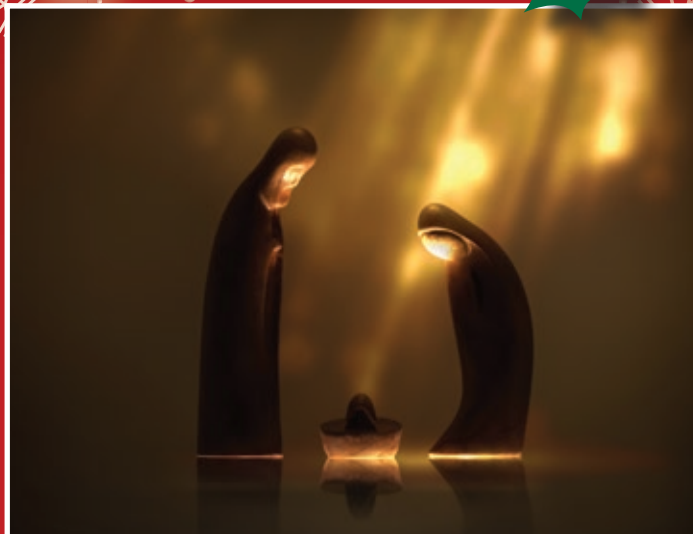


DECEMBER 2021 / JANUARY 2022 £1

# COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



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## Waiting... a lost art?



patient?

Do our children know what it is to save their money for that one item they've been desperately craving? Do we wait until special occasions to buy gifts, or do we spend frivolously all year round?

Yes, if we're not careful, the concept and fulfilment that comes with 'waiting' could easily be relegated to the history books.

This is why, I believe, that as Christians we should do our best to preserve the season of Advent for as long as possible. During this time we can savour the wait and anticipate the day which marks the arrival of Jesus Christ, God's son on earth.

As a nation we love Christmas, so much so that mince pies start to go on sale in September. We hear people complaining about how Christmas

Waiting is not something many of us can do easily. In a world full of instant gratification, instant messages, instant credit and next-day deliveries, have we forgotten how to be

we forgotten how to be

music is being played in the shops too early and decorations are going up in November, so it can be no wonder that by the time the 25 December arrives, so many are 'fed up with Christmas'.

To be fair, I do love Christmas decorations and music (and jumpers), and can see no harm with the joy these things bring; however, we must be careful that they do not come at the cost of forgetting how to 'wait'.

I confess, I'm not one for waiting: if I'm not undertaking a task of some kind I get fidgety. I need to keep myself occupied and have a tendency to want to rush. This impatience, however, was put very much into perspective after giving birth to two premature babies. No parent would choose for their child to arrive before their due date, bringing with it all manner of concerns and complications. However, I soon realised that waiting for the birth of a child is not one of inertia: a mother is not sitting passively waiting, they are constantly creating life and preparing for the arrival.

So much joy can be found in waiting in the 'present' and not in some desperate rush for the future. If we fixate on the future, there is a danger that we will miss out on what is going on in the present. Advent allows us to

take each day as it comes, encourages us to appreciate journeying with God, taking time to consider where we find ourselves in life.

The Bible is full of faithful women and men who waited, and in some church traditions we remember them through lighting the candles in the Advent wreath each week: Abraham and Sarah, John the Baptist, the prophets and Mary. Jesus himself also waited until the right time to begin his ministry.

My prayer for Advent, Christmas and the New Year is that we all regain our ability to savour waiting, to changing the focus of our lives from ourselves to God; and to embrace the peace and tranquillity that comes with new life.

If you, like me, would like to reflect more on 'waiting' this advent, I'd highly recommend a short book by Paula Gooder, 'The meaning is in the waiting: The spirit of advent', it's an incredibly useful companion to guide your thoughts.

Whatever it is you find yourself waiting for, I encourage you to seek out God in the midst of it and be attentive to that still small voice of calm.

**Sarah Marshall**  
Tring Team

## Comment gets a new bank account



Recently the HSBC changed the *Comment* bank account and started applying monthly charges. On consideration, it was decided to close the account and bring the *Comment* monies into the main account for the Tring Team, but as a separate ledger, so that we can continue to ensure that we cover all the printing costs.

This means that when we reach the New Year and the annual renewal time, the details of online and cheque payments will be different. The bank will be Nat West, sort code 55-70-10, account 6067 9360. The account name will be Tring PCC Team Scheme Stewardship Fund. I know the name is a bit cumbersome, but I'm afraid that is what it is!

Your distributor will be able to remind

you of these changes during February and March.

You may like to know that the cost of printing the magazine is only half covered by your £1 subscription. In theory the rest of the amount is made up by the cost of advertising but the pandemic, plus the desire increasingly to use online advertising rather than print, means that there is always a shortfall. Would people react badly to an increase in the cost of the magazine?

The question was posed at our last Editorial meeting - 'Do people read the whole magazine? Does it need to be as long as it is?' As it happens it is shorter this time, simply because expected contributions did not

arrive. Do consider writing an article for the next edition yourself which will be the February edition with a deadline of 1 January 2022!

Thank you for continuing to read and contribute to *Comment*.

**Barbara Anscombe**  
St Peter & St Paul

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



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

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

**Contact comment.magazine@gmail.com**

## 'Bin it? No way!



My mum used to spend many evenings darning socks or other items of clothing to keep them going just a bit longer. This was quite normal practice in the 1950s and 60s but

I haven't noticed my own children doing this! We have become a wasteful society where very often if it's broken, we throw it away. Maybe we don't have the skills, the time or the right tools to do a repair.

Tring in Transition (a group that aims to make our way of living more sustainable) is soon to start a project called 'Repair Café'.

Starting in the new year on the third Saturday of every month (the first session on 15 January) you will be able to take broken items that need a quick fix to High Street Baptist Church Hall. There you will

meet a merry band of repairers who will do their best to help you with a fix. You might even learn how to mend it yourself next time round.

There will be people who could fix toasters, lamps, hair dryers, clothes, toys, musical instruments, electronic devices, bikes and more. You will be able to check out our Facebook Page, 'Tring Repair Café', to find dates and other details.

Donations for the running of the event will be appreciated and payment for any parts needed for the repair can be paid on the day. If the repair is a bit more complicated, we can provide details of local businesses who should be able to help you.

If you yourself love to fix things, then do get in touch with me at jan.m.rook@gmail.com and you could join our team at High Street Baptist Church Hall at 10.30am on the third Saturday of each month.

The Repair Café concept arose in

## Christmas Greetings!

Best wishes for a Happy Christmas and the New Year to all at St Peter & St Paul, especially to all Choir members, past and present. With fond memories of festive singing with you.

**Jane Legg, now in Yorkshire**

Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 2009, and was formulated by Martine Postma who was at the time a journalist. In 2010 she started the Repair Café International Foundation which provides support to the 2000-odd repair cafes that have sprung up around the world since that time. Their slogan is: 'Bin it? No way!'

Repairs can save money and resources and can help minimise CO2 emissions. But above all, Repair Café just wants to show how much fun repairing things can be and how easy it often is.

**Jan Rook**  
**Tring in Transition**

## What exactly IS Chaplaincy?



Tring School at the moment has a slight feeling of trying to fit a pint into a half pint pot, as the saying goes.

There is a physical element to this with the lack of space. You will have seen in a previous edition of *Comment* an article on the school rebuilding and remodelling. All is on target, but this means that there is very little outdoor space while the work continues and no spare rooms. Term is finishing a little earlier than planned to allow for the move to the new building, so that the staff do not have to pack and unpack over Christmas, and the first few days of the Spring term will involve online-learning to help with this: exciting, but a lot of work.

School is also still running on different breaks and lunches for different year groups. This was started when the year groups were in 'bubbles', but with the lack of space, and the move ahead, it was felt better to keep to that, then change again when we have moved, rather than keep changing. This does make life easier for the students as they are not all crammed into the same limited space at the same time, but it can be very tough for staff who can be teaching without even a break – and the Modular village (mobile classrooms to you and me) means that you can be a long way from a kettle and a loo.

But it is not just physical: Tring School

has a tradition of Extended Learning Days, when the students are offered the chance to use their skills in a different way or to learn something new, but the one in the summer term had to be postponed. Everything had already been paid for, so that meant it was moved to this term, and the students had two ELDs in a short space of time. The knock-on effect of that is the lessons that need to be squeezed in elsewhere.

We are all also tired. The students are tired, and this applies to all schools. They have also lost stamina from having to learn at home – in the Primary Schools, those who used to be able to write a whole page without too much effort are struggling. The students who are more introverted are having to relearn how to spend whole days with other people, instead of learning on their own. Others have not had support or motivation from families, so to be in a structured environment with rules and expectations is leading to behavioural issues (the toilets have been trashed several times already this term). Learning to 'do school' in a new way over Lockdown added to our skills, but as we all know, learning a lot of new things in a short space of time is draining.

So what are we doing as a chaplaincy? Pretty much what we were doing before, so a lot of praying for them all. Lunch clubs are short, and we have no allocated space, so we go wherever we can; we are back to teaching Lifeskills lessons in person, which is good, and the Year 9 lesson is now on 'Grief and

Remembrance', so that we can carry on with the ideas raised in Year 7; we record an assembly each week, which is watched in form time, and this has been a big improvement. There is no time lost getting everyone into the hall, and it is a much better context in which to raise topics for discussion. Having said that, each house does meet for a Collective Worship in person once a half term. As we know, while worship can work online, it is still good to be together in person.

So we carry on, with kindness and patience and remembering the School vision that is based on I Corinthians 12:4-6: 'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.'

The joy of a school is that there are always new people with new gifts; there are new ideas and changes; and the joy of Tring School is also that we see God at work in all of these.

'Living God, Creator of us all, we thank you for your love that strengthens each of us.

Help us to value ourselves and others, to rejoice in the opportunity to learn, to care for the environment we share, and to build up the community in which we live. We ask you for your blessing on the students, the staff, and all who support Tring School. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.'

**Jane Banister**  
**Tring School Chaplain**

## You are not alone...



I did not choose to become a carer of a teenage son. It just became a necessity. Mental health conditions were not new to me. However, I soon began

to understand how isolating and bewildering they can be. As a result, some of us decided to form a carers' group aimed at bringing together people caring for family or friends with mental health problems.

That year was 1992. Two years ago, our group of between twelve and twenty carers won an award from the Skipton Building Society for services to the community. We estimate that during the years between 1992 and 2019, over 250 people have joined or contacted the group for help, guidance, education, advice or support.

We chose to spend our Skipton Building Society award money wisely. After much discussion, it has enabled us to produce leaflets, fliers, posters and information cards about mental health and the group. Our leaflet's heading is 'Are you supporting someone with a mental health condition? You are not alone.'

This heading has meant so much more over the last twenty months as coronavirus has spread worldwide, especially attacking vulnerable people, including thousands of mental health sufferers and their carers. Services and personnel continue to be pressurised and stretched as we come towards the end of the year.

Our group's approach is informal, providing a comfortable and friendly meeting place for people to socialise and share experiences and knowledge, and to hear professionals talk about their roles and their particular area of expertise. Individual members represent carers as Trust Advisers, taking part in panels interviewing prospective new staff. Some of us are also active at other meetings as 'experts by experience'. I feel professionals greatly benefit from involving users and carers in this way to improve the services they offer.

After forty-nine years of caring, I am convinced that maintaining our mental health is more about people than 'pills'. The supportive phone calls, the listening ear, the exchange of letters and emails all help carers to look after their own wellbeing. I have been told how much carers appreciate this.

Much of the work I do is for the Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation

Trust (HPFT) as well as for our own carers group 'Caring for Carers in Mental Health-Dacorum'. I also work with 'Carers in Herts' and 'Hertfordshire County Council' representing carers.

In the last few months, working with professionals, I helped to produce a leaflet with the title 'Keeping Carers Safe'. Previously, very little consideration had been given to the idea of keeping carers safe. Staff and patient safety had been at the forefront with very little thought for carers. I feel this leaflet is an important step in supporting carers.

I also represent carers at 'Suicide Prevention Meetings', and am chair of the 'Carers Council Meetings'. HFPT promote the 'Triangle of Care', including the user or patient, the staff member and the carer. I see the carer as having a vital role to play and should be recognised as such.

If you would like to learn more about my role as a carer representative or about our mental health support group for carers: contact me on 07752 164854 or r.lovelace476@btinternet.com. I would be pleased to hear from you.

**Dick Lovelace**  
**High Street Baptist Church**

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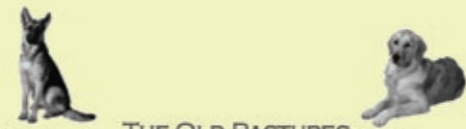
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## The Big Church Read



At High Street Baptist Church, some of us have been taking part in 'The Big Church Read' which is a nationwide book-reading group for churches. The idea is that everyone in the group purchases the book and then we normally need to read a chapter a week and then watch a short video about the chapter. We then have a meeting on Zoom on Sunday evenings for an hour to discuss the book.

We have just started a new book called 'Why Worship?' by Tim Hughes and Nick Drake and it seems very good; but more of that in a future issue.

I want to tell you about the last book that we completed. It was called 'How to Pray' by Pete Greig. He is the Senior Pastor at Emma's Road Church in Guildford and is also one of the founding

champions of the 24-7 Prayer Movement which has spread into more than half the Nations on Earth. The book is extremely well written and very readable. When one of his sons heard that he was writing a book about Prayer, he said 'Oh, that's easy. You just say Dear God, chat to him for a bit, and then say Amen'. This is broadly right, but the book has been written as a simple guide for normal people. It's for everyone who would like to grow and also go a bit deeper in their relationship with God.

Each chapter covers a different aspect of prayer and the hard issues, too, are not left out. How to cope when prayers are just not answered can be tough and challenge your faith but Pete gives some coping mechanisms. Is it OK to shout and rage against God sometimes? Pete's wife has a long-term illness and he talks in the book about how he just exploded at God one time because she was so unwell and he so wanted God to heal her.

There are chapters on keeping it simple, slowing down and centring on God, adoration, petition, intercessory prayers, listening and contemplation, confession and reconciliation.

The final chapter is about spiritual warfare, a subject not often covered and one which sometimes we shy away from. It is explained well here and is very helpful. In every chapter there is a hero – someone who embodies this style of prayer – and it was interesting to see the people chosen. If you feel that your prayer life needs a boost and refresh, you might like to try this book.

**Thelma Fisher**  
**High Street Baptist Church**



## Restless



The November meeting of the Tring Team book group discussed William Boyd's war-time thriller 'Restless'. William Boyd was born in 1952 in the Gold Coast (present day Ghana)

to Scottish parents. His father was a doctor and his mother a teacher. He spent his early childhood in the Gold Coast and Nigeria and then went to prep school in Scotland followed by Gordonstoun, the school attended by both Prince Philip and Prince Charles. From there he went to the University of Nice. He took an MA in English and Philosophy at Glasgow and then a PhD at Jesus College, Oxford. From 1980 to 1983 he lectured in English at St Hilda's College Oxford. In 1983 his first book was published, 'A Good Man in Africa'. Since then he has lived by his work as an author and screen writer.

The novel depicts the tale of a young woman who discovers that her mother was recruited as a spy during World War II. The book continually switches between time periods of the late 1930s to the Second World War

and the 1970s and, in doing so, from first to third person narration. Eva, a young Russian woman, is recruited after her brother's death, to work for the British secret service. During this time she falls for her mentor and boss, an upper-class Englishman called Lucas Romer. But all is not as it seems (spoiler alert) as Romer is working as a double agent which ultimately leads to the attempted murder of Eva, alongside the deaths of other agents.

The tale is interlinked with the story of Eva's daughter, Ruth, in the 1970s and how she comes to terms with the discovery of her mother's secret life. Ruth is an English graduate in Oxford making a living as a teacher of English as a foreign language while trying to study rather slowly for a PhD. Boyd himself was involved in postgraduate study in Oxford in the 1970s. The setting of the novel is in London, Oxford, Scotland, continental Europe, the United States and with a brief scene in China.

The majority of the group enjoyed the book a lot. It is well written and the author manages well the shift between times (the group does not normally approve of such an approach) and places. It is a gripping read and

apparently well researched. All of the group thought he handled the two main female characters convincingly.

One of the main themes of the book was that a spy (and possibly all of us) should not trust anyone. This was part of Eva's training and proved to be essential later on in the story. Eva proved herself to be a resourceful spy and a very quick thinker when under pressure. In his depiction of spies Boyd is closer to John le Carré than to Ian Fleming, although Eva moves much faster than the urbane George Smiley.

Why should it be of interest to a Christian book group? The book deals with the uncertainty of the time of our death which is introduced by a quotation from Proust at the beginning and played out in the precarious existence of Eva during the war and possibly also in the 1970s.

The book was a popular choice. The one doubter in the group, who had enjoyed the start of the book, felt that what she had heard would make her persist to the end. To my mind (and that of your noble Editor) Boyd's best book, so far at least, is 'Any Human Heart'.

**Jon Reynolds**  
**Tring Team**

# Buying locally produced and Fairtrade



It always seems to me such a good idea to buy locally produced food and drink when one can, and Fairtrade when one can't. For example, fresh fruit and vegetables

when in season as well as bread are all produced and available for sale locally. And Fairtrade-certified wine, bananas, chocolate, coffee and tea for example, which can only be grown in other countries, are all available to buy locally too.

Many of the places you can buy both are listed in the recently published edition of the Justice & Peace Group's Guide to locally produced and Fairtrade food and drink. This was officially launched by the Mayor of Tring, Councillor Christopher Townsend, at Tring Farmers' Market on 23 October.

The guide this year contains fifty-two entries, compared with the previous printed edition (October 2019) which contained thirty-six. This time shops, cafes, etc were asked what they were doing to cut down on the use of plastic and their efforts are noted in several cases in the guide. (Unfortunately we didn't have room to put down everything we were told.) It does seem that many outlets in Tring and the surrounding area are making a real effort to reduce their use of plastic. Just to give a few examples, Healthfare Health Food Shop is selling loose spices, tea, fruit and nuts

from dispensers into paper bags or customer's own containers. The Akeman restaurant is providing paper straws, and also paper takeaway cups. All of the packaging of Nonna's Supper Club is either recyclable or compostable.

Buying Fairtrade is especially helpful at the moment to

poorer communities overseas. Extreme weather and rising temperatures are already hitting the production of major commodities including coffee, cocoa and tea. And, of course, Covid-19 has not helped either.

To set out what the Fairtrade system means, I can do no better than quote from the website [www.foodunfolded.com/article/fairtrade-certification-how-it-works](http://www.foodunfolded.com/article/fairtrade-certification-how-it-works): 'Within the certification system, you have Fairtrade certified buyers and producers. To receive Fairtrade certification, both groups must abide by their respective Fairtrade standards.' (The Fairtrade standards cover, for example, key areas for environmental protection, including energy and greenhouse gas emission, soil and water quality, pest management, biodiversity protection, prohibition of genetically modified organisms and harmful chemicals, and waste management.) Perhaps what's



most unique about the Fairtrade system is their 'minimum price' and additional 'premium' payment model, which aim to counteract the impact of volatile markets on small-scale producers. Fairtrade-certified buyers must pay farmers a minimum price for their products, or the current market price – whichever is higher.

'On top of the minimum price, buyers must also pay 'Fair Trade Premiums'. Each product has its own respective premium amount, and they serve as additional funds to be invested in the community (roads, schools, water pipes, for example), business operations (like training and resources). This money is put in a pot for smallholder cooperatives to democratically vote on what and how they want to invest the premiums.'

We in the Justice & Peace Group act as the Fairtrade Steering Group for the town and we have to renew the Fairtrade Town status for Tring every two years (though we have been given an extra year this time because of the pandemic). There is a lot of information we are required to give each time when we apply for renewal but we are happy to do this and proud that our town is one of more than 600 Fairtrade towns across the country.

Referring back to the newly published guide, this will be available in printed form in various parts of the town, for example in churches and at various events which take place in Tring. The current print version was made possible by generous funding from Churches Together in Tring. The guide is also available online at [www.justiceandpeacetring.org](http://www.justiceandpeacetring.org).

**Michael Demidecki**  
Justice & Peace Group, Tring



# Two turbulent years



Firstly, an apology. I am sure you, like all of us, have had enough of Covid-19 and its omnipresence in day-to-day life and the dreaded media. However,

it has been a rather unique eighteen months and I felt that one more article couldn't hurt.

At Bishop Wood School we have been through two of the most turbulent academic years that anyone in the building can remember. It has been a real struggle, if I am perfectly honest, and many of us have had our resilience tested to the limit. But what of the children? How have they coped through this challenging time?

If you were to wander through school this week, you would find full classes of happy children enjoying their learning as though nothing had ever happened. However, this is an untrue picture because many of our pupils are suffering underneath. The period of school closure, key worker groups and home learning has hurt them, albeit not necessarily when it comes to their academic progress. Here at Bishop Wood, many of our pupils were incredibly well supported by parents with home learning and we are not seeing the much-reported gaps in knowledge and understanding. But we are seeing children with very new and very real mental health challenges. This is currently our greatest challenge in school.

We need to be open minded. Some children absolutely loved schools being 'closed'. They may well have had more contact with adults at home than normal and will possibly have benefited from one-to-one support with their learning. These children are now thrust back into a large group and have to have one thirtieth of a class teacher's time. They get angry, they get distressed and they get upset. It is completely natural. Our job is to support these children and work with them to build up their resilience again. We are incredibly fortunate here as we have an in-house support worker (Mrs Hill) on the staff team who can run interventions as a group or with individuals. I have been able to use the Covid-19 recovery

funding to commission more hours whilst things return to normal.

Then, we have the children who perhaps were put in a more vulnerable position by being at home rather than in school. This does not bear thinking about for too long but we all know that school is the 'safe space' for some children. Many, if not most, of the children in this position were welcomed into the school building throughout 'closure' and stayed in school. Their needs must be met and they must be made to feel safe.

Providing a 'safe space' for our pupils is one of the most powerful ways to support the mental health of these young people. For many, that safe space is the classroom, for some it may be the playground, for others it is Mrs Hill's room. For those with acute needs, we need more. As a result of this, we have decided to develop a space within the school into a sensory room. This will be a safe space for pupils to go to if they need to calm down or

indeed if they need some more sensory input. It will benefit pupils with specific educational needs and those without. If I am being honest, I can very much imagine staff members popping in for some respite at the end of particularly challenging weeks. Of course, these state-of-the-art rooms do not come cheap and we need to find the funding for it. Our amazing PTA (The Bishop Wood Buddies) have agreed to help us – which is incredible of them. We hope to have it installed at some point during this academic year.

Finally, a special mention to Huw Bellis and Sarah Marshall from the Tring Team. They have been amazing in supporting the school through these challenging times. Through cooking paella, chatting in my office, or sharing a cup of coffee with staff, they have made people feel supported and looked after. We all need a crutch every now and then.

**Gary Stanley, Headteacher**  
Bishop Wood School

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# Sex in a changing world



'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.'  
1 John 4:18

We all know how much life changes – think of how different your childhood was from those being lived now – and the changes that happen also alter our attitudes and views. One of the biggest areas of change has been that of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. For some, these changes are long overdue; for others, they seem alien and uncomfortable.

The Church of England has recognised this, and so the Bishops commissioned a report which was published last year, called 'Living in Love and Faith', which looks at Christian teaching and learning on those issues. The pandemic rather overshadowed the publication, but we are being encouraged

theology, others with surveys of where we are now, but it is important to read all the sections, as well as look at the other resources.

**Part 1** is on life and God and the church: it looks at the gift of abundant life and relationship as given to us through Jesus. It also looks at the biblical and historical roots of the church's understanding of marriage, and how we go on learning to be good observers of the world we are in and our lived experiences.

**Part 2** is on the world today: it looks at the social trends re singleness, marriage, friendship and loneliness, and also sexual activity including commodification, freedom and consent; sexual orientation and gender. What are the scientific understandings of sexuality and gender, and issues including mental health and procreation? It also includes the place of religious faith in society today.

**Part 5** is about how to have conversations with others on these issues. What is also recognized here, is how important it is to engage with those who have different views from ourselves, so that we can learn from the experiences of others, rather than always reaffirming our own attitudes.

It ends with an appeal, that we look at the way ahead, and our part in it.

These are difficult topics and the report is open about the need to face differences, divisions and disagreements honestly, humbly and compassionately. It acknowledges that tensions will arise, but as Christians, we seek peace.

The report also commends the Pastoral Principles for living well together as a means of enabling discussion, and these principles are to address ignorance, to acknowledge prejudice, to admit hypocrisy, to cast out fear, to speak into silence; to pay attention to power.

These are principles that can and should be applied to any discussions. The Tring Team hope to look at this in greater depth as a parish – probably during Lent – but it will require us to have difficult conversations, and to be prepared to listen and talk, not just to those who hold the same view as we do.

Lord Jesus, write the story of your grace and truth into the lives of your people, that, believing in you, the world may have life in your name. Amen

**Jane Banister, Tring Team**



## LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

to read it and start conversations. The aim of the project, since it is more than just the book but includes a small group course, a podcast, online resources... is to tackle the tough questions and divisions about what it means to be 'holy' in a society in which understandings and practices of gender, sexuality and marriage continue to change.

It is a carefully thought-out, deep, wide-ranging, and powerful piece of work. It draws on the Bible, theology, history, social and biological sciences, and it includes reflections, interviews and surveys. It does not tell us what to believe, but reminds us strongly that we need to have intelligent, caring and prayerful conversations, rather than burying our heads in the sand.

The book is in five sections and the idea is that you start in the place that works for you: some like to start with the

**Part 3** is the theology – making connections and seeing where we are in God's story. It reminds us of the story of salvation, and of how God engages with human beings through relationships. What do we mean by dignity, diversity, identity, and what does and what does not belong in the church? It also looks at specific patterns of life that respond to this – e.g. celibacy, marriage.

**Part 4** is the how and why of Christian questions and seeking the answers. How we read the Bible and come to different conclusions, and how we are formed by the church, its diversity and tradition. It includes how our understanding of the natural world shapes us, the relationship of the gospel to culture, the place of individual conviction and conscience, and the role of prayer.

## Parish registers

### Funerals

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

**Cintra Margaret (Peggy) Bainbridge 91**  
**Brian Dumbleton 79**

# Where the Transfiguration meets axe-throwing...



The weather could have done anything, particularly in these days of extremes, but thankfully our long-awaited Church Weekend Away benefited from fine, dry and unseasonably mild days.

Two years after our last Weekend Away we were able to go to a new venue. The beautiful setting of High Leigh at Hoddesden provided our home for the second weekend of October as around eighty people, aged from just a year old to 87, enjoyed the hotel luxury of this comfortable Conference Centre whilst sharing much-missed fellowship, relaxation, lovely food (such a joy not to have to plan and cook meals for a couple of days!) and, best of all, stirring teaching from our guest speaker David Hircock from Bromley, Kent. A lot of the time we were able to be outdoors, both in the grounds and the local area, which was great for the children and essential for the axe-throwing (an organised activity with instruction!)

The subject of David's talks was 'The Transfiguration of Jesus'. This event in Jesus' life is probably well known to all those who read the Gospels, but David spoke in considerable depth about its context, relevance and meaning to those who love and seek to follow the Saviour. Using the first three Gospels (it is interesting to note that the apostle John makes no mention of Jesus' transfiguration even though he witnessed it) we looked together at what the Transfiguration tells us about Jesus: he is the shining one; he fulfils the Law and the Prophets; he is the beloved one; he takes away the terror of the Lord (Matthew 17:1-13).

Developing this thought of Jesus shining, we considered how he shone on Saul on the Damascus Road and how the scriptures tell that he shines on us increasingly as we read the Gospels and will continue to do so as we walk with him until, in eternity, we see him face to face.

We then went on to consider the Transfiguration from the disciples' point of view and how we can apply

this to ourselves. They believed that Jesus would return in power and glory; we must trust this too. They were not to be ashamed of Jesus and nor should we be – how often are we discouraged from speaking about him for fear of offending people or making ourselves unpopular? The disciples understood that Jesus is the Son of God and would later see him die for sinners, thus making them right with God. It is not enough to believe that Jesus was a good man: he is our Saviour, and died so we didn't have to.

Next we went on to look at Luke's account of this event – told from Jesus' point of view (Luke 9:28-36). Here we were challenged about private prayer. Jesus delighted in speaking with his father, but the disciples were falling asleep. How many of us struggle with concentration in our prayer times? Jesus' Transfiguration was the high point: he met with his father, Moses and Elijah. Within days he went to the Cross, his lowest point. He did this for us. Jesus was sinless, perfect, righteous, but he suffered and died. Why? For the disciples and for us, sinners, people who do wrong things every day even though we try not to – we can't help ourselves. Jesus will not give up on us; he is the perfect Saviour. We were all challenged and blessed by this teaching.

The children had their own programme of teaching and activities which they really enjoyed and were happy to share with us at our closing service.



In addition to the teaching, we enjoyed worship sessions including the joy of singing together as we had not been able to do for many months. There was also plenty of time to take walks, read, drink tea and coffee, to relax on our own or with others, chat and generally enjoy ourselves. The whole weekend was greatly enjoyed by all and now we look forward to the possibility of another one, maybe next year...

**Joan Eeley**  
**Akeman Street Baptist Church**

## Be thankful for everything?



St Mary's Church in Puttenham is one of only fifty-six villages across the UK whose soldiers all returned home from both world wars. It has often been reported that the idea of a thankful parish post war has felt a little uncomfortable at times. Around 16,000 others were not so fortunate. At the time it must have seemed almost insensitive to rejoice in such an outcome when so many others around the country had suffered. I read in other reports that some villages even felt a sense of shame; not to have a memorial commemorating the end of the war was a little embarrassing.

I wonder if that is typical of the proud culture specific to the UK, or whether it exists in other cultures too.

But it is an interesting feeling, isn't it? Not wanting to celebrate or give thanks when you know of others who are suffering? It doesn't seem appropriate. This is a feeling not just belonging to a bygone war era, but also of today, too.

How many of us, during the Covid-19 lockdown, quite enjoyed the break? The peace and quiet? The chance to take stock and think...? Yet to shout such things from the rooftops would not have been sensitive to those who struggled with it all, those who already felt isolated; single parents alone with their children all day in high rise apartments in cities; those who relied on social groups for their mental wellbeing; or those who lost loved ones due to the illness. It just didn't seem right to be outwardly enjoying it, to appear grateful and happy. It felt privileged, as if we might have been gloating or crowing about our wonderful predicaments.

Mothering Sunday can also feel taboo. Some will want to rejoice in the glories and joys that motherhood or their own mothers have brought them, whilst other lament the families they lost or never had.

While Advent and Christmas can bring great joy, it can also be a time of great pain for many: it could be the first year without a loved one, or feel difficult for any number of reasons. It's important to be aware as many of us carry on with reckless abandonment!

It is a tricky balance, giving thanks whilst also remaining sensitive. Yet in

1 Thessalonians 5, St Paul tells us to rejoice in all situations. They are such wonderful words, 'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.'

One of the most wonderful acts of thanksgiving in the midst of horrific circumstances was during the plague in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Starting in Derbyshire back then, and continuing in villages today, people dress up water wells as a way of saying thank you for the purity of much needed water coming from underground springs. It was of huge importance that the water from the springs was clean, fresh and uninfected. People were dying in their thousands and entire villages were wiped out, yet there was a sense of giving thanks to God for what they had.

How many of us, when faced with difficulties, can honestly say that we try to focus on the positives and give thanks; being grateful for what we do have, rather than for what we don't.

In the Book of Common Prayer communion service, we hear the words, 'It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord.' It is important to be grateful for what we have, while also being sensitive to others as we do.

On 11 November the people of Puttenham gave thanks totally unapologetically, not just because it was their bounden duty to do so, but because they wanted to wholeheartedly and with free will. They thanked God that the soldiers of the village came



home safely, that no parent there had to mourn the loss of their child. At the same time they brought before God those around the world unable to rejoice with them because of their own pain.

**Sarah Marshall, Tring Team**

*We pray to the Lord of comfort; Thank you for walking alongside us in our grief, for sharing and delighting in our celebrations, we look to you to give us the strength to carry on our journey of life and faith. Amen*



### Community Carol Singing Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December

**Come and join us singing carols together at Roman Park, the new estate on the western edge of Tring. We'll be carolling for an hour from 6pm.**

**Brass players and other instrumentalists would be very welcome!**

**Optional rehearsal at 7pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> in church.**

**For details of where we'll meet and other information, contact:**

**musicalanna@annalehair.co.uk 07753 567704**



## The biggest splash ever!

How I wish I had been in St John the Baptist Church, Aldbury, on 7 November!

At the morning service, Paul and Victoria Sypko and big brother Harry, brought Thomas (8), Jessica and Isabella (7) to be baptised.

Michelle Grace used the blue fabric

to represent the River Jordan (obviously) where the baptism of Jesus caused the biggest splash ever, with the most mysterious voice ever – and with the best news ever, that God loves each one of us and welcomes us into his family.

Baptisms were not like this in my day! Congratulations to the whole family and a special welcome to Thomas and identical twins, Jessica and Isabella.

**The Editor**



## Pre-loved or second hand?



When my parents and their extended families were children, I know that it was common for them to buy their clothes from jumble sales or to have 'hand-me-downs' from other members of the family.

The same cardigan or dress would frequently reappear in photographs worn by someone else. (I was going to say that this was by the girls, but when my father's home was hit by a shell that destroyed the house in November 1940, nothing could be found for him to wear the next day but a borrowed skirt, which he was mortified by – more so, it seemed than the destruction of his home and the death of his dog as a consequence as he retold the story!) No one thought anything of wearing second-hand clothes. They had few choices available to them. Our Aunt Peg used to say that when her father was unemployed in the 1930s, they were very poor – but not as poor as the children who went to school without any shoes on their feet... Apparently Easter was the time when something 'new' would be bought.

I remember as a child being very put out when my younger sister wore my

favourite dress – which I had long since outgrown! But my sister was born nearly seven years after me and times were changing. I don't remember the jumble sales being the source of her clothes – though I remember acutely going to buy second-hand school uniform to go to my secondary school – everything from the shapeless bottle green tunic and 'rosebud' summer dresses to the blazer, hat and gym skirt. As I had done most of my growing by the age of 11, I seemed to stay in that awful uniform for ever!

What I don't remember is shopping in what we now call Charity Shops though apparently their history goes back to the 1700s. But I do now.

Those who don't frequent charity shops may think that they have a certain smell, and there is no doubt that a small number still do. But in these days of reusing and recycling it is positively fashionable to shop in charity shops. One of my colleagues at work used to be famed for frequently wearing something new to work and every time I told her how good it looked, she would reply 'Charity shop!' with great glee.

The Oxfam Bookshop in Berkhamsted is a real treat to visit if you like books and there are plenty of opportunities to refresh your wardrobe without going further than Tring High Street. It seems to me a win-win-win.

The donor clears out things they no longer need and creates space; the buyer gets something new that won't be seen in church the next week because it came from Fatface (I am thinking of you, Brenda Hurley, Margaret Oram and Beth Townsend who all own MY jumper!); and the charity benefits from some of our hand-earned cash. What's more, it is increasingly common to find end-of-lines from department stores or unwanted gifts that are brand new and still have the shop labels on them – at much reduced prices.

Some of these shops have renamed themselves 'Pre-loved' shops though they tend to sell designer labels or vintage clothes, but the principle is the same. SOMEONE needs to buy new clothes or there would be nothing to give away! But if you want to make a difference to the planet, this is one easy way that you can. Give your unused clothes away and buy 'new' from the shop while you are there.

PS I wore a jacket to church just recently that I bought in the Rennie Grove Shop for £5.00. It's VERY bright and I would never have chosen it new because it's a bit bold for me – but it's also FUN. And at least three people commented on how lovely it was!

**Annette Reynolds  
St Peter & St Paul**

## Tweet of the month



As I write this COP26 is taking place up in Glasgow and is a gathering of the United Nations to discuss climate change. COP stands for 'Conference of the Parties' and these conferences have been annual since the first one took place in Berlin in 1995. Unsurprisingly COP26 is the 26<sup>th</sup> such conference to take place and the importance of these conferences and what they agree has never been greater than it is now. So, it seems pertinent to discuss climate change and the impact it is having on our planet and our wildlife – in particular birds.

Some of you will remember Frank Mercurio, the previous rector in Tring. After the horrific Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, he said something in a service that remains stuck in my mind to this day. He said that God gave humans free will when he created us and that it was possible that he also gave Earth free will when he created it. Now I don't think this means that the Earth thinks, or understands right and wrong or sin. However, no one would deny that Earth is a dynamic, changing planet and it is possible that it is this that allows life to exist here in the first place. So, when

God created Earth for us to live on, it is possible that the dynamism that makes life possible also means that things like earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters were a consequence of that.

However, these days I would like to think there are few well-informed people that would deny that humans are having an adverse impact on Earth's climate. I have noticed changes which certainly support the view that our climate is changing – admittedly it has always done so in the past but the rate of change now is what is concerning. I have lived in Tring for thirty-three years and can see changes to local wildlife that indicate that climate change is having an effect. When I first moved here Willow Warbler was a common breeding bird around Tring Reservoirs and now it is absent as a breeder as its population moves northward in Britain and is mainly found locally at higher altitudes at places such as Steps Hill and Ivinghoe Beacon. Also, birds that used to be found regularly in Winter at the reservoirs such as Goosander (see photo), Bewick's Swan and Smew are seen less frequently and in smaller numbers. They don't migrate to Britain as much as they used to because milder winters mean they can stop in The Netherlands instead of coming here. I witnessed this myself in 2013 when on



a trip there I saw Goosander and Smew on practically every piece of water I went past. These are minor changes but there are also more dramatic and concerning examples of change happening across our planet.

In Genesis 1:26 it says, 'Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."'. While dominion means sovereignty or control, any good leader knows that this is not solely about power but it is also about responsibility and looking after that which we have dominion over. Now is the time for us to act responsibly with that which God has provided for us to live on. Surely this is what God would want.

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

## Killer quizzing



There was a very welcome return to the Tring Team social calendar in October – the Long Marston Curry & Quiz evening.

Huw Bellis' curry is always a top performer. Could the same be said about our team's quiz score? Pre-quiz nerves were settled by a reasonable performance in the opening couple of rounds, notwithstanding the usual agonising over when to play our joker (for double points).

Our team comprised Chris and Beth Townsend, Katie Arber and Didier and Kathryn Jaquet, in addition to Hayley and me. It was an honour to compete once again with our friends. And we had the example of previous sterling quiz performances of people we knew. For example, no one who was there, at a different quiz, could ever forget Jane Banister's uncanny and extraordinarily encyclopaedic knowledge of celebrity wedding dresses.

A couple of years of enforced pandemic non-quizzing had clearly served only to fan ever brighter Didier's uber-competitive quizzing spirit. There must be something in the air in Stewkley where he is now Assistant Priest. From the outset, it was clear to the team that only a podium finish was going to be acceptable.

I'm pleased to say that the rest of us generally responded well to Didier's elevated standards, maintaining high standards of operational security in respect of the quiz sheet when Ian Munro would sidle over to 'chat' at our table. We had a good spread of specialists and generalists, spare pens (obviously) and a disciplined approach to time management in each round.

Our excellent quizmaster had set all the teams a conundrum with the final 'Killer' round. Four questions: your choice to answer or not; 100 points for each correct answer; the loss of all previously accumulated points for any wrong answer.

We were confident that Denis Healey was the British Chancellor who had gone to borrow from the IMF. But looking around the room, it was clear that Hayley and I weren't the only people who would remember the 1970s.

So, we thought we would have to answer at least one more question to



win. It came down to Southampton FC's all-time record scorer and the atomic number of gold. We thought Matt Le Tissier was a strong guess for the former. Some long-dormant neural pathways in my brain threw out 79 as the atomic number for gold, but I wasn't sufficiently confident. So ignoring Mayor Chris Townsend's exhortations to 'go all in – stick it all on red' we played it safe.

It wasn't Le Tissier, it was Mick Channon. And gold does have the atomic number 79...

In our post-quiz debrief, Didier and Kathryn reassured us that 'we are better than this' and that we should prepare 'to go again' next October.

Hayley and I have certainly embraced that challenge and have already begun a disciplined programme of intensive listening to Radio 4 and TalkSport, and nightly recitations of daily excerpts from the Guinness Book of Records and Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. We can only hope that this will be enough.

The main lesson I took from the evening was that when going for gold, one should go for gold, and not for Matt Le Tissier.

The other lesson was that we had great fun with friends in our team and other teams over a delicious curry and drinks, and so lots more people should come next year to this fantastic event so brilliantly

delivered by Huw Bellis, Jane Banister, Lee Dimond and quizmaster Martin Kelly. **Richard Abel, St Peter & St Paul**

*Personally I am very pleased that the Killer questions were there – as our team proved completely unable to answer questions on popular culture (what have we been doing with our lives?) despite bringing our non-curry-eating son Jon with us who knows his James Bond movies, but we were redeemed by making a good judgement on which questions to answer at the end. It dragged us up from last place to a stunning 3rd! **The Editor***

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## One starry night...



It is a frightening fact that many of people's livelihoods depend on Christmas. No wonder that, commercially, Christmas seems to start in October even if, as I discovered one year in a supermarket, it ends on Christmas Eve. It is also fascinating to consider how Eastertide is dwarfed in comparison. How many Easter cards do you send and how many Christmas cards? For me the answer is possibly two or three for Easter and well over 100 for Christmas.



So it is interesting to remind ourselves of how long it took for the birth of Jesus to become an important date in the calendar and a great festival of the church. One early Christian writer, Clement of Alexandria (AD150-215) thought Jesus was born on 20 May (why that date?) but the first mention of 25 December comes in a calendar of AD336. It is usually thought this date was chosen to oppose the pagan observance of the 'Birthday of the Invincible Sun'. This date spread from Rome but in the East, 6 January was more important. The Church in Jerusalem kept to this date until AD549 and the Armenian Christians still do. The slow start to the observance of a feast of the birth of Jesus in part reflects the belief that the date worthy of celebration was that of the Resurrection. So from earliest times there has always been an Easter Day, while Christmas Day was slower to make its mark. Of course, this can be linked to the relative importance of the Resurrection of Jesus compared to the birth as shown in the Gospel writings. Only Luke and Matthew give us any details.

It is strange, too, if we stop to think about it, that Christmas is fixed by the solar calendar to a particular date while Easter is fixed by the lunar calendar to a particular day of the week. The Old Testament uses the lunar calendar and so this was the calendar of the first Christians.

It is also interesting to note how cluttered Christmas week is in the Church's calendar, containing, as it does, the feasts of St Stephen, St John the Evangelist, and less surprising perhaps, the Holy Innocents. Easter, on the other hand, moves or omits the saints' days which would fall in Easter Week. For the church it is always awkward (or would be if we let it affect us) when Christmas Day falls on a Saturday or Monday, involving some rapid changes of mood – Advent IV until Christmas Eve and St Stephen straight after Christmas Day. For those interested in liturgical colours and ritual correctness, we have successively purple, white (or gold) and red. The real problem is for those who try to keep Advent as a sombre period of preparation!

A different day of the week each year for Christmas, a different date of the year for Easter. Easter Sunday is always the first Sunday after the first full moon after the 21 March and so varies considerably from year to year. And although the rule is the same, changes in fixing the calendar over the centuries with the Julian and Gregorian reckoning and so on mean that often Orthodox Easter is different from ours. Various disputes have arisen: perhaps most familiar to some is the way the Synod of Whitby (AD664) settled the difference between the Irish way of calculating Easter and the Roman in favour of the latter.

Easter is tied to Jewish celebrations of the Passover which is on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Nisan which can fall on any day of the week. We know well the great link between Passover and the Crucifixion of Jesus. But for a few centuries there was a group of Christians who kept Easter Day on whatever day of the week was the fourteenth day of Nisan – so for them, Easter was a different day of the week as Christmas is to us. But that

group of Christians only lasted for a few centuries!

It is also interesting that in English we call the feast day Christ's Mass or rather Christmas. My father tended to spell it Christmass to make a point! Certainly at one time Midnight Mass was a very popular service but in our secular and car-driven world, things have changed. Celebrations such as Carol Services before 25 December are the norm and Nativity Plays and Crib Services usually take place before the reputed time of Christ's Birth – midnight. Actually we do not know the time of Jesus's birth although the Book of Wisdom has the following: 'When peaceful silence lay over all and night was in the midst of her swift course from your royal throne O God, down from the heavens leapt your mighty Word'. (Wisdom 18:14) Easy to spot here the inspiration for a well-known carol!

Another feature of Christmas observances is the Christingle service. Invented by a Moravian bishop in the 18th century to symbolise Christ as the Light of the World, it has spread and was adopted by the Children's Society to help in fundraising. Apparently, when oranges are not available, swedes are used! Among the accompanying decorations for Christmas was the Christmas crib, started by St Francis of Assisi in 1223. Not to be forgotten is the Christmas tree introduced by Prince Albert in 1848 and Christmas cards, to say nothing of the influence of Charles Dickens. There is a huge contrast sometimes between what we see in the Nativity scenes of great artists and what Luke and Matthew tell us. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the growth of images and ideas about the Visit of the Magi, both from the pious imagination and the application of Old Testament texts to this event.

One last thing is that at one time the Roman Emperor in full regalia read the Gospel which begins 'A decree went out from Caesar Augustus'. Perhaps our Queen should wear Coronation robes and read the Gospel in Sandringham on Christmas Day!

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

# The language of Art



It all started in 1967, when I was 23 and on my honeymoon in London.  
A trip to the National Gallery was on the wish list. In the first room I visited, only one image was

on display, Leonardo's Cartoon. It's a drawing of St Anne with the Virgin Mary and child with the child John the Baptist. It was made famous a few years ago when someone shot it with pellets. It was repaired and is now behind glass and a barrier. When I first saw the drawing it was free of protection and seemed to meet me. It was a great influence. I was mesmerised at the skill of the drawing. I found a convenient bench and stared at it for a full thirty minutes. It had such power, beauty and tenderness. The drawing held a great spiritual quality for me, a gift, and I wanted to draw like that.

As a girl I had often copied illustrations, usually in pencil. I particularly like drawing people. That was my starting point. Art college and dress design came later.



There was not a lot of spare time in my day in 1967. Wanting to draw and paint were on my wish list, but I had started a manufacturing business making clothes for women and children, selling to mail order. It was a huge commitment, with staff that needed me to make sure they had work. Seven years later Roy took a job in London, and we were on the move.

It wasn't until we had moved south, and with my business taken over by my mother and Dad, we moved to Berkhamsted. With three children, I waited

another five years only painting as a hobby in watercolour and oil. When my youngest started school, I decided to retrain as a fine artist. I went back to college.

As they say, the rest is history.

I truly believe I have been given gifts from God. I sometimes wonder where the ideas come from, and I have a deep respect for everything I paint.



The land speaks to me when I'm out walking or viewing as a passenger in the car. The patterns in the fields, the marks that have been left by man and tractor are so attractive. The fields that held cattle, the drovers' paths, and the different greens of the grasses that edge the fields. And let's not forget all the many colours of the soil: rich black; soil with a lot of clay in it that has a whitish hue; peat browns; the red soil of Dorset. I sometimes wonder how many greens there are. Hundreds, I suspect.

It's a kind of magic of nature, and those marks and the mixed colours are a history of the land, and all the forgotten footsteps. Who could not imagine the agricultural labourers toiling in the fields among the furrows, like my ancestors in North Yorkshire.

Life drawing and still life have also held my interest during my learning curve as a visual artist. It's good to set up in the garden on a warm day when the light's good and paint the flowers in the borders – such drama in the lights and darks: greens that are almost black and whites that are tinged with blues and violets; when white daisies are not white.

Trained as a designer, I see rhythm, and a spectrum of colours in the body or the land, but more times than not, I express colours that are not there, colours I feel – and my work becomes slightly abstracted and certainly colourful. That's when I feel the gift, the spirit in me.

What sort of artist am I? I would describe myself as a colourist.



I mainly work in acrylic, though I trained in oils. Acrylic dries fast, which suits my nature. I can be impatient when I have an idea. I want to develop a painting quickly while the inspiration is with me. Some paintings come quickly and almost paint themselves, others can take weeks to resolve. They fight you, but if you know there is a painting there, you have to work it through.

Not every artist can draw, but it helps for my type of work. And I always did like drawing. When I think of Leonardo de Vinci, his masterful work in line and sensitivity, I will always be a novice.

For some styles in art, being a draftsman is not necessary. Abstract art is more about rhythm, a kind of poetry of colours, to find depth and emotion in the paint. Artists must work the way they feel. We are all different. I confess I wouldn't know how to start an abstract piece.

Artists tend to see in a different way from others. We absorb what surrounds us; it feeds our imagination. Seeing is the key to creativity: the more you see, the more you realise that everything and everyone are connected, that some great hand and mind has made us. It's more than a little magic.

Don't be fooled into thinking that art, painting and drawing, is a relaxing pastime (it is for some). People say to me, it must be wonderfully relaxing to paint. It isn't. Absorbing, yes. Creative, yes. It pulls the brain apart, it makes you think, it makes you solve puzzles.

You learn about good composition, balance, and rhythm. On top of which you must learn about colour, what mixes with what. Oh, and lots of practice, just as a singer or and musician spends hours honing their skill, a visual artist will practise life or portrait colour sketches, landscape sketches, that sugar basin on the table... a sketch a day to help the eye and hand coordinate. How long does it take to paint a picture? Let's say thirty-odd years. It's a whole different language.

**Brenda Hurley**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

# The Shepherds' Carol



A short and simple poem put (unusually) into the mouths of the shepherds on Christmas night. With its address to Mary and gentle pace it seems to carry echoes of mediaeval verse.

Clive Sansom was born in 1910 in London and educated there. He studied Speech and Drama and, later, Phonetics, and lectured in speech training, becoming an instructor in the same at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. He married a Tasmanian in 1937 and joined her in the Society of Friends. He was a Conscientious Objector in the Second World War and the joint winner of the Festival of Britain poetry prize in 1950. He and his wife later settled in Tasmania where they both ran a Speech Centre and, as a committed conservationist, he founded the Tasmanian Wilderness Society. Best known for his performance poetry and verses for children, he was well known for his beautiful speaking voice.

He died in 1981.

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

*We stood on the hills, Lady,  
Our day's work done.  
Watching the frosted meadows  
That winter had won.  
The evening was calm, Lady,  
The air so still,  
Silence more lovely than music  
Folded the hill.  
There was a star, Lady,  
Shone in the night.  
Larger than Venus it was  
And bright, so bright –  
Oh, a voice from the sky, Lady,  
It seemed to us then,  
telling of God being born  
In the world of men.  
And so, we have come, Lady,  
Our day's work done;  
Our love, our hopes, our selves  
We give to your son.*

**Clive Sansom**  
*This poem can be found in Christian Verse compiled by Charles Causley, Puffin 1982*

# Quiet Place

**Need space to contemplate?**

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

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



# Crossword

## ACROSS

- Son of Jacob (5)
- Speaking to God (7)
- Redeemer (7)
- Badge of guidance (5)
- Sports team (4)
- Request (3)
- Tasks (4)
- Wise men (4)
- Where they came from (4)
- 'Yule' .... (4)
- Xmas drink (3)
- The two of them (4)
- e.g. Waltz or Fox-trot (5)
- Christmas tree (7)
- December 31<sup>st</sup> (4) (3)
- Ancient string instruments (5)

## DOWN

- December 25<sup>th</sup> (5) (8)
- Patron saint of Wales (5)
- Protection from the rain (4)
- Group of churches (6)
- Church offerings (4)
- First part of a service (7)
- First visitors after Jesus' birth (4) (9)
- Self (3)
- Supporter (3)
- Jesus' mother (7)
- Calm (6)
- Volunteer (5)
- Where you are (4)
- Small measure (4)

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
8								9				
10					11				12			
18								19			20	21
24									25			
26										27		

Answers on page 34

# Do books matter?



I mentioned before that I have been packing up thousands of Christian books for children in some sixty languages stored in our Tring office and trying to find homes for them. I have had help – and I still need it!

John Bush from St Peter & St Paul took away Polish and Russian books as gifts for children in St John's Church, Walthamstow, where his son is vicar. John's wife, Shirley, took books in Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian for her school in Westcott. The hunt for a final book in Bulgarian was a challenge then (easier now all the books are neatly organised!) but worth it: 'Thank you SO very much for the Bible in Bulgarian; it quite made my day and that of school staff,' wrote Shirley Bush. 'Our Bursar made a little label for each book explaining they had been kindly donated by you and they were handed out on the last day of term. If our children were anything like those in Walthamstow, they will have been quite overwhelmed with gratitude. There is something very special about receiving a book in your own language.'

Tricia Apps from Corpus Christi took a number of boxes in English (with a specifically Catholic flavour) and some in Italian for a young Italian mum who will share them with her friends, particularly kind since Tricia is trying to move house!



A friend contacted a variety of people in Dunstable and I am following that up: one of these is a church in Adeyfield, Hemel Hempstead, who provide everything from clothes and toys to food for families in need in their area which includes a number of communities for whom English is not their first language. Their senior pastor, Cathryn Barringer, will be the recipient of hundreds of books in Polish, Romanian, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Tamil and French.

A friend of my son's, who works at Egerton Rothesay School in Berkhamsted, is also helping me source homes for others. She is particularly resourceful! Wendi Meredith, who attends Hope Baptist Church in Aylesbury, put me in touch with Caroline Cameron from Compassion UK who came to meet us in Tring, learned about our work and told us about theirs – and took away fourteen boxes and upwards of 450 books in French, Spanish, Portuguese and Bahasa (the language of Indonesia) all destined for the very poorest children in partner countries where Compassion operates. As she was brought up in South Africa, she took away a few books in Afrikaans, too, as her son is teaching his children to be bi-lingual.

Wendi Meredith also sourced a home for our Norwegian books. She drove to St Olav's Church in London one day in half term pulling a suitcase full of books. There were half a dozen people at the church clearing up after their morning mums and toddler activities and getting ready to go through what they had planned for their alternative



to a Halloween children's event. The person in charge of the children's ministry told her that the timing was perfect because they were planning to give away books at that event and weren't sure if they had enough for all ages. She was also very pleased that there were Christmas activity books among the books supplied because she had intended to put together a Christmas order from a Norwegian publisher that week and might not need to do that now. 'The thing that I kept thinking was that God's timing is always right on time,' Wendi told me. 'I had no way of knowing who would be at the church when I arrived or whether they even saw the email I had sent... I decided Tuesday night that as I didn't have any plans for Wednesday that I needed to take care of the Norwegian books. I felt very strongly that it needed to get done this week and specifically the next day. God knew that they were going to be meeting when I arrived and that they needed books for Saturday. It is always exciting to see God's plan come together when you don't even realise you are part of the plan. They were so very pleased. The children's worker told me "Tousand takk" is a thousand thanks in Norwegian.' The rector and chaplain Revd Dag Magnus Hopstock Havgar from St Olav's said the books would be highly appreciated.

As we continue to find homes for the books before we have to shut the office doors for ever, I continue to wonder what happened to the literature ministry among children. Do we not think books matter any more? Do they have no place in helping children understand or learn about or engage with faith, in learning about the God who loves them?

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

# What to do about COP26?



I was born in 1950, which always seemed neat to me, just half way through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I've already outlived my father and grandfathers by quite a margin, and so the chance of me surviving until 2050, the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, must be quite low. I focus on 2050 as that is the year set for us to reach net zero in carbon emissions, if we are to avoid irreparable harm to the planet and many of its inhabitants.

While I may not make it to 2050, I hope that my children will – indeed they will probably only just be claiming their pensions; and my grandchildren ought to survive to 2100, the end of this century. By then it is clear that everybody will be affected, directly or indirectly, by climate change.

To be honest, I've not followed every detail of COP26 (even though a close relative was at the conference, speaking up for the oceans); I've been more affected by watching 'The Trick', a programme about the attempt to undermine climate science a decade ago. It's available on BBC i-Player for quite some time.

Two things about the programme impressed me: the first was the effort and money being spent to muddy the waters of the science about the climate. Indeed, if you look for 'hockey stick' in a search engine you are quite likely to find a site attempting to deny its existence. The hockey stick, by the way, is the chart showing the way global temperatures have risen in the industrial era. It has been the life's work of Phil Jones, long-time head of the Climate Research Unit in Norwich, and he was the target of the smears. The second thing that impressed, indeed frightened me, was Jones' characterisation of the world at the end of this century without action to curb climate change. Not just unusual extreme weather, but widespread famine leading to huge flows of migration, orders of magnitude greater than those seen even in recent crises.

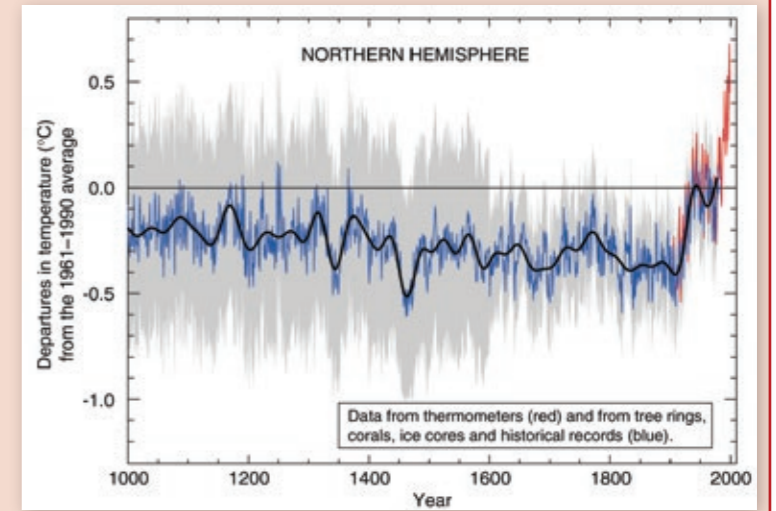
So, if I'm persuaded that this is real, and affects not me but my offspring, what should I do? Well, I've measured

my carbon footprint (sites like <https://www.carbonindependent.org> or [www.footprint.wwf.org.uk](http://www.footprint.wwf.org.uk)), which shows that I am about average for this country at

14 tonnes of CO2 per year. Mostly I am well below average, as I don't eat much meat and walk a lot rather than driving; I also don't spend much on clothes and 'stuff', as will be obvious to anybody who knows me.

The biggest issue for me is international travel; an annual flight to California to visit my daughter and her family boosts my footprint by nearly 50%. I'm not strong enough yet to resolve not to go,

but I used to go twice a year before the pandemic, and now probably will go maybe once every couple of years. Is that enough? I'm not sure.



Is it irrelevant anyway because one person can't make a difference? Well, maybe, but that applies to absolutely everything that I do. What do you think?  
**John Whiteman, Tring Team**

## Your Christmas in Tring Church At the heart of Christmas



### Carols

**Sunday 19th December 4 pm**

Hear the Christmas story unfold in this service of lessons and carols

**Wednesday 22nd December 6 pm**

Outdoor carols in Tring Churchyard

### Crib Services

**Christmas Eve 2 pm and 4 pm**

An all age service telling the Christmas story.

### Midnight Mass

**Christmas Eve 11.30 pm**

Encounter the mystery and joy of Christmas at this service

### Christmas Morning

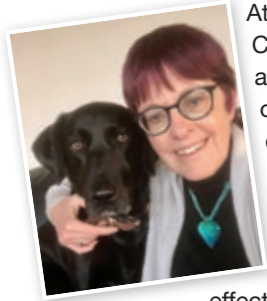
**Christmas Day 8 am**

Traditional language communion

**Christmas Day 10 am**

A communion service on Christmas Day for all ages.

# Letter from Orkney



At the time of writing, COP26 is underway and our focus is on the climate emergency. We are putting our trust in the world's leaders to legislate and mitigate the

effects that humans are having on the planet. All extremely worrying – especially the bit where we are trusting our leaders to do the right thing. To be fair though, I wonder if they are caught between a rock and hard place. We all want to be greener and environmentally aware, but many of us still want our 'stuff' and to travel wherever and whenever we want and the politicians are conscious of this. Is there a way to achieve both?

When we moved to Orkney I was vaguely aware of there being significant work being done here on 'renewables', but admit to not being very engaged with it. COP26 prompted me to do a little research as apparently many delegates travelled here to observe the progress being made. I then discovered that Stromness in Orkney is the most

important centre of research for renewables in Europe. I also found there are over 500 domestic wind turbines across the islands, more than any other county in the UK. This is apart from the commercial turbines, which along with the sun, wave and tide power means the islands produce more than 100% of the energy than it needs. Unfortunately, at present the excess can't be exported to the mainland as the underwater cable isn't man (person?) enough for the job. Therefore there is a 'green hydrogen plan' underway for Flotta, (an island here which currently houses an oil terminal) which will enable the surplus energy to be utilised.

Therefore, along with one of the highest uptakes of fully electric cars in the UK, the first net-zero-carbon hospital, the first hybrid-electric plane being trialled for inter-island use and drones being tested to deliver mail to our more remote islands, Orkney and its population is up there with its commitment to low-carbon-renewable energy research. I am conscious though that the

climate and geography of the islands, which incorporate plentiful wind and wave power, a reasonable amount of sun and the space for people to install their own wind turbines, is different from many other places. I guess wind turbines at least 20m high in the back gardens of Tring may not be well received, and there's not a lot of wave energy unless you count a breezy day on the Grand Union Canal.

In the meantime, we can only pray our esteemed leaders agree to significant and meaningful pledges and act upon them. We shall see.

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



# Inside the Parish Church of Tring



## The living heart of Tring in all seasons

St Peter & St Paul's Church has been a centre of worship and spirituality for almost a thousand years. Its history is written in the stones, ancient wood and beautiful glass that make up its fabric. The hopes and prayers of so many generations in Tring are recorded here for posterity.



## Designed for worship and fit for purpose

The nave is the heart of St Peter & St Paul's Church and is the space which carries the thoughts, songs and prayers of the congregation heavenwards. It stretches from the tower in the west to the chancel arch in the east and is where the congregation sits and visitors congregate.

The space has been roughly the same since the 14<sup>th</sup> century but there have been significant amendments since and the current layout is 15<sup>th</sup> century in form.

Throughout this period it has had the same structure, with seven piers or columns on each side, each of which is constructed of four connected shafts.

## Massive alterations

The 15<sup>th</sup> century nave originally was supported on columns made of Totterhoe stone but in the 1880s, when the whole church was restored, a massive problem caused by the foundations meant that the whole structure was considered fundamentally unsafe and so these columns were removed (they are now in Long Marston Church) and replaced with masonry of exactly the same design in Portland Stone. Whilst the columns are new, the capitals and the arches are of the original 15<sup>th</sup> century construction and link with the 14<sup>th</sup> century tower arch at the west end.

Beyond the arches, the brightness of the clerestory space draws all eyes heavenwards to the flat 15<sup>th</sup> century roof. Because of the light, very few people see that on the support columns there are fourteen wooden figures carved – the twelve Apostles plus St Paul and St Barnabas. These are hardly visible in normal conditions.

## Fabulous beasts

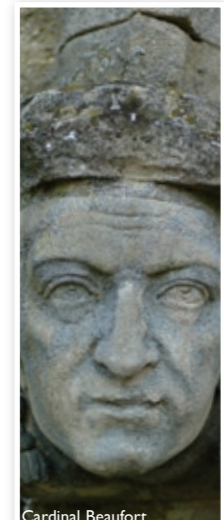
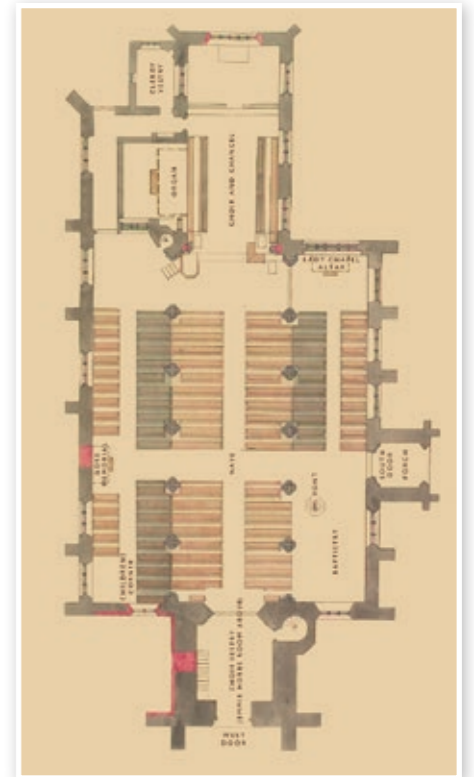
In any event, all eyes are drawn to the strange figures which top the columns on the interior of the nave and these fourteen stone corbels are one of the most intriguing features of Tring Parish Church. It is believed that they were produced in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

## North side in order from west to east

1. A monster with a woman's head and forepart with clawed feet and scaly wings – possibly a female sphinx or one of the apocalyptic locusts.
2. A beast swallowing a man.
3. A wild boar.
4. A wild man, his body covered in long plaited hair and wreathed from the loins with vines. Possibly an emblem of the 'natural or green man'.
5. An antelope with tusks.
6. A hound or talbot with a studded collar.
7. An angel bearing an heraldic shield.

## South side in order from east to west

8. A fox carrying a goose.
9. A monkey dressed as a monk.
10. A griffon devouring a man in armour.
11. A lion holding a shield.
12. A dragon.
13. A collared bear, chained and muzzled.
14. A dog or wolf fighting a dragon.



Cardinal Beaufort



Bishop Claughton

## Two bishops

On the exterior of the west door is an intriguing piece of history. On the north side we have Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Lincoln (the diocese at the time the tower was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century). Henry Beaufort was the son of John of Gaunt and the brother of Henry IV. On the south side we have Bishop Claughton of St Alban's, the diocesan bishop at the time the tower was restored.

Throughout the interior and exterior of this church the stones tell of our rich history and are there today as a testament to the many generations who have worshipped here.

**Grahame Senior & John Bly**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

## Piano & more series

*An hour of music on Sunday afternoons*

### A concert for Advent

A line-up of local musicians - of all ages! - from families around the parish will perform a varied programme of music with a mainly seasonal theme.

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December**  
at 3pm

Tring Parish Church HP23 5A

*followed by tea and refreshments*

Free admission; donations welcomed

*For further details, see:*

[piano-and-more.org.uk](http://piano-and-more.org.uk)  
or Google "Piano and more, Tring"



## Piano & more series

*An hour of music on Sunday afternoons*

**Arwen Newband** *Violin*  
**Nick Turner** *Viola*  
**Sarah Boxall** *Cello*  
**Anna Le Hair** *Piano*

**Piano quartets by Mozart and Beethoven**

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> January**  
at 3pm

*followed by tea and refreshments*

*Live performance, to be held in*  
**Tring Parish Church HP23 5AE**

*For further details see:*

[piano-and-more.org.uk](http://piano-and-more.org.uk)  
or Google "Piano and more, Tring"



# Angels from the realms of glory



This Christmas Carol written by the Scottish poet James Montgomery in 1816 is still very popular. But what are 'Angels from the realms of glory'?

We don't talk about angels very much nowadays, but they have been mentioned from early Old Testament times. Angels are recognised in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism and Satanism. The word angel comes from the Greek *angelos* or 'messenger'.

The first mention of an angel in the Bible is in Genesis 16:7 'The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert' and angels are mentioned 290 times in the Bible. So the concept of angels is well established in Christianity. Angels are contrasted to demons who are linked to the fallen angel Lucifer, or Satan – demons and Satan get 110 mentions in the Bible. The first mention of angels seems to have been made by Zoroaster c2000BC – he founded Zoroastrianism which basically believes that the world is a battle between good and evil. Zoroaster is also called Zarathustra and 'Thus spoke Zarathustra' is a book by Nietzsche, turned into a tone poem by Richard Strauss which became the main music for '2001 – a Space Odyssey'. Zoroaster said that there were Amesha Spentas, archangels who guided, inspired and protected humanity, and this concept is shared in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Sikhism has Azrael who brings a message of death and

Chitar and Gupat who record the deeds of humans – although Sikhs do not believe in heaven or hell.

Most literature about angels describes 'Guardian Angels' who look after an individual. I think the best depiction of a guardian angel is in the famous 1946 film 'It's a Wonderful Life'. If you have never seen it – watch it! It is available on most channels such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. This film was remade in 1977 as 'It Happened one Christmas', became a musical in 1986 and had a sequel in 1990 'Clarence'. You could also read Salley Vickers' sensational debut novel, 'Miss Garnet's Angel'. This uses the book of Tobit in the Catholic Bible and Protestant Apocrypha as a background theme. C.S.Lewis uses 'Eldila' or angels as a recurring theme in 'Out of the Silent Planet', 'Perelandra' and 'That Hideous Strength' (as well as devils in the 'Screwtape Letters').

So what does the Bible say about angels? In the first place they were created by God. Psalm 148:2-5: 'Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts... Let them praise the name of the Lord, for at his command they were created.' Then some angels fell and were consigned to hell 'For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell' (2 Peter 2,4) and joined Satan 'The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work' (1 John 3,8). Peter then tells us that this is the basis for the battle between good and evil 'For our struggle is not against flesh and



1886 painting by Bernhard Plockhorst

blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Ephesians 6,12).

Many modern Christians find this unpalatable. A Zoroastrian struggle between Good and Evil sounds very old fashioned and not in tune with our modern world where, no doubt, the devil would be considered a product of his upbringing and be assigned a social worker! Protestant denominations are not into angels and devils, and I have only heard one sermon on this subject in the last few years.

And do I believe in angels? Well, I am fairly certain I would not have reached 80 years of age relatively undamaged without my guardian angel!

**John Allan**  
High Street Baptist Church

# Once in Royal David's City



Around this time of year, I normally hear a boy treble start off the carol service at St Albans Abbey or listen in to the service from King's College, Cambridge. I feel

for the young lad as he strikes up the solo with only a single note from the organ and the next minute will live with him for the rest of his life, for good or ill.

At this point I often cast back my mind to pretty much sixty years ago to my first solo in school. This took place in the Infant Hall of my Primary School which was housed in a fine old Commonwealth era Manor House. The Junior section was in a bog-standard 1950's steel and glass box, but the Infant section was more interesting. The Primary School served two large London-overspill council estates on the Kent/London Border, the one I grew up on and the other even tougher estate, literally on the other side of the railway tracks and home to the notorious Star Lane. Star Lane was somewhere we did not normally go carol singing from our church just down the hill, but one year, equipped with two burly six-foot-three brothers, one a trainee policeman, one a trainee Guards Bandsman, we ventured up there and received the most generous donations from any road in the parish. In 2020 a police raid recovered from a site in the lane a loaded shot gun, seventeen air rifles illegally held, CS gas, cash, drugs, three quad bikes stolen from farms, scores of dogs, twenty-four chickens, a pony and numerous cats. Seven arrests were made. You get the picture.

In the Infant Hall, aged 6 or so, I was singing away safely with my class and really enjoying myself. Singing was quite common at home and I sang at Sunday School. My father came from a small town just outside Cardiff and was musical. He played the violin in the School and Methodist Chapel Orchestras and had a good baritone voice. (My mother did not have much of a voice but she gave me my love of reading). When I came out as a tenor in the sixth-form, he complained that it was always the tenors who would start off the repeat of the last hymn and prolong the service. My grandfather was a ship's painter in Barry

Docks. Made redundant in the Great Depression, he was determined his children would not work with their hands and my father was sent off to the wicked English city of London to work as a railway clerk for the LNER. As well as playing a lot of sport when he worked nights, when working days, he would often borrow a stool from his office at Liverpool Street Station and sit in a queue in the early evening outside the Royal Opera House for the few six-penny standing tickets at the back. He once heard the great Swedish tenor, Jussi Björling. He had taught me numerous songs in English and Welsh, including a few heavily censored Army songs. I can well recall him drumming into me the Welsh words of *Sospan Fach*, probably the daftest song in the world. An English translation is:

*Mary-Ann has hurt her finger,  
probably best left out  
And David the servant is not well.  
The baby in the cradle is crying,  
And the cat has scratched little  
Johnny.  
A little saucepan is boiling on the fire,  
A big saucepan is boiling on the floor,  
And the cat has scratched little  
Johnny.  
Little Dai the soldier,  
Little Dai the soldier,  
Little Dai the soldier,  
And his shirt tail is hanging out.  
Mary-Ann's finger has got better,  
And David the servant is in his grave;  
The baby in the cradle has grown up,  
And the cat is 'asleep in peace'.  
A little saucepan is boiling on the fire,  
A big saucepan is boiling on the floor,  
And the cat is 'asleep in peace'.*

It is the club song of the Llanelli Scarlets RFC, which explains a lot.

While all this meant I was used to singing in a group, I was nervous when the teacher picked on me as the first boy to sing a solo after two girl soloists. At 6 I was not self-conscious like a teenager but I was worried that a particularly tough Star Lane bruiser would think I was a 'sissy', as we said then, and communicate this to me one



way or another. But the teacher was a Congregationalist Minister's daughter from my father's home town and a refusal would get back home quickly. Anyway, I was a good boy. Well, most of the time. I can't remember what I sang but it went down reasonably well and the teacher was pleased. At the end of the lesson the Star Lane bruiser gave me a hearty but friendly thump on the back and thanked me for proving that the boys could sing just as well as the girls.

At 12 my voice broke and I am no longer soloist material. My elder brother had a better voice than me before his voice broke but a worse one afterwards. My younger brother always had a bad voice but unfortunately it has never stopped him. My desire to be a British Jussi Björling went. As my voice broke, so did my expectation to star in the back row of the scrum for Wales and open both the batting and the spin bowling for Kent. Odd how my voice breaking could have that effect. I am sure that is the explanation.

When I trained to be a teacher in Canterbury, I sang in the choral society and one year we did a dry run of a largely classical performance to be sung the following week in the Cathedral. This took place in the prison next door to our college. This was surprisingly popular with the men there, possibly explained by the fact that three quarters of the choir were young women. We took our place at the front of the prison chapel and then the Chaplain and the Wardens led in the inmates. In the front row of the inmates was one of the lads from my Primary School; the gap between us had already widened.

**Jon Reynolds**  
Tring Team

# The big display

Take a look at the new display boards in St Peter & St Paul's when you are next walking past the Parish Church or perhaps at one of the many Christmas events this year. You will find lots to interest you from a commemoration of the fallen to what DENS are doing.



# 2021 – a tale of two cities

As we head into Christmas and the new year, we are hopeful. Hopeful that, as international borders have reopened, we may be able to visit home in the not-too-distant future; and hopeful that our situation here might become a bit more stable, as our employer has finally sponsored us for permanent residency, which will give us certain rights that make our being here a little less precarious. This decision is currently in the hands of the immigration department.

Looking back at 2020, it really is a tale of two cities: a Sydney in which everything was almost back to normal and we were able to travel more or less as we pleased (at least locally and between most other Australian states) and a Sydney in lockdown, with Delta out of control and hardly anyone vaccinated when it all went pear-shaped in June. But let's start with the fun part. At the beginning of the year, we reported in Comment on our pre-Christmas trip to Tasmania. For John's birthday in January, we spent a lovely summer weekend walking the Kiama Coast path, just a



Wine in the Hunter Valley

couple of hours south of Sydney – which reminded us very much of our beloved Pembrokeshire Coast Path in Wales. Valentine's Day was spent at a spa hotel in Katoomba at the heart of the Blue Mountains. The hotel – formerly the private summer house of Booker Prize winner Tom Keneally – has one of the most stunning views we have ever seen from a hotel room. Over Easter, we spent a wonderful few days touring the wine country of the Hunter Valley, enjoying the wine as much as the beautiful landscape.

And in late April we had the privilege of watching a stunning open-air performance of *La Traviata* at Sydney Harbour – with the famous Opera House as backdrop. However, in late June, a weekend in the Blue Mountains hinterland, in the apple and cider country around Bilpin, was to be our last trip for some time.

When we wrote in June about 'Auscatraz', little did we know that we would not only suffer from closed borders, but also soon be back in lockdown. That ended up lasting over 100 days: about twice as long as we hoped would be the case when we last wrote (in August, for Comment's September issue). At that point, the daily case numbers were around 200, but subsequently grew to over 2000 at the October peak. As we also mentioned, this meant cancelling a long-awaited trip to Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef and spending both our wedding anniversary and Sylvie's birthday in July at home. But looking back, we can't really complain given all the lovely things we have been able to do this year, though sometimes it takes flipping through some of our photos to remind us of this!

Ironically, the recent outbreak might have helped to open up Fortress Australia much sooner than looked like being the case. When lockdown started in late June under 20% of the local population had been fully vaccinated and Australia ranked last among western nations in vaccine uptake. Many people were hesitant. Having lived blissfully unscathed during most of the pandemic, few saw Covid-19 as a real threat. This all changed quickly and dramatically. By the time you are reading this, more than 90% of the over-16 population in



La Traviata

NSW will be fully vaccinated. At the time of writing, Australia has caught up with the UK on first dose vaccinations and will shortly have caught up on second doses. Not all states and territories are equal, as those least affected by the pandemic (Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland) are still lagging behind NSW and Victoria, the two most populous states. The vaccine success and the realisation that Covid-19 simply can't be kept out for ever, has emboldened both states to scrap quarantine and reopen their borders to the fully vaccinated. So far this only applies to Australian citizens and permanent residents, but we hope that others will soon follow. We have another little pre-Christmas trip booked, but decided to stay in NSW (Snowy Mountains and the South Coast) as the state border issues are still too uncertain.

So, there is lots to hope for in the coming months, but also a new uncertainty for us. One of the biggest advantages in lockdown was that we currently live in a lovely house with two studies and a large garden to wander



Katoomba Echoes Hotel View

about, so even after three months of lockdown we never really felt too 'locked in'. Sadly, we have just learned that our landlord has caught the bug of Sydney's overheated property market and we will likely have to move at the end of our tenancy (early March) unless another investor buys it. At the same time, if the permanent residency is confirmed, we are considering buying our own place, but are unsure about the timing, and of whether buying now would be buying into a bubble. Today we read of a house in Sydney that had been purchased for just nine weeks earlier. Needless to say, many such parts of the city are well out of our price range!

Fortunately, the situation at work seems to have settled down a little and we hope that one of the upsides of the pandemic is that our employer realises the need for more flexible work



Kiama Coast Path

arrangements, which would allow us to move a little further into the mountains even if it means a longer commute.

Together, we recently ran a research workshop on 'Virtues and Vices on Screen' via Zoom, with participation from across the globe. Some in the Tring congregation may remember our Lenten Film series a few years back on

these topics, and it's a research project Sylvie continues to work on. John has also kept busy and was recently interviewed on ABC Radio National – the Aussie version of BBC Radio 4 – about his recent book *Love's Forgiveness*. Anyone interested can find it here (John's bit is mostly in the second half): <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/soul-search/forgiveness-up-close:-a-look-at-mothers-and-daughters,-kierkega/13606338>. So, we'll see what the new year will bring and no doubt will update you again before too long.

In the meantime, we wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! **Sylvie Magerstaedt & John Lippitt**  
**St David's Anglican Church, Blaxland NSW**  
**Formerly of St Peter & St Paul, Tring**

## Covid-19



Comment readers can be forgiven for wondering why the UK Covid-19 epidemic has not completely ended with the substantial vaccination programme that

has been carried out.

But in my first article on this subject you might have noticed that excellent individual immunity to poliovirus was only loosely connected with the capacity for passing on the infection. The early Salk vaccine was injected as opposed to the Sabin vaccine which was administered by mouth. It transpired that oral immunisation interrupted transmission whereas injection didn't. Immune mechanisms in the gut were important. One can conjecture that intra-nasal administration of Covid-19 vaccine might hypothetically have similar consequences, but as yet the injection route is the norm.

In any event, spread of the currently prevalent very infectious variants occurs disconcertingly often, even in vaccinated people, with illness exacerbated by waning immunity from vaccine given in late 2020 / early 2021.

But where is the infection coming from?

The daily media broadcasts of national percentage vaccination figures have excluded ineligible younger vaccinees, so the percentage was of news and administrative interest but of diminished biological relevance to the population as a whole.

Debate about the desirability of vaccinating younger people has centred on their mild illness, which is very rarely fatal, making vaccination ethically problematic. These ethical concerns trumped the benefit of protecting the whole population that might have accrued from their being vaccinated. But now the theoretical benefit to the whole population from youngsters' vaccination is probably somewhat reduced.

What remains? First, the current position of giving booster vaccine to older citizens should be unequivocally beneficial to individuals, though the outcome on the NHS load remains to be seen.

Second, in the UK we have developed excellent genetic monitoring of virus variants, which so far has been deployed with benefit. One hopes that monitoring will be sustained, independently of 'Track and Trace' in the event of changes in administrative policies. It gives early warning of

variants 'of concern'.

Third, whilst transmission rates remain high, folk who are vulnerable to poor outcomes can still be socially vigilant, and limit their exposure. Unfortunately this may mean pulling out of crowded events, including church services, which the author has hastily done.

Finally, several anti-viral agents which have proved effective in trials are potentially available, but data on their deployment in the UK are currently unavailable. This deficit will eventually be remedied by engaging the world-acclaimed accelerated NHS evaluation process.

If you feel confused, you have evaluated the facts correctly! The situation is now complex, with multiple interacting processes and a shifting backdrop. The science is likely to be fairly clear, the modelling is subject to much uncertainty, and the administrative processes are likely to be the Achilles heel for a happy outcome. Boosters, and social vigilance are recommended for readers of Comment with a blow-out at Christmas being postponed to Easter!

**Mike Sherratt**  
**Corpus Christi**

## Christmas time in Tring



I remember that the first time David and I attended the Christmas morning service at the parish church in Tring, we were puzzled to see people looking back, somehow expectantly, towards the little gallery space. We soon found out, as dozens of balloons were pushed towards the congregation and made their way towards the front of the church, bouncing gaily and touched by many hands. They were to help us to enjoy Jesus' coming as a baby and remember 'his birthday'. We took two away with us, and met a small family on our way home and gave them to their young children

who were delighted to have them.

Other memories are of the music we heard around the time of Advent and Christmas, with special memories for David, then in the choir. No doubt music will be especially valued this year after the drought of it last year when churches were uncharacteristically silent and dark. And the TRingers, under the guidance of Margaret Gittins, added to the enjoyment at various events at that time of year as well.

One year, I took part with a small group who sang carols and raised money for charity in all the pubs in Tring, with varying receptions from the patrons! In some they joined in with the carols with gusto, while others hardly noticed that we were there. However, I must admit that for my part, it was

a way of seeing the inside of these traditional pubs which were otherwise closed to me, not being a drinker!

On a post-Christmas note, shortly before we left Tring when the first lockdown came in, I noticed a number of families out with young-ish children on bikes; I reckoned that at least some of those bikes had been Christmas presents that were at last coming into their own as the roads and paths were suddenly so much quieter.

Greetings to all for Advent, then Christmas itself, followed by the start of 2022. How we all wonder what changes that will bring for us, if COP26 really does mean business this time...

**Margaret Whiting**  
formerly **St Peter & St Paul**

## Why a 'dog collar'?



The so called 'dog collar', worn by clergy, first appeared in the 1860s invented in 1865 by the Revd Donald Mcleod, a Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) minister in Glasgow, according to the Glasgow Herald and Anglican Church documents. Prior to that time, in the early 1800s, there was a fashion for informal clothes to have the white shirt collar folded down over the garment underneath – and it was thought that initially this was copied by clergy. Sometimes 'preaching bands' are used with the collar when conducting a church service.

The style of clerical collar varies greatly. There can be a single circular collar worn over a black under-vestment, a black shirt with a gap for the white collar to be shown through, and, for the really trendy – various coloured shirts with a gap in the collar for the clergy collar to show through.

Most churches simply require their minister or priest to be 'suitably dressed' in their regulations. Clerical collars are not compulsory although many Anglican and Catholic priests wear them even when informally dressed. At the other end of the scale, many Baptist ministers only wear them when conducting the formal ceremony of a wedding or funeral.

Until the 4<sup>th</sup> century clerics and secular dignitaries dressed in much the same way, but after the 4<sup>th</sup> century secular fashions changed, leaving only clerics dressed in the stole and/or chasuble. The stole had become a ceremonial scarf whilst the chasuble (derived from the Roman paenula) ended up as a single triangular garment with a hole for the head. This form of dress with additions and decorations formed the main clerical garb for hundreds of years, and the chasuble was also used in religious orders and monasteries. There were no 'dog collars' to wear with clerical garb. The style of paenula evolved so that it eventually became the cassock, a black robe with a mandarin style collar with a gap in the



Danish pastor in ruff



Justin Welby and Pope Francis both with clerical collars

front of the collar for the white dog collar to show through.

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century many Catholic clergy still wore secular clothes except for special services, but in 1725, Pope Benedict XIII ordered priests not to wear lay attire and it became normal for catholic priests to wear a paenula or cassock at all times.

The origin of the term 'dog collar' is debatable. In the mid-1800s all collars on normal formal shirts were detachable so they could be starched and were fitted to the collarless shirt by studs (this style persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century). The clerical collar was initially simply a normal collar reversed. This style, which showed the whole of the collar, looked like a dog's collar, hence, it is thought, the name.

The Danish Lutheran Church ministers traditionally wore a white ruff instead of a dog collar – and many still do, including female ministers. I suppose they could be called a dog collar since dogs say 'ruff, ruff' (except that the Danish equivalent of 'ruff,ruff' is 'vuf,vuf')!

**John Allan, High Street Baptist Church**

## Around the world



This is part 7 of an article that began in the May edition of *Comment*.

On the way to Te Anua, on South Island, New Zealand, across the plains and below the towering 'Remarkables' mountains we stopped to photograph at some length the 'Kingston Flyer', an old restored steam train which still runs every day taking tourists on a nostalgic train ride through the countryside.

We drove into Te Anua in pouring rain and somewhat weary only to find, for the first time on the tour, that our room was not ready. Out again to the lakeside where we sat and looked at the ducks shelter from torrential rain and hailstones. The following morning those same mountains, much to our surprise, were coated with the first autumn dusting of snow.

Our route to Dunedin was along dead straight roads over a flat landscape with not another soul in sight. When another vehicle appeared it was a warning Land-rover to say there were sheep just coming. In Britain when you meet a flock of sheep it doesn't hold you up for more than a minute but in New Zealand the road was full of sheep as far as the eye could see and they just kept running past us for a good ten minutes, being herded by four or five dogs and two shepherds on foot with two 'spare' dogs sitting in the Land-rover in reserve.

We arrived in Dunedin in good time so we made our way into the city to look at the cathedral of St Paul. We were shown around by a church watcher who was very interested to know where we were from, who by coincidence knew St Albans from a holiday he had there once. From the cathedral we made our way to one of the only stately homes in New Zealand, Olveston House. Built in the 1920s by a member of the Thermion family originally from Bristol, it was interesting but not a patch on the National Trust!

Omarama was our next stop and on the way we passed some hydro-electric plants. Nothing unusual in these except for the colour of the water from which they were generating the power. It was a brilliant turquoise blue and came from the glaciers in the hills. The colour was unlike anything we had seen before and was due, so my son told me later, to the silica deposits in the glacier melt water. The lakes and water were so unusual we took a side road which went around Lake Aviemore and over three dams which controlled the water flow. The contrast in the bright sunshine, with a deep blue sky, the lime green of the trees and the turquoise water, with the mountains in the background, was mesmerising and we stayed to take many pictures.

The following day dawned rather dull and, although we planned to visit Mt Cook, the weather did not look hopeful for photography. However we drove on down a road which travelled alongside another turquoise lake, Lake Pukati and as we travelled nearer the mountains, so the mist slowly cleared until within a

mile of Mt Cook, the clouds suddenly lifted and we saw the enormous glaciers and summit of the mountain in all its glory before us. Although the road to the mountain was out of the way and took some time to cover, it rewarded us with some of the most spectacular pictures of the whole trip.

Our route to Christchurch from Mt Cook took us via another spectacular lake, Lake Tekapo. This is a little tourist town with a monument to the tremendous help afforded by sheep dogs to all the New Zealand sheep farmers. However, on the edge of the lake is a tiny chapel. The altar has been built in front of a panoramic window which looks down the length of the lake to the clouded mountains in the far distance. One looks from the altar cross to this stupendous heavenly view, an absolutely breathtaking sight.

We had spent so much time taking photographs at Mt Cook and the lakes that there was very little time to do any sightseeing in Christchurch.

We had another early morning flight back to Auckland so spent the day wandering amongst some of the city shops and in the evening we went out to Greenhithe for a farewell dinner.

On the Friday, our penultimate day in New Zealand, we spent time in the Museum and photographing the flora and fauna in the Wintergardens. In the evening we packed ready for our departure the following day. We went out to the coast for a picnic and to visit a colony of gannets before going to the airport for our flight to Los Angeles.

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

## Greetings from Biggleswade!

Reading in *Comment* about how long various people have spent in the parish of Tring, it suddenly dawned on me that we have been attending the church in Biggleswade for forty-six years! Before that Ian and I were sixteen years in the Parish Church of Tring. Happy days.

I celebrated my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in August (in Cromer, in the picture) and my MS means I can't write as well as I used to, but reading the



article about the Cartwright family brought back memories of spending a day in London at the English Folk & Dance celebration years ago with Don Cartwright.

We wish you all God's blessing for a peaceful Christmas and our love to anyone who remembers us in the choir and congregation of St Peter & St Paul.

**Rosamund Drakes**  
**St Andrew's Church**  
**Biggleswade**

## In memory of Eunice Hall

Eunice lived her whole life in the area that we would call Tring Rural, but in the memories that she wrote down in lockdown, she used the old term of Dacorum Hundred. She recalled how many of the people worked on the local farms on land owned by Christ Church College, Oxford and Lord Rothschild.

Born in Long Marston in 1935 as an only child, Eunice was a fifth-generation villager and was proud that one of her sons and her two granddaughters still live there now – seven generations of her family. When she was a child, Long Marston not only had a school, an Anglican Church, a Baptist and a Methodist church, but also a general store, a Post Office and an adjoining sweet shop, a butchers with its own slaughter house, a bakery with a bakehouse, a sweet shop, three pubs, a forge (for shoeing horses and repairing agricultural/garden implements), a garage with petrol pumps and a taxi service, a village barber, a cobbler, local builders, painters, carpenters etc., and a local egg packing station.

When Eunice was 5 in 1940, she attended the Victoria Village School in Long Marston where there were then three classrooms for children aged 5-14, infants, juniors and seniors. In January 1941 the school was bombed. The Infant mistress and two adult evacuees were killed. Eunice was then taught in various locations in Long Marston and Puttenham. The infants went to the Baptist Chapel schoolroom in Cheddington Lane, the seniors to the Old Parish Hall while the juniors had to cycle to the Parish Room at Puttenham. As she then lived in Gubblecote, it was a journey of over 1½ miles. Those without cycles had to walk across the fields. The school hours were 9.00am to 12noon and 2.00pm to 4.00pm and everyone went home for their lunch. The old room was heated by an iron stove which was very smoky first thing in the morning so they had lots of nature walks.

Eunice's mother had been in service in the dairy on the Rosebery Estate of Mentmore Towers until she married her father in 1934. By the time he retired, her father was the last chairman of the Berkhamsted Rural District Council before local government organization in 1977 under Edward Heath meant that the borough of Dacorum was formed.

Secondary school for Eunice was the grammar in Hemel Hempstead, to which she also cycled. 'I would have been a quiet, rather timid pupil not willing to take

part in class discussions. Absolutely no good on Sports Day and never managed to learn to swim.' While the quiet child might not be the adult Eunice we knew, she also spoke of those friends that she still exchanged Christmas cards with, and this ability to keep in touch is definitely something we all remember.

As we all know, her memory was phenomenal, and there are some wonderful accounts of what rural life was like, of all the businesses and shops that used to be in Long Marston in the days when you could play with a whip and top, or play hopscotch on the road near the Gubblecote turning (not sure any of us would try that now!)

She would cycle with friends to the Regal Cinema in Tring, feeling sorry for the young people from Wigginton who had a much worse ride home; and also to Aston Clinton to catch the bus to Aylesbury for the dances, which is where she met her future husband, Bill. They married in 1960, living in Avebury, the house that he built on the land given them by her father. She trained as a tailor, skills that came in very useful when friends and family needed alterations. She brought up their family, Andrew and Tim, in the heart of the community that Eunice loved.

'People might expect village life to be boring,' wrote Eunice, 'but all my life I've been involved in all kinds of activities. I remember helping my father deliver tins of food, such as pineapple, to elderly people during the war (I wonder if the tins were a gift from Commonwealth countries). Then as a teenager I was involved along with many others in fundraising events for the building of a new hall. Then there was tennis and trying to get a tennis court on the recreation ground; a drama group and amateur performances. As a young mum I was in a group with Jean Warwick, the then vicar's wife, in setting up a village play group. This is now the village preschool. Until very recent years I was an active WI member and on Puttenham Church Council and very involved with fundraising activities there – Jumble sales in particular – in the kitchen.'

Eunice was also a school governor, and played many other roles too.

Eunice and Audrey and Josie were all friends and bridesmaids together. Audrey's daughter, Helen, remembers Eunice and Audrey sharing mother's help duties at the playgroup, and sliding on the wooden floors at Avebury. 'Eunice and her family always went to Honiton in



Devon for their holiday to stay in an old mill. It was very basic, with no mains electricity! Audrey always thought Eunice didn't get much of a "holiday". It was lovely that in later years Eunice and Bill enjoyed so many fabulous holidays all over the world. I really enjoyed hearing all about her travels when Eunice returned: it was very educational as she would learn so much about everywhere she visited and loved sharing the knowledge. Badminton was also an important part of Eunice and Bill's social life, and they were very good at encouraging the younger players. Eunice made the most fabulous cards for birthdays and Christmas! She never forgot a birthday and wrote lovely notes full of village news.'

Eunice's knowledge and memory were incredible, always so accurate. It's very sad that so much information has now gone as she was the Long Marston Encyclopaedia.

And, of course, her faith – which like much of her life was practical in nature. The church was part of the community that she loved, and she was part of that. As you know, there are several churches in our patch, but Eunice was one of the few, if not the only one, who went to all three of our churches: in St Mary's, Puttenham, with her granddaughter; in St Cross, Wilstone, with Bill, and with one of their wonderful carers; and All Saints, Long Marston, having walked there. She loved music as part of her experience of church.

Eunice died in the season of All Saints, which is when we remember all those of faith who went before us; those who were not perfect, but who lived out their lives of faith. In the letter to Timothy in the New Testament, it speaks of Timothy's mother Eunice, who taught him how to love God, because that is what it is to be a saint.

In Eunice's own words: 'I consider I've had a fulfilling life living my whole life in the Tring Rural area. It has given me a great feeling of belonging, especially during the lockdown when the community has been so supportive.'

**Jane Banister, Tring Team**

## In memory of Audrey Young

It has been my privilege to know Audrey and John Young for about fifteen years. Audrey Young was a fine role model, a delightful, gracious, gentle lady and a kind, caring and thoughtful friend. She was reverent in the way she lived and always taught by example what is good. She was an unstinting support for John in all his activities.

When we heard that Audrey had gone to be with our Lord so suddenly, some of us thought that her passing was just like that of Enoch in Genesis 5:24 – 'Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away', and that is what David Chapman spoke about when he conducted her Thanksgiving Service.

Audrey did indeed walk faithfully with God. She became a Christian as a teenager when she lived in London and she served him in every way throughout her life. Having completed her nursing training, she and John were married and blessed with three children, all of whom spoke at the service, bearing witness to what a wonderful mother she was. Their four grandchildren also spoke at the service, and many photos were shared, making sure that we all knew of her loving abilities as a grandmother. She continued to be a very able, caring and sensitive nurse, working at night when their children were young. There are many who will happily share their experiences of her in her professional capacity.

In latter years Audrey served God and others with her amazing hospitality skills. Many Sunday lunches were lovingly prepared and shared with friends, also providing opportunities for fellowship and fun. During the lockdown

period when all of our activities were curtailed, David and I would call regularly to see John and Audrey and immediately be invited to sit in their beautiful garden or in their comfortable home (when it was allowed) and, at once, we would feel encompassed in their warmth, humour and positivity. It was a real joy to visit them.

Audrey was young at heart, her great desire being able to do the things that she used to do. She was creative in many ways, producing some beautiful collage pictures, lovingly and carefully designed and constructed. She had begun work on a new one just a few weeks before she went to be with the Lord. She enjoyed many crafts and was always interested in the things made by others.

Always keen to get involved in Church activities, Audrey and John were valued members of their House Group and often hosted the meetings. They rarely missed the monthly Churches Together Prayer Breakfasts and quietly served in many ways behind the scenes. One lady said 'I will treasure the memories of the time I spent in the kitchen at Tots with Audrey and John; she was such a servant-hearted lady and a great witness'.

They were so glad when Church



Services resumed after lockdown and attended faithfully, as they had done for years, often at both Sunday Services.

Audrey was always thinking of others. She had an amazing capacity for remembering details and, in faith, turned her thoughts and concerns into prayers. She was much loved by many as she reflected her love for Jesus in so many ways. She will be missed by all who knew her. We praise our Lord that she is now safely with him in her eternal home.

**Joan Eeley  
Akeman Street Baptist Church**

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## In memory of Ken Martin

Ken was a 'gentle' man in its truest sense.

Ken met Olga at the Young Conservatives and she was his faithful, loving wife and by his side for fifty-nine years through thick and thin. As a husband, dad and granddad, family was at the heart and soul of everything he did. He was a proud man, with perhaps traditional views and opinions in many ways over what was right and wrong in the modern world.

Ken lost his mother early in his life and was brought up by his father and grandparents who were hugely formative in the man he became.

Ken was a Chartered Surveyor by profession and had worked diligently to get qualifications during the early years of his married life. The skills learnt dominated many aspects of his ongoing life, notably his attention to detail and accuracy.

Intertwined with his family life there were a few key activities, many of these having community at the heart of them.

The church was important to him – firstly in Kingsbury, London, where he grew up and sung in the choir for many years, and subsequently becoming Church Warden, a position he retained for many years, prior to the family moving to the Tring area.

Round Table was another organisation he believed in, both with the club itself and still to this day The 41 Club, serving in both as Chairman with distinction.

His other main passion was

gardening, and he grasped this from an early age. The family move to Tring brought him the garden of his dreams, an acre and a third to play with and room for both flowers and vegetables. Although a lot of hard work, he loved it.



Managing his garden then took much of his weekend time, and although it did not impact his strong faith, he stepped away from the church for a while. Eventually, he felt it was getting too much for him to manage in the manner he would have been happy with, and with a new development in Wilstone, 'The Mill', being built, it was time to move. This brought Ken and Olga back into the main village community which they strongly believed in. A much smaller garden ensued, but as always it looked first class for flowers.

The move to 'The Mill' once again allowed him to return to the church where he became Church Warden, this time at St Cross, Wilstone, and he

continued to fight for its status to be maintained.

Ken was a man of exacts: everything had to be 'just so' even down to cutting cakes to even portions. It was also a standing joke in the family that at Christmas time, the family's cards were held back until the last possible moment, and then they were put together and up with pinpoint accuracy into card trees, with every card having its own specific place to ensure a perfect layout. Simon's wife, Deborah, in particular, loved to tease him about this, a tradition his daughter Julia has continued.

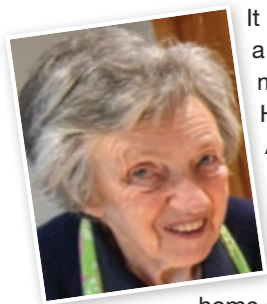
Being a strong Spurs fan throughout his life there was family rivalry with Simon, Julia and his second granddaughter Kathleen who all supported Arsenal. Ken's sister Margaret was a schoolteacher. He was very proud his eldest granddaughter Sarah followed into the same profession, both teaching History.

In recent times his health issues meant he had to take on the supervisor's role. He did not enjoy this but would be seen with his walker giving his orders and – woe betide you for not maintaining the perfect accuracy displays with variances not accepted.

He lived life as he would have wanted. He is survived by his loving family: wife Olga, daughter Julia, son Simon, granddaughters Sarah and Kathleen.

**Olga Martin and family**

## Calling all ex-Tring readers!



It is now four and a half years since I moved to Penrice House near St Austell in Cornwall. Here I am well cared for and I keep busy with activities in the home and the local

Methodist Church where I am now a member.

With Christmas greetings to all my friends in Tring.

**Dorothy Walsh**  
formerly St Peter & St Paul



During my 94 years, I have come across a few parishes but never one with a magazine like *Comment!*

**Nan Brown**  
formerly St Peter & St Paul

*Nan, originally from the West Country, moved to Tring from Devon when she was 91 to live near her family but a few years later they moved to the Taunton area and she went with them, now overlooking the playing fields of Taunton Prep School. Nan sends greetings to all her friends in Tring!*

## In memory of Pam Cockerill

Mum was born on 15 October 1926 at home, which was a greengrocer's shop in Tring High Street owned by her mother and father, Winifred and Douglas Sanders. She was an only child and had a very happy childhood, much of it spent in nearby Wilstone, which she loved, and where a large part of her extended family lived at the time.

In Tring the family lived in a succession of houses, including a bungalow, one of two built side by side by her father and his brother Harold. Harold lived in the bungalow next door and across the two back gardens they had a tennis court where Mum spent many happy summer's days which led to an enduring love of tennis. To Mum and my sister Alison, Wimbledon fortnight was sacrosanct.

Mum was 14 when the Second World War broke out, and you might have expected this monumental event to have impacted her life quite dramatically, but whenever Alison or I asked about her experiences, she'd say 'I really can't recall much at all', except for the evacuees from London that came to stay and the dances at the Victoria Hall attended by the lads stationed at RAF Halton.

After the war, one of Mum's passions became amateur dramatics and dancing. She and her friends were members of the New Mill Follies who put on regular reviews and plays at the Church House. The Follies also raised money for Cancer Research; fundraising was to become a major part of her life for many years.

Mum's first job was working for The Midland Bank in Tring as a cashier, where she stayed for four years, before moving to Oriel Records in Aston Clinton. After a break to have her two children, she

took up the post of classroom assistant at Wilstone School. After the school closed in 1971, she took up the position of secretary at Wigginton School where she stayed for twenty years until retiring. She was also clerk to Tring Rural Parish Council, and a Governor first at Goldfield School and later Tring School.



Mum met Dad in New Haw, Surrey, in 1946 – her mum and dad, for reasons unknown, bought a greengrocer's there, but moved back to Tring within a year or so. They married in St Peter & St Paul's Church in Tring in 1951.

In the 1970s they developed a passion for boating on the canal and we spent many long weekends and holidays at the boat club in Cheddington which held annual skills competitions where you had to manoeuvre your boat around a course and hook fenders out of the water. This was one of the few occasions when I saw Mum becoming competitive. The very first time they entered, they won.

Mum was very involved with St Cross in Wilstone (where she arranged for her meticulously planned funeral to take place). She organised flower festivals, the first in 1993 and the last in 2013. Over the years these raised £1000s for the church, resulting in new windows, lighting, heating and flooring. She encouraged people to take home a jam jar and put 10p a week in it, so that she had fifty jam

jars in circulation and accumulated yet more funds for the church.

The biggest event of this period was 'The Festival of Transport' which she and Dad organised in the village, which started with a parade including numerous horse-drawn vehicles, bicycles,

commercial vehicles and vintage cars culminating a full-blown fete on the recreational ground. Her final big event was in 2019, at the age of 92, when she organised a flower-arranging evening with Neil Gurney (who was her hairdresser and the organist who played at her funeral) for the decking appeal.

She was a devoted and loving grandmother to Molly and Hugh, always encouraging, enthusiastic and proud of their achievements. They spent many lovely hours together including holidays in Southwood, which was Mum's favourite seaside town.

She loved painting, was a bird watcher and loved the reservoirs, and for most of her life she had a cat. She played the piano and loved Sunday lunches; she learnt to drive at 30 and horse ride at 70. She didn't like cooking much, but never bought a ready meal – she didn't like doing the housework as the cobwebs testified. She cooked meals for people who needed help and for sixty years raised money for Cancer Research.

She lived a long and fulfilled life during which she was many things to many people. St Cross, Wilstone, and the village itself held a special place in her life. She was loving, generous, kind, unjudgemental and 'in charge'. As Dad said on their fiftieth wedding anniversary when asked 'What was the secret of a happy marriage?' he replied. 'It's simple: just say "yes dear".' But perhaps it's her sense of humour we'll remember most. Even in the bleakest moments, there would be a smile and laughter, and she kept smiling and laughing to the end.

**Tim Cockerill, son**



# Useful contacts

## TRING TEAM PARISH

**Team Rector**  
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**JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP**  
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www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
www.newmillbaptist.org.uk  
www.akemanstreet.org  
www.berkotring.org.uk

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

 Tring Parish

 @revhuw

## Crossword puzzle answers From page 19

ACROSS	DOWN
1. JUDAH	1. JESUS' BIRTHDAY
4. PRAYING	2. DAVID
8. SAVIOUR	3. HOOD
9. MOTTO	4. PARISH
10. SIDE	5. ALMS
11. ASK	6. INTROIT
12. JOBS	7. GOOD SHEPHERDS
15. MAGI	13. EGO
16. EAST	14. FAN
18. TIDE	15. MADONNA
19. ALE	17. PLACID
20. BOTH	21. OFFER
24. DANCE	22. HERE
25. CONIFER	23. INCH
26. YEAR END	
27. HARPS	

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Please contact Barbara Anscombe if you would like to take a subscription to *Comment*: £10.00 for 10 issues each year. The magazine can be posted to you with an additional cost for postage at current rates.

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

## Comment Deadlines

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



# Services in Tring Team Parish in December and January

## Sunday 5th December

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**  
8am Holy Communion traditional language **Aldbury**  
10am Holy Communion with Sunday Club **Tring**  
10am Worship for All Christingle Service **Aldbury**  
10am Holy Communion **Long Marston**  
3pm Christingle Service **Tring**

## Sunday 12th December

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**  
10am Worship for all **Tring**  
10am Holy Communion **Aldbury**  
6pm Celtic Evening Prayer by zoom **Long Marston**

## Sunday 19th December

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**  
10am Holy Communion and Sunday Club **Tring**  
10am Worship for All **Long Marston**  
10am Holy Communion by extension **Aldbury**

## Sunday 26th December

10am Team Parish Holy Communion **Tring**

## Christmas Services

We have lots of special services over the Christmas season. There is a poster elsewhere in Comment with all the Tring Church Christmas services.

Please visit the website for more service details across the parish

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

## Mid-week Services in the parish

9.15am Tuesdays Holy Communion **Tring**  
10am Tuesdays Alternates weekly either Holy Communion or Morning Worship **Wilstone**  
10am Thursdays Holy Communion in traditional language **Tring**

## Services in

# Tring Team Parish in December and January

## Sunday 2nd January

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**  
8am Holy Communion traditional language **Aldbury**  
10am Holy Communion **Tring**  
10am Worship for All Service **Aldbury**  
10am Holy Communion **Long Marston**

## Sunday 9th January

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**  
10am Worship for all **Tring**  
10am Holy Communion **Aldbury**  
6pm Celtic Evening Prayer by zoom **Long Marston**

## Sunday 16th January

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**  
10am Holy Communion and Sunday Club **Tring**  
10am Worship for All **Long Marston**  
10am Holy Communion by extension **Aldbury**

## Sunday 23rd January

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**  
10am Worship for All Holy Communion **Tring**  
10am Holy Communion **Aldbury**  
3.30pm Evensong **Puttenham**  
6pm Holy Communion **Long Marston**

## Sunday 30th January

8am Holy Communion traditional language **Tring**  
10am Holy Communion and Sunday Club **Tring**  
10am Holy Communion **Aldbury**  
10am Holy Communion **Long Marston**

# High Street Baptist Church

Growing in the message and challenge of God



Photo by David Beale on Unsplash

Join us for our  
special services  
and events this  
Christmas.

## **Sunday 12 December**

10.30am All-age Nativity service

4pm Remembering loved ones service

## **Sunday 19 December**

6pm Carol service

## **Christmas Eve**

4pm Outdoor service (behind Springwell Vet, HP23 6HA)

11.30pm Midnight Communion service

## **Christmas Day**

10am Christmas celebration service