If in doubt use a food thermometer to check, but you will be fine. Cooking is an art not a science.

Turn the pie out of the tin, allow it to cool and then wrap in cling film and leave in the fridge overnight.

Now I have to be honest here. I have no idea if the last step is necessary or not, but since I have been doing that the quality of my pastry has improved. I don't know if I just got better and making the pastry and the cling film is co-incidental, but Mary Berry recommended it, and who am I to disagree.



## Eating it

Perfect as a main meal with a salad or as a sneaky snack, assuming the kids and Jane haven't polished it off in one sitting. The only problem is I think it would go particularly well with a pint of Side Pocket for a Toad, but I have given up for Lent so I will have to have a cup of coffee, toast my dad and look forward to Easter and game pie with the in-laws.

**Huw Bellis**  
**Tring Team**

# Pandemic-friendly transition

This academic year is my 4<sup>th</sup> year teaching Year 3 at Bishop Wood. With us being a Junior School, we welcome our new cohort of eager seven-year-olds from Goldfield Infants School. In previous years, we have worked collaboratively to ensure that the 'big leap' to the school around the corner is a smooth and happy transition for our new families. For both children and parents, this can feel like a step into the unknown and it is our job to take our new families gently by the hand and welcome them into their new community.

Transition from Year 2 to 3 in 'normal' times is a carefully planned and thoughtfully organised timetable of activities. We need to get to know our new pupils but also make sure that the children begin the September term with the excitement of a new chapter outweighing the natural fears and worries that change can bring. We also meet our new parents and help them feel prepared and organised for the term: where to buy the correct uniform, which pencil case is suitable and how to order a school lunch are important topics to talk about alongside the content of the Year 3 curriculum.

We visit the Year 2 classes at Goldfield and work with the children in their familiar space. We get to know who they are and what they enjoy. They get to talk to their new teachers whilst feeling relaxed and the journey of moving into a new school begins. We welcome them into our busy hall to watch our Year 6s perform their traditional Leavers' Assembly. We return to Goldfield to enjoy their special leaving celebration and watch them have their moment on stage as they get ready to fly the nest of Infant School. They visit us again to spend a morning in their 'big' classroom. They have their first school dinner with us in the bigger, noisier dining hall. They begin to find their feet. Step by step, each visit gives the new children a sense of where they are moving to and who they will become when they are there.

But, of course, the summer term of 2020 was very different. The pandemic put huge restrictions on how we could begin to get to know the sixty children who would be joining us in September. In our first (virtual) planning meeting in mid-May, we all asked, 'How are we going to do this?' It seemed an impossible task

in the middle of an already challenging school term.

The barriers were endless. Firstly, the majority of the Year 2s were at home. Only a small number were in school as key worker children. We were unable to visit Goldfield and meet any child face-to-face and they couldn't visit us in their September classroom. Paying very close attention to Government guidelines meant that our face-to-face options were almost non-existent.

Adaptability and faith was called for, as has been asked of all of us. Alongside 'community,' one of Bishop Wood's core values is 'hope' and hope was very much at the front of our minds as we planned a pandemic-friendly transition process. We hoped it would allow the new children to get to know us and their new school. We hoped we would feel prepared to receive them and know everything we needed to know about them as a cohort and as individuals. We hoped our new families would feel happy, informed and trust us to care for their children. We hoped we would do the best possible for the children.

As is commonplace right now, virtual meetings formed the backbone of our transition process. The children were adapting like us and making the most of the strange times they found themselves in. They introduced themselves via Zoom and personalities were gradually revealed. We filmed a virtual tour of Bishop Wood and took our new families around their new school via YouTube. If they couldn't come to us, then we would come to them. Questions from the children were emailed to us and answered via video messages. Working from home, the Year 3 Bishop Wood children wrote letters from their home-schooling desks, welcoming the Year 2s to their school, answering questions and sharing happy memories. Parents received information via Powerpoint slides and had questions answered by our Admin staff. Had we done enough?

I'm proud to say we had. September 2020 came and our new Year 3s arrived and flourished. They amazed us with their ability to make the most of their new environment. They enjoyed each other's company, something they had been missing for so long, whilst getting to know new friends and staff members. They grew in confidence. They showed

us who they were. They made up for 'lost' time and reminded us of why we teach.

As I write this, our children are remote once more, but this time they feel closer than before. Our ability to connect has grown and with the click of a Google Meet link, their smiling faces greet us on screen each morning. Again, they show resilience and strength.

Transition is part of this new normal. We are all having to change and adapt. Little is what it was before. We long for the day when we can all be face-to-face again. Our Year 3s are yet to experience the dining hall, a school assembly or a whole school event. They haven't shared the joy of singing a Bishop Wood favourite hymn or celebrating a year 5 child's success. They still have a lot of experiences to discover.

Soon it will be time to begin the annual 'moving up' process for all children and we will think about saying goodbye to our year 6s and welcoming more Year 3s. Hopefully, this summer, it will be without a screen.

**Paula Birley**  
**Bishop Wood School**

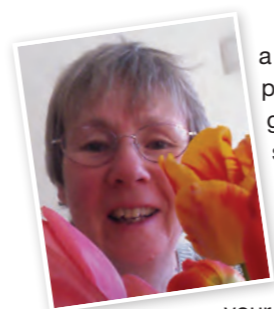
## Happy News

Many congratulations to Brad and Nicki on the arrival in February 2021 of Darcey Day Sinfield, a sister to Harrison, who was baptised in St Peter & St Paul's Church on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019.

**The Editor**



# Why you should care about cowpats



If you are a pet owner, a parent, guardian, grandparent, shepherd, swine-herd or a backyard poultry keeper, there is no doubt you aim to keep your charges worm-

free (no itchy bottoms, thank you) and ectoparasite free (be it fleas, headlice, sheep scab, to name but a few choice visitors). So 'wormers' (used here to mean anthelmintics) and insecticides (including insect growth inhibitors) are in widespread use in the home and beyond and we are probably all the healthier for using them (one day I may write something about why parasites might be good for you along with the amazing gut biome that impacts both physical and mental health), but when we use a whole range of drugs, medications and pharmaceuticals, what are the overall consequences? Is there even more to worry about than the loss of bees and hover flies and other attractive pollinators? Should we look beyond the 'plight of the bumblebee'? Yes indeed!

The 'Crooks' (a random group of local sheep keepers) were invited to graze some lambs at the beautiful Millhoppers nature reserve, near Wilstone, now most ably managed by members of the Butterfly Conservation Trust. BCT made quite reasonable demands about what medications the lambs could receive prior



to and during their stay on the land, the concern being that insecticide residues could have deleterious effects on the very insects they are trying to preserve, namely butterflies.

Insects generally are pretty amazing but I am passing over glamorous butterflies and high profile honey-bees, acrobatic damselflies and dragonflies and considering the earth's lowly housekeepers, the beetles!

Beetles are the largest group of animals on the planet with over 350,000 species worldwide, the UK home to around 10% of these species. They are all insects, of course, (head, thorax and abdomen, six legs) but the beetles (Coleoptera: Coleo – sheath, ptera-wings as in pterodactyl, pterosaur, diptera etc) have two sets of wings, one pair forming a hard shell or sheath over a second pair used for flying (or not) from which the name of this diverse group is derived.

Some easily recognised beetles include ladybirds, chafers and stag beetles, but our least appealing friends are probably the dung-beetles! Of the sixty or so species of UK dung-beetles, there are some that like their dung warm and dry while others prefer cool and damp; they may prefer cow or sheep or deer offerings or they may be quite broadminded and take what they can find. They may be burrowers, dwellers or tunnellers but they will certainly devour and destroy cowpats, bumbles, droppings and doo-doo's making the world a much cleaner place. In so doing they aerate the land, increase the nutrient content of the soil and increase the health of pastures and the plants growing there. These are enormous benefits, arguably critical to the health of the planet. Imagine all that poo lying around without them.

As we prepared to move the lambs to Millhoppers, I became increasingly interested in the principles of conservation grazing and ways in which we could reduce our use of insecticides and wormers in line with conservation principles. I came across a case study by 'Farm Wildlife' (<http://farmwildlife.info/2019/04/15/British-dung-beetles-here-to-help>) and one phrase leapt out at me about a further and rather surprising benefit of dung-beetles. The authors had

cited evidence that they 'help to control intestinal parasites by reducing dung suitability for worm larvae'. Wow! Why was that a eureka moment?

Time for some parasitology. Sheep



eat infective worm larvae as they graze and adult worms then develop inside them, in turn producing masses of eggs passed out in the faeces, often accompanied by diarrhoea and general ill-health, especially in lambs. Larvae hatch from the eggs and sit in the pasture, sheep eat them and the cycle continues. Unless you can find clean grazing and rest the land for a year or more, you often end up having to use more and more anti-parasitic wormers to reduce the worm burden. So killing off dung-beetles doesn't just mean we will be literally tripping over mountains of excrement, here is an example of how we would critically upset the balance in the way diverse biological systems interact. This natural biological control of intestinal worms by the action of dung-beetles could be lost. In treating the sheep against insect parasites, we were not only potentially damaging a whole ecosystem, but adding to our worm problems. Consequences indeed. Be it on the farm or in and around our homes and gardens, the use of more and more chemical interventions is causing havoc, not just in the air with falling populations of flying insects, but right down in the soil at our feet and in ways we probably haven't yet fathomed.

Next time you reach for your flea product or fly spray, please stop and think if there's another way, such as flea sticky traps, regular dusting and vacuuming, washing pet bedding... My research has certainly made me stop and think quite a lot!

**Jenny Hoare**  
**St Mary's, Northchurch**

# A tale of twelve churches



My parents never went to church, so as a child my first 'sort of church' was a Crusader class that a friend invited me to, in a hall in Morningside, Edinburgh. I also

went to a Crusader camp in the Highlands where, on a stormy night under paraffin lamps, aged 16, I became a Christian.

However, when I was 8 my father had to go on a nine-month round-the-world business trip and my mother, with her fourth baby new born, decided I would be too much trouble, and packed me off to my grandparents in East Linton, a small farming community of about 450 people twenty-five miles from Edinburgh. I was very happy with my grandparents and attended the village school. My only memory is of the girl at the desk in front of me combing the lice out of her hair each morning and lining them up (squashed) on her desk. I went to the village church, Prestonkirk, with my grandparents, but do not remember much about the boring services.



Prestonkirk Church, East Linton

I went to prep school in Melrose and the whole school sat in special pews in the parish church. Again, the services were very boring, and going back fifty years later, I discovered the carvings I had made on the underside of the pew I sat in, to relieve my boredom!



Trinity College, Cambridge

When I went to study medicine at Trinity College Cambridge, I attended two churches: St Columba's Presbyterian Church (the first church where I was a member) on Sunday mornings, and Evensong at Trinity College Chapel.



St Columba's Presbyterian Church

I also studied for my lay preacher qualification at Westminster College – and it was in training that I had my first two 'humiliations' as a preacher. The first was at St Columba's where, as president of the Presbyterian Association, I had to preach an annual sermon. I was in the tall pulpit in my gown. Under the lectern was a shelf with a large carafe of water. As I leant forward to make a point, my gown caught the carafe which emptied silently over my trouser front. The congregation must have thought me very nervous when I descended from the pulpit. The second was in a tin hut Congregational Church in the Fens where there was a large stove



Ipswich Presbyterian Church

in the centre of the church. As I warmed to my long intellectual sermon, the elder in charge got up and pointedly raked out the stove! Two lessons, keep sermons short and do not gesticulate wildly.

I married and went to stay in Manningtree near Ipswich. I joined the Ipswich Presbyterian Church and at the tender age of 23 was ordained an elder. Each elder had an area of parishioners to look after and mine was a large agricultural area south of Ipswich. As a young man I had to visit elderly farmers and enquire why they had not attended one of the quarterly communion services. I knew they had not attended as I had to give out tokens which were left in the communion plate on attendance. Their comments left me in no doubt of the importance of farming compared to communion.



Presbyterian Church, Aldershot

My next move was to Aldershot where I was a church elder and district elder at Aldershot Presbyterian Church. This was the time when the Presbyterian Church of England and many Congregational churches formed the United Reformed Church, and as I was district elder, I was involved in the initial discussions. The stumbling point for many Congregational churches was that they strongly believed that they could appoint any member as their minister, where the Presbyterian churches only appointed ministers with a degree and three years training. Personally, I favoured the Congregational view which did not endear me to my church. My views have often been too liberal for some!

After three years I moved to Tring, and as Tring did not have a United Reformed church, I went to the parish church of St Peter & St Paul's. As a presbyterian elder, I found I could not transfer membership without taking new vows. I felt this was not right for me, so I was not a church member, but was a sidesman without church membership.



St Peter & St Paul, Tring

When I was 40, I had a painful divorce and then met Veronica, whom I married. She suggested that I might like to try going to St Martha's which she saw as a warm friendly small church. It was, and I was able to transfer membership from Aldershot Presbyterian Church to St Martha's Methodist Church where I became a steward and district steward. The only time I ever stormed out of a church slamming the door behind me, was when a very elderly lay preacher declared that as leprosy was a punishment for sin, so was HIV a punishment from God for homosexuals!



St Martha's, Tring

St Martha's had a week's retreat to Iona one year, where we stayed in the Abbey House and worshipped at Iona Abbey. Veronica and I also went there for a short holiday. The Iona Community made a deep impression on me, and I became an Associate Member of the Iona Community – which is worldwide. Our local branch which is Beds, Bucks and Herts, has twenty members, and we meet four times a year for fellowship, and to worship using the Iona worship service.

For twenty years Veronica and I had a flat in Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders –



Abbey on the Isle of Iona

where she was born, and near where I went to prep school in Melrose. We went to the Old Parish Church (Presbyterians had parish churches in Scotland) where we were honorary members of the choir when we were in Jedburgh. We sold the flat five years ago and have not been back to the church.



Old Parish Church, Jedburgh

About twenty-five years ago, Veronica suggested I might like to go on retreat to a monastery, and I ended up going regularly to Turvey Abbey – a Catholic monastery of monks and nuns. Turvey Abbey is a 'thin place' a term used by the Celtic Church to identify a place where earth and heaven are not far apart, and it has become my spiritual home. About ten years ago I decided it was right for me to become an oblate, a member of the monastic community who lives outside the monastery; becoming an oblate is the same system as becoming a monk – a year as a postulate, a year as a novice



Turvey Abbey Chapel

and then vows.

Whilst I was at St Martha's I became involved in High Street Baptist Church's 'Tea and Toast' sessions where we opened from 11.00pm Friday to 2.00am Saturday to provide a refuge for the many drunk teenagers on Tring's streets at that time. As a result, I became drawn more and more towards HSBC, and eventually joined them. I have just retired from seven years as a deacon, but am still involved in the technical team who do sound and vision at services, and Zoom. It was through High Street that I became involved in DENS, the charity for those who are homeless, where I was a cook and a trustee for some years.



High Street Baptist Church, Tring

So after twelve churches I am a Baptist, Catholic Oblate and member of the Celtic Iona Community. I am entirely happy with this wonderful mix.

**John Allan**  
**High Street Baptist Church**

## Parish registers

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

**Charlie Dickenson & Chloe Rowley**

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

**Jean Bolton 83**

**Harry Baldwin 22 weeks gestation**

**(Frances Geraldine) Gerry McDonald 77**

**Mary Hill 93**

**(Maud Mary) Betty Busby 104**

**Dennis Gascoine 77**

**Keith Shaw 73**



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## Two truths and a lie

Mark Twain said that truth is stranger than fiction – and Tring people seem to be proving him right! You really couldn't make up some of the things that pass for real events in the lives of people in the Tring community! So here again, inspired by Edmund Booth's icebreaker in the February edition of *Comment*, are three clues about various people who write for *Comment*. (Only two of the clues are true!) I would be amazed if you could work out who they are – but when you find out, you must admit some are pretty weird!

Answers on page 32.

### Mystery person 1

1. I wrote a book about the Psalms.
2. I taught the Laps maypole dancing.
3. I fell down a ha ha and broke my leg.

### Mystery person 2

1. I was a butcher for ten years.
2. I love to watch cricket, especially at Lords.
3. I have sung in a choir at the Royal Albert Hall.

### Mystery person 3

1. I was christened in the same church as my spouse.
2. I have touched the Apollo Ten command capsule.
3. When I was young I wanted to be a professional ballet dancer.

### Mystery person 4

1. I went to school in Dudley with Lenny Henry.
2. I hold a licence to drive a steam engine.
3. I've made pizza with Gino D'acampo in his kitchen.

### Mystery person 5

1. I survived a terrorist bombing
2. I've been to Choral Evensong in every continent (except Antarctica)
3. I learnt to swim when I was forty.

### Mystery person 6

1. I once shared a joke with Prince Philip.
2. I lived, on and off for 3 months, in the African bush.
3. I have stood on the top of Mt Kilimanjaro.

### Mystery person 7

1. I have flown across the English Channel in a hot air balloon and was arrested by French police when I landed.
2. My father was a German U-boat captain called Manfred.
3. Actress Rula Lenska once shaved my beard off.

### Mystery person 8

1. I'm a cat lover.
2. I have lived in Hertfordshire all my life.
3. I am a member of MENSA.

### Mystery person 9

1. I used to have a Siamese cat called Dandy.
2. I intended to spend my working life in film making.
3. I did not have a house key until I was 26 years old.

### Mystery person 10

1. I have lived in Malaysia for 2 months.
2. I have lived on Iona for 3 months.
3. I have lived in America for 4 months.

## Another move from Tring

At the end of February we said goodbye to Ian and Jacky Matthews. We wish them well in their new home on the Isle of Wight. They are a couple whom we will miss very much in the Tring Team.

Jacky is one of our flower arrangers, always making the Easter Garden for St Peter & St Paul's Church (as well as being a cub leader and working at Tring School) and Ian has quietly done a huge amount for us. He was ever present at Tring's 8.00 o'clock service, worshipping quietly and minding his own business, until one year he was tapped on the shoulder (by Chris Hoare) and it was suggested to him that he might like to be a churchwarden. He said yes, and has been a fantastic churchwarden, looking after our Parish Church building and the Team Health and Safety but, more importantly, giving

the clergy a reassuring sense that all will be OK and problems can be dealt with. Nothing has seemed to phase him.

Those who have been watching the live stream Book of Common Prayers service will recognise him as the person who reads the lesson. However, one of the main things that Ian has done for us is bringing his professional skills to the Tring Team. Ian (and his colleague Kev Holt) first rebuilt our website six years ago and then, as we went into lockdown and needed a totally different online presence, redesigned it to enable us to continue worshipping remotely. For some years they have also been responsible for the production side of *Comment* – and it was when they took over that *Comment* went



from black and white to an all-colour magazine.

Whilst this is obviously a 'thank you' to Ian and Jacky for their ministry with us, it is also about you. Are you like Ian, someone who is worshipping quietly and minding your own business? Are you ready for someone to tap you on the shoulder and to release your ministry? If so, don't wait for the tap, let God prompt you to offer yourself.

**Huw Bellis, Tring Team**

## Megastick Walk returns

Get out your walking boots and prepare for another year of walking – in a Covid-compliant way – on 16 May. We will have walkers and runners, with

twins being pushed in their pram, some matched funding as usual and all in aid of Christian Aid. If you have saved some money in the last year and feel able to

part with some, we would value your sponsorship. More details next month.



# Tweet of the month

This month we are looking at Little Bittern, a bird that most people have probably never heard of. Given its name it will come as no surprise that it is similar to Bittern but smaller. However, while Bittern winters regularly at Tring Reservoirs, in particular Marsworth Reservoir, Little Bittern is a rarer summer visitor to Britain that has only been seen once at Tring Reservoirs back in 1968.

The Bittern or Eurasian Bittern belongs to the Botaurus genus and these are basically intricately patterned brown birds and there are no real differences in appearance between the males and females. This might suggest they are not exciting to see but their elusive habits mean that they are much sought after by birdwatchers. Little Bittern belongs to the Ixobrychus genus and these are about half the length of Botaurus Bitterns and often there are significant differences in appearance between the genders. As is typical in birds the males have brighter plumage than the females. Normally Little Bitterns are found across mainland Europe into central Asia, in NW India and sub-Saharan Africa and a few are seen in

Britain each year between April and October.

The scientific name of Little Bittern is Ixobrychus minutus. Ixobrychus is derived from two ancient Greek words and basically translates to reed-roarer or reed-boomer and minutus means small so we have small reed-boomer, which is entirely appropriate as it does boom like its larger cousin but isn't as loud. Its habits are also similar in that it eats fish, frogs and insects and is also found in reed beds and other marshy areas.

The Bible verse that refers to Little Bittern is Isaiah 14:23 'I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts'. What is curious about this verse is in other Bible translations Hedgehog and/or Porcupine are used instead of Bittern but this seems unlikely given the context of the verse and the habitat mentioned in the verse. 'Pools of water' also translates as swampland or marsh which are not areas favoured by Hedgehogs or Porcupines. Also although the Bible says Bittern it should



be Little Bittern as that is relatively common in Israel and Bittern is rare.

The section of Isaiah chapter 14 that this verse is part of is referring to the downfall of Babylon and this verse in particular is prophesying that Babylon will be turned into a swamp and so would be considered a useless piece of land. In purely monetary terms, marshland is largely thought of as useless today, although this view is changing and this habitat can be valuable as sea defences and also flood prevention inland and also just for the wildlife found there.

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

# A miscellany of churches



If, like us, you enjoy visiting churches on your travels, then you will surely also have a treasure chest of memorable experiences from which it's hard to make a selection!

## All Saints, Woodham

This was our Parish Church during the twenty plus years that we were living in Surrey. It was built as an Anglo-Catholic church in the 'arts and crafts' style. Two long-standing parishioners were the Bedser twins, a name familiar to all oldies with an interest in cricket. As youngsters they had sung in the church choir and played, of course, in the choir cricket side. When Eric Bedser died in 2006, his funeral was attended by many big names in the cricketing world, including Richie Benaud and Sir John Major. Carole had a brief conversation with Norma Major. During the service and afterwards at the wake, we tried unsuccessfully to spot who might be Sir John's minders (ex-PMs continue to have a security detail even when no longer in office). These guys really know how to be inconspicuous.

## St Martin in the Fields

This is a lovely church right by Trafalgar Square. In happier, non-Covid-19 days, it houses a cafeteria-style restaurant in its crypt. There is a good choice of cold dishes and one hot meal on offer. The hot meal varies consistently according to the day of the week, so if, for example, you go on a Monday it will always be shepherd's pie. If you happen to be visiting, say, the National Gallery or the Coliseum it really is worth fitting in lunch or an early supper at St Martin's in the Fields.

## Chichester Cathedral

We visited Chichester Cathedral one Saturday afternoon many years ago, particularly to see the famous window designed by Marc Chagall, who was inspired by the theme of praise in Psalm 150. However, we were lucky enough to come across The King's Singers

rehearsing for the concert they were due to give that evening. We sat down quietly and enjoyed a private performance of the forthcoming programme.

## St Michael and All Angels, Holcombe

For several years in the 1960s-70s we used to go to Devon at Whitsun half-term and stay in a cottage on the farm owned by a relative of Martin's. On the Sunday we went to the little village church. The congregation numbered six, of which our party were four. The priest, Father Lamb, processed in, carrying a violin which he placed on the altar. At appropriate moments in the service he turned and picked it up, to accompany our singing. The church (a daughter church in the parish of Winkleigh) has since been sold and very swishly converted to residential use.

The Church of England has an ex-pat presence in Europe, but it is also a great pleasure to share in Anglican worship further afield which is rooted in its own land and landscape. In Australia we found Harvest Festival celebrated on the Sunday next before Lent. On our tour of eastern Victoria and north Tasmania there followed:

## Lent 1: St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne

Stately and traditional in worship as any cathedral in England. 'Tring, oh yes,' said the friendly sidesman, 'my neighbour used to live on the Rothschild Estate. Got a famous railway cutting.' The sermon, based on the Old Testament lesson for the day, raised the question of how Noah coped for forty days with (1) predatory animals and (2) those like mice and rabbits which are over-enthusiastic about reproduction.

## Lent 2: St John's, Launceston, Tasmania

This church is historically interesting with an eclectic mixture of architectural styles. We were at a Family Service, a drastically abbreviated Communion Service where the children went out and the adults settled down for a lengthy but well-argued sermon exploring various aspects of Jesus' relationship with his mother.

## Lent 3: Stanley

A locked church and a short notice in the porch: 'There is no service in Stanley this week'.

## Mothering Sunday: St John's Metung, Eastern Victoria on the shores of the Gippsland Lakes

At a sung 8.00am Communion Service we had a sermon encouraging worshippers to turn to (1) Jesus, (2) St Paul and (3) the Psalms, to inspire their prayers in Lent. This was followed by simnel cake for everyone in the very friendly congregation.

## Christchurch Cathedral, New Zealand

On a different visit we were lucky enough to catch a flower festival here with its gloriously decorated nave. (Since our visit, of course, Christchurch has suffered severe earthquake damage and there is a temporary, so-called cardboard cathedral). Here we also enjoyed a lovely Evensong. On the cathedral's bookstall were pamphlets published by the AAW (Association of Anglican Women); Carole commented idly to the lady behind the counter that, being herself Anglican and a woman, she was slightly surprised never to have heard of this society and was told that they were a breakaway faction from the Mothers Union with which they had fallen out!

Truly, there is no end to the fascination of visiting churches – every one challenges you in a different way to respond to its witness, rooted in its own location and community.

**Carole & Martin Wells,**  
**St Peter & St Paul**



St John's Church, Launceston, Tasmania.

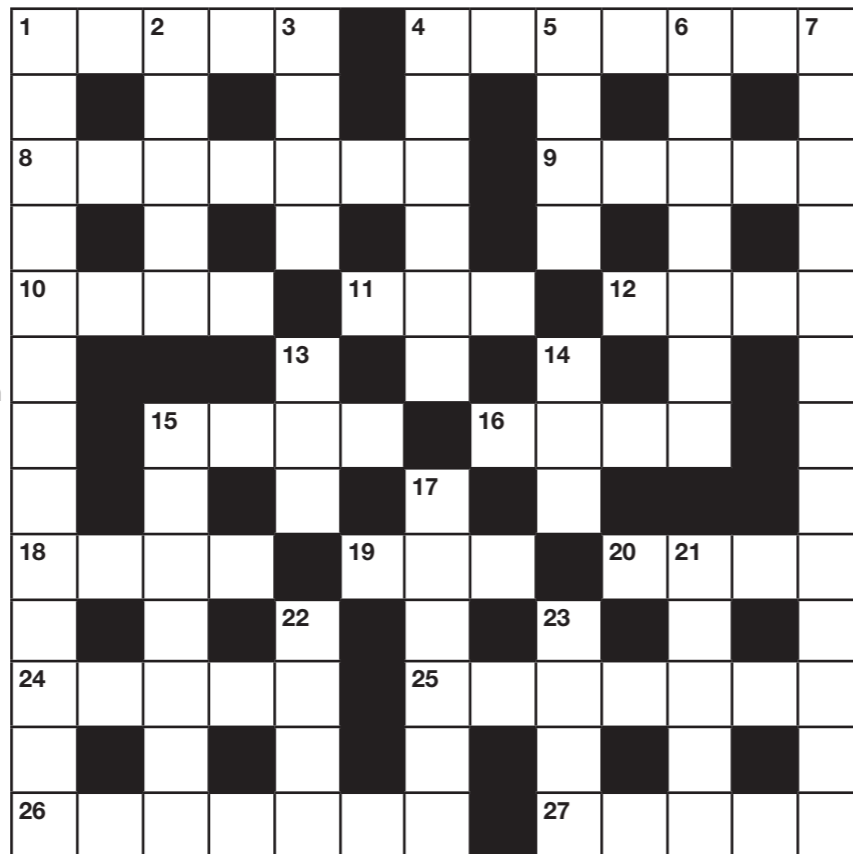
# Crossword

## ACROSS

1. Friend of St Paul (5)
4. Third son of David (7)
8. Book of the O.T. (7)
9. Pledge (5)
10. False god (4)
11. Affirmative (3)
12. Part of a plant (4)
15. 'Kneel to ....' (4)
16. Song of praise (4)
18. Used to be Persia (4)
19. Home of Noah (3).
20. Father (Hebrew) (4)
24. Solitary (5)
25. Act of atonement (7)
26. Biblical Asian city (7)
27. Follow on (5)

## DOWN

1. 'Suffered under' (7) (6)
2. Music speed (5)
3. Stagger (4)
4. Reply (6)
5. Planted (4)
6. '..... our darkness' (7)
7. First to see the risen Christ (4) (9)
13. Legal rule (3)
14. Cheerio (3)
15. Title of the kings of Egypt (7)
17. Fruits of the vine (6)
21. Notices of future weddings (5)
22. God (Latin) (4)
23. Not repeated (4)



Answers on page 38



# The parable of the 'normal'



Much has been said about the life before Covid-19 being 'normal'. But what is normal? A possible answer is that, for each person, it is what they are used to – family life, work life, leisure activities, relationships which, for them, is the usual routine of everyday life.

Since Covid-19, it has not been the same for everyone, even if they have not contracted the disease. For some the routine of life has completely changed; for others not quite so much, but nearly everyone has had to change their way of life in some way.

We all look forward to the time when life is back to 'normal'. It seemed to me that there is a similarity between the way God meant us to live and the way we are all having to live at the moment, although all such analogies or comparisons are never perfect.

So here is a modern-day parable.

Just as Covid-19, from the beginning of 2020, has affected our physical and mental well-being and our normal, usual way of life, so since the time of the creation, rebellion against God's way of life for the human race which is called sin, has affected our spiritual well-being, as well as our physical, mental and emotional state.

Just as Covid-19, for over a year, has brought enormous physical, mental and emotional suffering, considerable grief

to many, and a fear of the future, it has also seriously affected our normal, usual routine of life.

So from the time of Adam, who disobeyed God, sin has brought spiritual suffering ever since, because we were made for God's glory and, once separated from him, we no longer have that relationship with him. This, too, has adversely affected our physical and mental state for we are not living in the way he planned for us.

Just as Covid-19, has brought premature, physical death to vast numbers around the world, so sin has brought spiritual death to all mankind when God has become unknowable and irrelevant. Man has made other gods or has placed himself as a god who will decide his own destiny.

Just as Covid-19 has brought about a huge amount of goodwill from very many to help those who are suffering in any way, very commendable as all that is, it cannot bring a cure to defeat the virus.

So for the many who have experienced God's love themselves and are motivated by this to 'love their neighbour,' know that 'good works' do not bring forgiveness, but give evidence that their faith is genuine. They know that salvation by faith is in Christ alone.

Just as Covid-19 altered our lives completely as we kept to the rules of lockdown, the wearing of masks, washing hands, social distancing and isolation, but – helpful as they are in preventing transmission, they could not provide a final solution to bring us back to normal;

so keeping to national and civic laws, living a morally upright life and doing good to others, right as they all are, do not deal with the great need of man – to know God's forgiveness.

Just as Covid-19 has brought together the knowledge and skills of the medical world and scientists to produce a hope for a cure by vaccinating everyone, so the Bible has provided hope for a way of forgiveness, and preachers and all believers are commissioned to go into all world to make this known.

Just as Covid-19 can be prevented almost completely by everyone accepting the offer of a vaccine, so those who do not accept the offer are at risk of catching the disease and dying; so God's forgiveness can be assured through trusting in the death of Jesus who shed his blood that we might be forgiven. All who believe are reconciled to God, but all who do not trust God's offer of forgiveness, or think there is another way to have peace with God, are at risk of being separated from God in this life and the next.

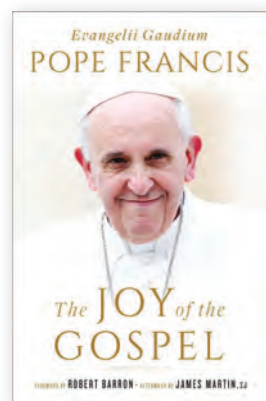
Just as Covid-19 has destroyed our normal way of life and many people could not enjoy all the normal activities which bring pleasure to living, so sin has spoilt the life God had planned for us because he was left out, but Jesus came to bring 'abundant life' – a full life with God included in his rightful place.

With Jesus at the centre of our lives, our lives are enhanced and truly blessed.

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

Answers: Two truths and a lie

1. Caroline Ellwood (1 is false)
2. Brian Impey (3 is false: I have only sung in local Salvation Army choirs)
3. Roy Hargreaves (3 is false: but I used to do country dancing)
4. Afra Willmore (1 is false: although Lenny Henry did grow up in my home town and my gran taught him the subject now known as 'textiles')
5. John Whiteman (2 is false: I've only done Europe, Asia, Oceania and North America)
6. Nicky Bull (3 is false: my husband did that!)
7. Ray Willmore (2 is false: but that's what I told my future wife when she interviewed me in the 1990s)
8. Chris Impey (2 is false: I didn't move to Hertfordshire till I was 19)
9. Betty Aston (1 is false: I had a miniature dachshund of that name)
10. Jane Banister (3 is false)



# Overflowing love: touching those around us

The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him... If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts... What then happens is that 'we speak of what we have seen

and heard' (1 John 1:3). The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart.

**Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)**

# What a difference a year makes



In my long and varied life, I don't think I have seen so much change to my life in just a year: possibly the year I was married or the start of welcoming children into our life come close.

Who would have thought a year ago we would now be in our third lockdown? A year ago we thought the first lockdown would be short, the indication was that it would be reviewed in three weeks but, as time went on, it became clear that this pandemic was going to be a tough nut to crack and the devastation to jobs and lives beyond imagination.

Being retired and my family mostly key workers in varying degrees, the impact has been minor compared to some, and we have all stayed well and healthy. So as I reflect on the year, I want to focus on the positives that have come out of the last year; rather that dwell on all that we have lost, I think of the opportunities I have embraced.

Firstly there is the time spent differently. Suddenly the meetings stopped, both for church business and social, which meant there was nothing in the diary, time to choose how to spend it. Exercise was allowed and encouraged so out came the walking boots and map, and, of course, the camera. There was time to study the map and find paths that I hadn't trod in many years, and as I walked on them, the memories came flooding back of walks with friends and their dogs, conversations about our

families, views that came back to life. And we were so lucky with the weather last spring as I watched nature unfurl: that was certainly not on lockdown. There was time to try different paths that I had never trod in my fifty years of living in Tring. Being alone in the woods beyond Dancers End with just a deer for company beside a bank of bluebells, the most stunning bluebells I think I have seen. There was time to experiment with my camera and look at more of the functions. There was time to sit in the garden and watch (and try to capture) the blue tits going in and out of the nest box.



Secondly there is the technology. I had not heard of Zoom last March and felt I didn't need to bother with that as lockdown was only going to be short wasn't it? As lockdown lengthened and I was invited to my first Zoom meeting, I discovered a whole new way of connecting with people: not the same as in the flesh as sharing hugs and refreshments weren't possible, but just chatting with friends and family and seeing everyone was great. We set up a regular family group and have been

meeting every Sunday afternoon. I have seen more of my daughter in Plymouth this year than I have in the thirty years since she left home! We share quizzes and games and even had a race night for Macmillan nurses, dressed in our finery and hats, although one daughter decided pyjamas were more comfy!

Zoom can be challenging for those who struggle with technology to navigate the various buttons and getting sound to work, but a triumph when problems are solved and connections made. The lack of social interaction face-to-face has been one of the biggest problems to get round and even more difficult for those without the technology, but for those with devices, we enjoy coffee after our Sunday services, Craft and a Cuppa where we just sit and natter, some of us doing a bit of knitting or other craft, house groups and even the Lent Lunch for Christian Aid, sharing what soup we have and creating laughter with the talk about favourite comedy programmes and other such subjects. Mothers Union has met more often by Zoom, generally social chat and laughter, sharing news and also concerns, but also having very successful Advent and Lent study courses.



Thirdly there is practical stuff. Last summer when face coverings were needed, I set up a home-factory making many face coverings in return for a donation to Dementia UK and St Peter & St Paul's. I lost count when I got well past 100, and estimate the total so far at over 200!

So looking back over the year and as we come out of lockdown, I hope that I will find time to keep walking the paths and byways, to keep the communication going and find ways to incorporate face-to-face meetings with those still wanting virtual stuff, either because of wanting to stay home or by distance. Although it's been a year we wouldn't want to repeat on so many levels, I've enjoyed a year of new opportunities and challenges.

**Janet Goodyer**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

# Piano and More



Despite restrictions and lockdowns, the Piano and More series is continuing! In February, pianist Alan Dorn gave a pre-recorded recital from his house, and in March, I gave a live streamed piano recital from my home studio.

At the time of writing, it is not clear whether there will be a concert in April, but we have exciting future plans, including the premiere of

'London Concerto' on 10 October. This is an accessible piece written by the American composer James Marshall (who hopes to be present) for myself on piano and Alison Eales on clarinet and a small ensemble conducted by David Moore.

Other highlights include local cellist Helen Godbolt making a welcome return on 12 June.

Details of all the concerts we have organised so far this year are at [www.piano-and-more.org.uk](http://www.piano-and-more.org.uk), where you can also see photos from previous events.

**Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul**

## 'Wow!' moments

Well, someone read last month's Comment so quickly they were able to respond with their 'wow' moments, inspired by Sarah Marshall's request for them. And it's someone I don't think we have heard from in Comment before! Hooray! Ed.

### 'Wow' moment 1

As good parents, some years ago, we drove to Nottingham University to witness the graduation of our youngest son. Seated in the circle of the theatre in which the graduation was staged and not yet having met up with him, imagine our surprise, the hat-doffing being over, when it was announced that one student had been chosen to make a speech,

on all the graduates' behalf, a vote of thanks and welcome.

Who should walk on stage but our son Bruce, who made a fantastic and humorous speech which received rapturous applause from the audience and he finished with 'thanks to Mum and Dad'. All we could do, with tears of joy, was to say to anyone who would listen, 'That's our son! That's our son!'

### 'Wow' moment 2

On our bucket list, one of our travels abroad when we were in America was to visit and photograph the mighty Grand Canyon. We landed safely in Arizona and in stifling heat drove to the Canyon car park. We stopped for a cooling

drink and because we could see very little of the scenic views we had been expecting, we were directed to a low wall encompassing the car park. We reached the wall and looked over. It was breathtaking – the way the ground fell away in front of us with the sides of the Canyon revealing the magnificent scenery down a mile or so in front and below us. For a moment or two we were speechless over the beauty of what we were seeing. As if that were not enough, a moment later my wife bent down to stroke a 'nice kitten' which had appeared from nowhere, at which point everyone screamed at her: 'Don't touch the skunk!!'

**Phillip Lawrence, St Peter & St Paul**

## Coming full circle



Until 2020, when working from home became the norm for all who were able, my last experience of regularly working in this way was a matter of choice as it coincided with being a young(ish) mum. We adopted our first son, became pregnant with our second and I started a small publishing company all in the same six-month period. Only the adoption was planned...

In those days working from home meant using a small Amstrad computer and dot matrix printer on the dining room table and having a dial-up fax machine which whirred and beeped and used a strange roll of shiny paper where the print faded after a while (and you couldn't use the fixed-point telephone at the same time). We used Compuserve email but so few of our would-be customers used email at that time that it was mainly for communication between myself and the other home-workers in our small team.

More than thirty years later, the enforced lockdown means there are babies in the house that are not ours – we became foster carers in our later years and for the last few months have been the main carers of two baby girls, tiny, noisy and absolutely gorgeous. We cannot ever say we are bored! Now I have a dedicated room to work in (almost as crammed full of stuff and messy as the one left behind in Tring!), my laptop

is connected to a larger screen to help my ageing eyes and I use email, my mobile phone, Facetime or Zoom to communicate with my team by printed word, voice or (most horrible of all) video (did I tidy the shelves behind me? Is my lockdown hair presentable? – most definitely not!). There is even Wifi which works well most of the time with a following wind. When I hear a baby cry on the baby monitor, I pause my work to go and change, feed, cuddle, play and talk nonsense to a small infant who thinks I am funny and feels safe with me. I return to work when that baby is sleeping once more. I have come full circle.

It works. I can do it. It's easier than when I chose to work at home in the late 1980s.

As an introvert, I am self-motivated and don't mind working on my own and, as I am lucky enough to have my husband in the same house and one of my sons who was furloughed, it's not as if I don't have another adult to eat with or talk to face-to-face. I even have a small garden – and how privileged I felt last year to be able to enjoy the warmest, sunniest spring and summer for years and see the changes in that garden day by day.

So what's missing? I miss my wider family – having all four boys home for Mothering Sunday, Easter, celebrating all our birthdays together, our Ruby wedding anniversary, a nephew's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party and of course, Christmas. We couldn't attend the wedding of our eldest son, Tom – the wedding has of course

been postponed as no one could travel, let alone meet in a large enough family group; we couldn't see our second son James when he had a hip operation; we couldn't help him in his convalescence; we couldn't celebrate his new job and we have to hope we will, by the summer, be able to help him move into his first house. And they haven't been able to meet our new babies except on Zoom.

I miss attending church services where the wider church family, from older members to young people with small children, are part of the fabric of my life.

I miss my colleagues and being able to work together co-operatively, to exchange news, incidental or important, over a cup of tea. I miss friends who we used to have to stay or go for walks with or share news over a meal.

I missed the FOTCH Family Fun Day last year and will miss it again in 2021, working together with the other 'gardening ladies' who have become my friends and talking to all the people who pass by or go into St Peter & St Paul's maybe for the first time as a result of that event, bringing church into the community.

I probably knew before what matters most in my life before a pandemic changed the course of 2020/21. It's connection, with the people I love, the people I meet and the people I have yet to meet. We need each other to be fully human. I want that back – the sooner, the better.

**Annette Reynolds  
St Peter & St Paul**



**During Lent 2021 we are focusing on Christian Aid, supporting those in need in over 100 countries around the globe. From Syria to Sierra Leone, wherever there is a crisis, Christian Aid will be there.**

- Climate change is happening – we can't ignore the effect any longer
- Coronavirus makes it all much worse
- Christian Aid supports communities in the fight against this dangerous combination
- Join in the Lent Lunches on Zoom at 12 noon every Wednesday throughout Lent
- Support Christian Aid where it matters most; full details and resources from [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)

**Real people.  
Real change.** **75 years**

For further information on how you can help locally contact Reverend Jane Banister on 01442 822 170

## My wow moments



While I have been to a few more exotic locations, the place that made me go 'Wow' was definitely Mont St Michel in Normandy. It was a 'Wow, it really is as good as the pictures' moment. I first saw it in the early 1980s with some friends, including two now at Akeman Street Baptist Church, at the end of a camping holiday. Its setting, emerging from the sand and sea around it, is spectacular.

My rugby 'wow' moment was 'that try'. In 1973 the Barbarians (an invitation side from all over the UK and Ireland) were playing a great New Zealand side at the old Arms Park in Cardiff. I was watching on our black and white television with my father and two brothers. In the second minute of the game New Zealand winger Bryan Williams kicked the ball over the head of Phil Bennett, who ran back to pick

it up near his goal line. With nearly the entire length of the field between him and the New Zealand goal line, Bennett started up-field by sidestepping and evading three tackles. I shouted at him 'You're right in front of the post: kick it!' He ignored my advice, although he could probably hear it. He passed the ball to JPR Williams, who managed to offload the ball after Bryan Williams had tackled him around the neck. Still deep in the Barbarians' end of the field, the ball then passed through four pairs of Barbarian hands (Pullin, Dawes, David and Quinnell) heading up field before Edwards, slipping between two teammates and seemingly intercepting the last pass, finished with a diving try in the left-hand corner, 22 seconds after Bennett picked up the ball. Such open-running rugby was very rare at the time. The move involved six Welshmen and one English player and is for my money the best try I have seen.

My 'wow' religious moment came when I least expected it. When I was teaching A Level Religious Studies in

Leighton Buzzard, I had a class of eight and only one knew anything about the Church of England which was a key part of the syllabus I inherited from my predecessor. So I started the London Church Crawl trip which took them on a Sunday morning to All Saints, Margaret Street (Anglo-Catholic), in the early afternoon, after lunch at Pizza Express, to St Paul's Cathedral (middle of the road-ish) and in the evening to All Souls, Langham Place (Evangelical). Expecting to find the latter most to my taste, I was struck the two or three times I went by the start of the service at All Saints. It was 11.00am High Mass and the whole congregations stood in complete silence facing the altar for about three minutes. My Agnostic RE Teacher colleague, my Roman Catholic Colleague and my students (mainly Agnostic or Atheist) were impressed by the holy silence. It was, said one sixth-former, 'Awesome' – a correct use of the term.

**Jon Reynolds  
Tring Team**

# El Nour - the Light

She said 'As soon as the helicopter landed in Quaraqush, a Christian town in the Nineveh Plains, where they were forced to flee Daesh, the people went mad. They were singing and dancing... it's hard to put into words how happy the people were.'

This reminded me (the happy celebration not Pope Francis' arrival) of another happy celebration greeting: the arrival of El 'Nour' at Easter time. I was in Bethlehem doing an Icon Course at the Emmanuel Monastery.

One day we were taken to see the celebration of the coming of the Easter Light (Nour) an Orthodox celebration, in Beth Jala, the sister town with Bethlehem.

The light is brought from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

The atmosphere was full of anticipation, excitement, much noise and talking. The street was lined with people dressed in their Sunday best (it still exists in Bethlehem). There was an elderly man just in front of me, hands behind his back, fingering his rosary beads, just as the Muslim men finger their prayer beads. Above, the roof tops are lined with Muslim families enjoying the spectacle. People held candles or lanterns (Ikea type).



Firstly we were greeted with the music and dancing (see photo). A Land Rover,

with a fellow in a wheelchair perched on the back with his music desk, strapped down for safety. He was playing the music at maximum volume. The Middle Eastern strains of music filled the air – hymns, I was told!

Next came the young men, dancing, not with swords or guns, as they do for family or tribal occasions, but wooden crosses covered with greenery and flowers held high as they danced down the street.



Then came various young people: Scout groups starting with little ones, Beavers we would call them. Then the older girl and boy Scouts in their crisp uniforms. The last group were teens, in their Scout uniforms but playing Scottish pipes (still covered in Tartan) and drums!

I came to understand that local Palestinian Christian Scout groups were very important to the families as they kept their children out of trouble – maybe being targeted for trouble.

After these youngsters came the Orthodox Clergy in their colourful vestments and they processed up to the church carrying El Nour, the light. After a while there was shouting 'El Nour!' People, young and old were passing on the Light and the candles and lanterns glowed. We had nothing so someone gave us small candle and lit it for us from theirs. We were part of it now.

As we made our way back to the monastery, as we passed by a side street, I noticed a line of little boys, still in uniform, with their heads back and mouths open and the Scoutmaster with a bottle of water walking along the line aiming the water at their open mouths! It reminded me of young chicks being fed by their mother!

The Easter Light, for the Palestinian Christians, is a light of hope and new life. 'Palestinians who trace their ancestry to the first Christians in the Holy Land consider Easter as one of the most important holidays of all because of its symbolism of new life and the perseverance of their community through time and occupation' (Institute of Middle East Understanding).

Back to Pope Francis' Iraqi visit, 'Even before the trip there was an awareness, suddenly, among the ordinary Iraqi population, that these Christians didn't come from the West, they didn't come with the Crusades. They had lived here for centuries and their roots were there' (Aid to the Church in Need, UK).

Unfortunately the exodus of Christians from the troubled Middle East continues, from 1.4 million in the 70s to now below 250,000.

In his talks with Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, the spiritual leader for Shi'a Muslims, among other things Pope Francis demanded full citizenship for the Christians and that they are not treated differently. He said everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion.

Palestinian Christians still have much joy within themselves and are always hopeful.

**Tricia Apps**  
**Corpus Christi**

## Who remembers Gravelly Infant School?



Gravelly Infant School, which was opposite the former Co-op, had a wall which ran down the side of the school, leading into the playground. It's still there and runs between Gravelly House and 53 King Street.

I remember there being a very tall fir tree in the playground, just in front of the unsavoury outside toilets and I

wondered if that tree still stands. I had a little snoop around and I think it does – in the corner of The Furlong, just by their row of garages.

There were four teachers at the School – Mrs Standen taught the youngest children, then Mrs Knight took the next class. Every school child will remember the playground chant: 'Mrs Knight had a fright in the middle of the night; she saw a ghost eating toast half-way up a lamp post!'

Then there was the very scary headmistress Miss Lacey, who played

the piano and taught singing; Mrs Wilson taught in the fourth classroom.

I didn't enjoy my early school days as I moved to Tring just before I started school and knew no one. My generation didn't go to playschool and I found the wrench from home to school traumatic. I remember being delighted when I caught mumps because I got two weeks off school! I can't imagine how I would have coped with a lockdown!

**Rose Berringer**  
**St Martha's Methodist Church**

# In memory of Bill Hall

Bill was born in Aylesbury in May 1930, where his father ran a grocer's shop. He was the fifth of seven children, and of his siblings, he is survived only by his younger brother David.

After his education at Queens Park School, he embarked on a very long working life, starting as an apprentice coach painter at Aylesbury Motor company. Then it was National Service in the RAF, where he trained as an electrician and then in electronics. He worked for several different firms, and his work included developing the machines that tested the concrete used in the Channel Tunnel (seems to be holding up well); and cigarette dispensing machines. He was always a grafter, a very hard worker, and when at Airtech, he even drove the double decker bus that picked up the workers.

He met Eunice Chandler in early January 1959 at a dance, and they were married at St Mary's, Mentmore, in July 1960, by the Rector who was chair of the Badminton Club to which they belonged. Andrew was born in 1962 and Tim in 1966.

The first months of their married life were spent in a dilapidated cottage in Watery Lane, while Bill built their home in Long Marston. With the help of Eunice's father, he built the whole house – digging the foundations by hand, learning everything from dry stone walling to laying parquet floors (using seconds to keep the cost down). And it has remained



their home ever since.

Despite working until he was 72, and building his own home, Bill found time for hobbies as well. He was a very keen cyclist, and he also took up badminton after meeting Eunice, becoming a good player who won many local tournaments. He only gave it up ten years ago, and that was after two hip replacements and treatment for colon cancer. He enjoyed making wine, and did so with considerable success (his dessert wine made from rhubarb and gooseberries was a particular good one), winning many trophies, including at the Bucks County Show and the local wine federation. There are still dents in the ceiling from the corks popping out! He gathered his own apples and pressed them for cider and neighbours still remember watching him crawl along the branches to pick them (Eunice couldn't watch!).

Bill loved music – he created his own electric organ from a keyboard and a sideboard, although he could not play a note. He particularly liked country and western, and enjoyed barn dances. The music at the end of his funeral service was chosen as one of his favourites from one of the support groups he attended.

Together he and Eunice enjoyed travelling in retirement – a good offer to an exotic destination and they were off: Turkey, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Borneo (although when the children were little, it had been Devon). The first time they flew it was to Morocco, and although they never went to Australia, they did walk the great wall of China.

Memories from friends in the Wine Circle included trips to the theatre, fish and chip suppers, walks around the reservoirs, weekends away and tasting new wine.

Even in the last years, when he had dementia, he did not enjoy sitting still, and his ability to walk a long way at a fast pace stayed with him until recently. His years of walking his own dogs and those of other people went deep.

Like many of his generation, his faith was not something to shout about – he attended church on high days and holidays, weddings and funerals, but in his last years, church was one of the places he wanted to go – with both peace and music.

**Jane Banister, Tring Team**

# In memory of Beryl Perkins

About twenty hardy souls braved the falling snow to gather at St Martha's on 8 February to say our farewells to our friend Beryl. Half of those attending were from her family, the other half regulars from the church.

Beryl herself had chosen the hymns and the reading, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Revd Rachael Hawkins took us thoughtfully through the psalm, how it speaks of God's love and care, which Beryl knew and always showed to those around her. And though we're unable to sing in church at the moment, Paul was on hand to beautifully sing solo both the hymns chosen by Beryl: 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' and 'The day thou gavest Lord is ended'.

We learned that Beryl was born in Thame on 31 August 1934, and moved with her family to Tring in 1942. She lived



in Tring for almost all her life, attending the Convent school, and becoming a lifelong member of Tring Methodist Church. She met Michael Perkins while she was doing her first job at the Co-op in King Street, and in due course they married at Langdon Street Methodist Church in 1956. They went on to have a daughter Anne, and eventually a

granddaughter Cali, who married at St Martha's in June 2019, a special day for Beryl and her whole family. Phoebe, born last year, was also in church for the funeral, Beryl's very young great granddaughter.

We also learned that Beryl was cook at Bishop Wood School for twenty-five years, and that she loved cribbage, knitting, reading, and supporting the Red Cross. She followed the ups and downs of Watford FC, and was, of course, a regular at St Martha's. The church's celebration of the new kitchen in March 2020 was the last occasion that Beryl was present at St Martha's, but she always continued to keep in touch with us. Her family and friends will all miss her.

Rest peacefully, Beryl.

**David Sands**  
**St Martha's Methodist Church**

# Useful contacts

## TRING TEAM PARISH

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

## School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

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

## School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

(Tring School, Long Marston, Wilstone)  
Rev Jane Banister  
01442 822170  
jane@tringteamparish.org.uk  
jbanister@tringschool.org

## Curate

Rev Sarah Marshall  
St George's House  
3 New Mill Place  
Tringford Road  
07538 888502  
sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk

## Diocesan Lay Minister

Mike Watkin  
01442 890407

## Parish Co-ordinators

Roy Hargreaves  
01442 823624  
roy.hargreaves@btinternet.com

John Whiteman  
01442 826314  
john@tringteamparish.org.uk

## Church Wardens

Chris Hoare (Tring)  
01442 822915

Jane Brown (Aldbury)  
01442 851396

Christine Rutter (Puttenham)  
01296 668337

Ken Martin (Wilstone)  
01442 822894

Rev Jane Banister  
(Long Marston)  
01442 822170

## Tring Team Administration

Administrator  
Trish Dowden  
admin@tringteamparish.org.uk

Janet Goodyer  
pewsheets@tringteamparish.org.uk

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

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

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

## ST MARTHA'S METHODIST CHURCH

**Minister**  
Rev Rachael Hawkins  
01442 866324  
rachael.hawkins@methodist.org.uk

**Senior Steward**  
Rosemary Berdinner  
01442 822305

## AKEMAN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

**Minister**  
Rev David Williams  
01442 827881

## Administrator

Emma Nash  
01442 827881

## CORPUS CHRISTI ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Parish Priest**  
Father David Burke  
01442 863845  
davidburke@rcdow.org.uk  
www.berkotring.org.uk

## HIGH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH Ministers

Joe Egan 07521 513493  
joe@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
Ruth Egan 07521 513494  
ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

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

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

## NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH Minister

Vacancy


## JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP

affiliated to  
Churches Together in Tring

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

**OUR CHURCHES ONLINE**  
www.tringteamparish.org.uk  
www.tringchurchmusic.org.uk  
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www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
www.newmillbaptist.org.uk  
www.akemanstreet.org  
www.berkotring.org.uk

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

 Tring Parish

 @revhuw

## COMMENT

**Editor & Advertising**  
Annette Reynolds  
0845 8681333  
07968 312161  
comment.magazine@gmail.com

**Distribution & Treasurer**  
Barbara Anscombe  
01442 828325  
bandb33@talktalk.net

**Design**  
Kev Holt, Ginger Promo

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

## COMMENT DEADLINES

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

## Crossword puzzle answers From page 30

### ACROSS

1. PETER
4. ABSALOM
8. NUMBERS
9. WAGER
10. IDOL
11. YES
12. STEM
15. PRAY
16. HYMN
18. IRAN
19. ARK
20. ABBA
24. ALONE
25. PENANCE
26. EPHESUS
27. ENSUE

### DOWN

1. PONTIUS PILATE
2. TEMPO
3. REEL
4. ANSWER
5. SOWN
6. LIGHTEN
7. MARY MAGDALENE
13. LAW
14. BYE
15. PHAROAH
17. GRAPES
21. BANNS
22. DEUS
23. ONCE

# High Street Baptist Church - Tring

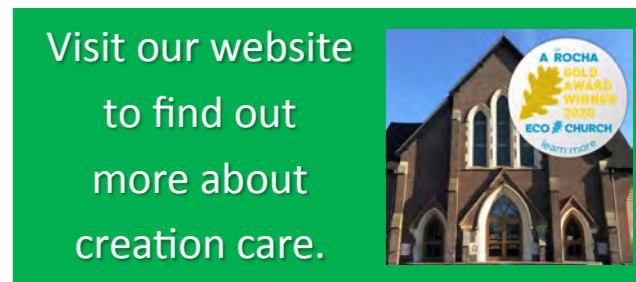


Growing in the message and challenge of God

For details about our Easter services, regular services and prayer meetings, events and updates visit our website.



## Journeying into new life



Don't hesitate to get in touch if you need pastoral support.

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

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

 #tringbaptistchurch  High Street Baptist Church

# PALM SUNDAY - HOLY WEEK - EASTER IN TRING TEAM PARISH



**Palm Sunday - We remember Jesus' arrival on a donkey into Jerusalem.**



**Maundy Thursday - We remember the last supper that Jesus celebrated with his friends**



**Good Friday - We remember Jesus' death; his betrayal, trial and crucifixion on a cross.**



**Easter Day - Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

**Come with us on the way to the cross**

**Tring - Aldbury - Long Marston - Wilstone - Puttenham**

**Services in our five churches, many of them live streamed on our website and YouTube channel, some by zoom**

**[www.tringteamparish.org.uk](http://www.tringteamparish.org.uk)**

