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COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



Worship at home

For our weekly Worship at Home resources, sermon links and prayer meetings visit www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk.



Recycling

Open all hours!
Our recycling area is located at the left hand side entrance to High Street Baptist



church. We collect bras, plastic milk bottle tops, baby food pouches, pens, glasses, mobile phones, stamps, batteries.

Our sermons, all-age talks and other videos are available on our YouTube channel **'High Street Baptist Church, Tring, UK'**.



For kids' activities, links, news and resources:



Kids Activities @High Street Baptist

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

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

www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk



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High Street Baptist Church

The season of creation



Every now and then, when day dreaming, I think, where else in the world would I like to live? Being a fussy creature, I don't want it to be too hot or too cold, nor too remote or too busy, and I am afraid that I don't want to go anywhere without good plumbing. But above all, what I would want is to be in a place with different seasons.

I love the changes that happen through the year of the length of day, of the quality of light, of the temperature (so long as it is not too extreme!). I love seeing how the plants and trees change through the year: the different greens on Ashridge, the roses blooming on our house, the blackberries ripening at the end of the school summer holidays.

We are very fortunate in where we live, so my day dreaming often ends up with wanting to visit places, but being happy where I am – which is good! It also reminds me how much the natural world still leads in how we live and behave and act, even if our actual contact with it is limited. The restriction of our lives earlier this year did cause many to become more aware of the world around them as they took daily walks, or started gardening; and there has been an increase in people seeking homes in the countryside as working from home has become more normal.

The rules by which we had, and to some degree still have to live, have made us aware of all the freedoms we have, and what we have taken for granted, and have also made us realise if we did not know it already, just what an

effect we have on the world. The skies became clear in the major cities as the traffic stopped, and air quality improved dramatically.

We are at a point where we can see the benefits of making a lighter footprint on the earth, and yet also are more aware of the restrictions we will have to accept for that to happen. Many are hoping, after years of campaigning for a more sustainable way of living (Friends of the Earth began in 1969 and Greenpeace in 1971) that it is becoming more likely. It always makes me sigh when I read articles about ten ways of being more green at home, as most of the suggestions are ones that my mother instilled into me: I did not realise that most people did not have compost heaps, or did not know the value of a real wool jumper as opposed to turning up the heating, and as for re-using things... (wonderfully demonstrated just now by Huw saying he needed to buy a Jiffy bag, and my retorting that I have never bought one in my life, and here are the bags for re-using).

This all ties in with our faith as Christians – the Old Testament that reminds us of the beauty and glory of this created world (the Psalms), the responsibility that we have been given and the role of our stewardship (Genesis and Leviticus), and the New Testament with Christ's teaching of how the church he gives us is one of love and compassion, and the example of the early church that held all things in common and shared what they had with others.

It can be easy to hold to those in our personal lives, but much more difficult beyond that. When Christian Aid and Oxfam began to talk about the need to campaign about climate change and

challenging tax avoidance as ways of helping the poorest in our world, many were not happy. They were accused of getting too political: yet surely the act of looking at how one's actions affect others is far beyond political – it is about being human, it is about serving others, it is about 'being church'. We are all called to know that we have been entrusted with this amazing creation, and we need to be responsible for it, and to take joy in it.

The idea of the season of creation (1 September to 4 October – St Francis' Day) in the Christian churches began in 1989, and has become more and more of an important festival. For us in Britain, it includes our Harvest services, which have expanded from a celebration of the local crops, to recognising the importance of sharing, and of valuing God's creation. As with so much, our harvest will be different this year, but the meaning is still the same.

*Divine Sculptor,
You have fashioned the universe
and all that is in it.
You have created the earth with all
its abundance.
You have made your people in all
our variety
and placed us here to act justly
and to seek peace.
Around us the sights and sounds
of nature
echo the song of praise your
people offer to you.
For the variety and splendour of
the universe
God of time and eternity, receive
our songs of praise.*

Jane Banister, Tring Team

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Jo and Sam whose first child, Leia-Rose Alice Mason, was baptised in St Peter & St Paul's Church on 2 August 2020.

Leia-Rose was born on 7 February and has been a welcome member of our post-lockdown church services over the summer. She is named after her two grandmothers, Leia and Alice, with the addition of the name Rose,

which Sam and Jo both liked.

Sam and Jo chose to have Leia-Rose baptised at St Peter & Paul's as they were married there last year and wanted her to be part of a church family that they knew and where they felt welcomed.

'Wherever she is, she will always belong to her Tring church family,' Jo said.

The Editor



'To meet or not to meet? That is the question'



Well, little did we think this time last year that in the spring and summer of 2020 we'd be doing church in our pyjamas. Or with our feet up. Or whilst knitting.

Of course, we all miss the fellowship and collective worship, and we'd all rather things were back to normal so we can do church together as we always have done. But if we're honest, there are parts of 'lockdown church' that have been – dare I say, quite nice. From watching with a cup of tea and slice of cake, to parents being able to watch online services together in peace and quiet after their children have gone to bed.

As we contemplate resuming services together at Akeman Street Baptist Church, knowing some have already done so, what will we miss about our virtual church? What will we continue? These are things that each church needs to work through for their own church setting.

Perhaps an alternative question is: what will we appreciate? Human contact.

Seeing each other. Sharing communion. Singing – of course! (once permitted). In short, all the things we have taken for granted for ever and a day. This reminds me of a lovely children's story called 'My house is a squash and a squeeze' in which a little old lady lives all by herself but she's not happy – her house is just too small, even for one. She appeals to a wise old man to help her, with the repeated phrase 'Wise old man, won't you help me, please? My house is a squash and a squeeze.' Repetition and rhyme work well in children's stories! The aforementioned wise old man steadily fills the lady's house with a collection of farmyard animals, before one by one emptying the house of these animals. By the time the old lady has the house back to herself she's amazed at how big her house feels! Well in the same(ish) way, perhaps we'll be amazed at how wonderful church life is when we're all back together and appreciate fellowship as never before.

As we start to resume services and activities across our churches, much wisdom will be needed for our church leaders as they prayerfully consider the needs of the church and when to resume. The different Christian traditions and

ways of worshipping will also have a bearing on the timing and format of when and how each church resumes. To meet or not to meet? Should we continue with online church for a bit longer? These are legitimate questions that each church needs to tease out.

But for all the uncertainty we may face, I am drawn to a very simple pattern for church life that we see recorded in the lives of the first followers of Jesus Christ. In Acts 2:42 four aspects of church life are captured in one verse: 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer'. These four key aspects of church life emerged as a result of the extraordinary evangelistic activity we read of in the early church earlier in Acts 2.

As we continue with online church for the time being, or start to resume our services or do both – we won't go far wrong as today's followers of Jesus Christ if we hold fast to that fourfold pattern of church life – teaching, fellowship, communion, prayer. May that be an encouragement to us all!

John Heasman
Akeman Street Baptist Church

Not going back to Church



As I am 79, and the advice is for people of my age not to be inside with a group (other than my 'bubble'), I won't be going back to High Street Baptist Church

at present. So, until I am vaccinated, or England is Covid-19 free, I am not returning. The statistics show that people of 80 or over (which I am almost) have a 15% death rate if they contract Covid-19, and 20% need hospitalisation. Of course, these figures vary a lot depending on which report you look at, but the lowest death rate for over 80s I have seen is 7.5%.

I should have been at a retreat for Benedictine Oblates earlier this year but we are now having a virtual retreat over eight weeks. Turvey Monastery where I am an oblate is still in lockdown at the

time of writing, although I hope to meet the Superior for tea in the monastery garden. This is sensible since a high proportion of the monks and nuns are over 80 – Brother Herbert is 99!

So it seems likely that I will not be attending High Street Baptist Church this year, or Turvey Abbey – unless there is a vaccine this Autumn, which is possible.

What will I miss?

I will still be having virtual communion, watching virtual sermons, taking part in virtual meetings, housegroup and prayer groups and meeting some church members outdoors.

Despite this, I will miss being in a service with music, singing and worship with the others. Probably there won't be singing in the Church yet, as this is banned!

I will miss having coffee, cake and a chat with others face to face. Virtual

coffee, cake and chat is not the same.

I will miss taking communion, passing the bread and wine to someone sitting next to me. Again, virtual communion is not the same.

I will miss meeting with my housegroup – we have zoom meetings but there is not the same atmosphere.

I greatly miss not cooking in the Church kitchen. Normally I cook once a month for forty to fifty people at our Friday Café. Of course, I could come in and cook on my own in the kitchen (I normally cook on my own) – but there is no one to cook for. Cooking makes me feel I am doing something worthwhile to help others. Without it I feel diminished.

I am really looking forward to the day when I can return.

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

It's church, but not as we know it



Well, in the Tring Team we began to go back to our church buildings in July, each week slowly testing things out to see what worked best and responding to feedback

from members.

After months of seeing our amazing, dedicated (and probably exhausted) clergy team and members of the church on a screen and observing (how can you not?) the books on their shelves or the layout of their room – or even their gardens! – we booked online to attend a service (so numbers inside allowed for social distancing), entered while sanitising our hands, were marked on a list for 'track and trace', found our way to a designated seat so we were appropriately distanced from others outside family groups or 'bubbles' (alternate pews were used) and waited with some excitement to worship again with others, in the flesh. At the end we were encouraged to leave in an orderly fashion, pew by pew, and to greet each other and chat and have fellowship outside in the open air.

We clapped. We clapped! Because we were relieved and delighted to be back and were so appreciative of all that had been done by others to make this happen after months of uncertainty and gloom and fears for the survival of those whom we love.

Of course, it was not the same as it used to be. At the time of writing it seems as if things may never be exactly the same as before. But there was huge anticipation and – yes, joy – at being able to be together to worship.

There is a huge gap without music and singing. Making that joyful noise

together is something I really miss in worship – and we can't have music played to us because – oh no! – we may be tempted to join in! We can now take communion, but the bread only, and in our seats to prevent us wandering too close to others on our way up to the altar rail.

But here's the strangest thing for me. There have been articles recently in *Comment* about sharing 'the peace' over which there is still a degree of controversy. Some people in the past chose to attend a different service so there is no need to greet others by shaking their hands in the service. It has never been my favourite thing either at the 10.00am service and I am certain I don't do it 'properly'. I move around the aisles making sure to include visitors and try to meet the eye of the person I am greeting rather than engaging in some sort of country dance; I try to use the name of the person I am greeting – and it gives me a reason to ask the name of a visitor at the same time and welcome them. But we can't do it now – and whatever I thought in the past – now

is the time I don't just want to shake someone's hand, I want to hug them! Of course, we can't do any of those things – we wave instead (with different degrees of enthusiasm!). If shaking hands seemed odd to visitors, waving like maniacs must surely seem stranger still!

I don't know about the other churches in the Tring Team but in St Peter & St Paul's the congregation has so far not been quite the 'normal' people, even with reduced numbers. I expected to see no one over 70 there but to my delight, some of our older members have decided they want to be there whatever the possible risk. There is great sadness though about those who are not able to join us – we miss them! Families with babies have come – not as many as before, but it means there is a spread of ages. Visitors have come, some passing through and others trying us out...

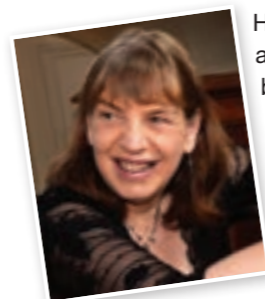
We are back – and ready to accept whatever the new normal throws at us which seems to change week by week. We will do whatever it takes to be able to worship God together again.

Annette Reynolds, St Peter & St Paul



Happy members of St John the Baptist, Aldbury, on the first Sunday back worshipping in Church after Lockdown.

Piano and More concerts – virtually!



How have Piano and More concerts been faring during lockdown? There were a few silent weeks, but, in June, Tring cellist Helen Godbolt recorded herself playing Britten in St Peter

& St Paul's Church and Karl Jenkins with pianist Mary Harris in her garden, and I played a short recital, also in the Parish Church, which was ably recorded and edited by Peter, Zoey and Vivianne Child – huge thanks to them. This was released at 3.00pm on Sunday 5 July.

These concerts will be available on <https://www.tringteamparish.org.uk> and also on <http://www.piano-and-more.org.uk>

for a few weeks. The Bechstein piano has kept its tuning remarkably well after its enforced sojourn in the corner of the Church, and it was good to be playing on it again. We hope to bring you more concerts in the coming weeks, and look forward very much to when we can resume with a live audience!

Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul

Fifty years in Tring

I was born in March 1939 in Hindley, Lancs (not to be confused with Hindle, Lancs, although we did have our own 'Wakes Week'). My early years were spent without my dad who was in the Royal Corps of Signals working mostly on the NE coast of Scotland monitoring activities in the Scapa Flo area.



I started school at 4 and on the first morning met Eileen who has remained my friend ever since and actually came to Tring last year for my 80th birthday celebration. We did everything together until we went to grammar school where we found ourselves in different 'streams', but despite both having new friends, we remained close. We went to Sunday School together, we were confirmed together and we always had ribbons next to each other on the banner at annual walking days, which were a very important Lancashire tradition. We were both in All Saints' Church Girls' Brigade



band: she played a trumpet (very well) and I became lead side drummer, so always 'called the tune'. Obviously I have always loved being in charge!

I was an only child, but never lonely. My maternal granddad lived with us until I was 8, my aunt and uncle and two older cousins lived next door, so while my dad was away, I never lacked male influence. My uncle was a fireman in one of the local pits so had a 'reserved occupation'.



I always loved school, always wanted to go to university and always wanted to be a teacher. I was extremely lucky to be taught by excellent staff who encouraged me to apply for Oxbridge and I became the first female student from my small local grammar school to go to Oxford. I was repeatedly told what an achievement this was but, nevertheless, it was with much apprehension that I left home in October 1957. I found university challenging at all levels initially. But I made some wonderful and long-lasting friendships and was taught by people whose books I had read but had never even imagined meeting in person; my personal tutor was Betty Kemp, 17th century constitutional historian, Dr John Roberts was my European History tutor and just as charming in real life as he always appeared on television. I had Dr F Madden as my Colonial history Tutor and went to lectures given by Professor Trevor Roper and Isaiah Berlin. The latter was the most charismatic person I have ever encountered.

It was an experience I have always appreciated and never forgotten. To complete my teaching certificate I

transferred to Cambridge, where I was always very popular as I had a room that overlooked Fenner's, the University cricket ground! My teaching practice was done at the Friends' School, Saffron Walden, a mixed boarding school run by Quakers. Again, I was extremely lucky as I learned such a lot about Quakerism as well as having an excellent mentor there. Quaker assemblies first thing in the morning were a fantastic start to a working day.

My first job was at Enfield County School for Girls. I stayed six years which included a year spent in Alexandria, Virginia, as an exchange teacher. That was one of the best years of my life, not least because I met my future husband on the boat going out there. In the mid 1960s an English accent was still regarded as a novelty and I was invited out for meals regularly just so people could listen to my accent. At the end of the year, with two other exchange teachers I spent six weeks travelling 13,500 miles in an old American station wagon, exploring as much as we could fit in. During the year my dad died, but I got home in time, was supported wholeheartedly by my American colleagues and was able to complete the year because of the support my mum received from my aunt and uncle.

I married in 1968, had two children and spent seven years as a 'stay at home' mum. We had moved to Tring in 1970 just before David was born, and became regular members of the St Peter & Paul congregation when he was baptised. I became Young Wives' Leader, and enjoyed that role very much indeed. Unfortunately it was during that time that I had a very bad episode of Crohn's disease. I had discovered that I had the disease ten years earlier when no one had even heard of it, let alone knew how to spell it. What I didn't know for some time was that one never gets rid of it. This time it led to major surgery and a long period of recovery. I had excellent support from church, especially the Young Wives' Group. I have been extremely lucky since as I have had no major upsets, but my health has been problematic at times and led to the removal of my gall bladder and periodic tests.

When my daughter started school I was ready to go back to work and from 1978 to 1993 I worked at Aylesbury Girls' High School. I took early retirement



to be in line with my husband and we celebrated by going on our 'trip of a lifetime' to Australia to visit John's sister and family. We began with a mini cruise on the Great Barrier Reef and spent time in Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney and Perth.

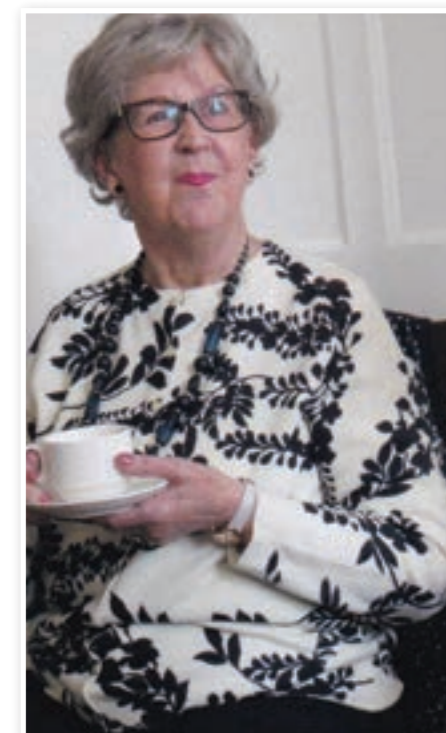
On our return I began my new 'career' as a relief receptionist at a local surgery. Over the years as the surgery expanded, so did my job. Despite difficulties with both doctors and a few patients, I loved every minute of it. I also fitted in some supply teaching back at Aylesbury High and, due to the serious illness of the Head of the English department, found myself in charge of moderation of the 'O' level English papers at a time when the literature paper was entirely internally moderated. This was a challenge, but proved to be extremely interesting. I had begun my teaching career as a history specialist, but along the line had 'diversified' and finished my career teaching A level history and O level English. The marking load was heavy, but

I enjoyed the different challenges.

In 1998 I became an inpatient volunteer at the Hospice of St Francis which was a really enjoyable experience and I certainly gained as much from my time there as I gave to them. Meanwhile John and I continued to enjoy our retirement together; we travelled extensively, went to theatres and concerts regularly and in addition John continued to play cricket and I began to play bowls. Both our children had established their careers and in 1998 both married, David in Melbourne, Australia, and Sarah in St Peter & St Paul's Church.

Everything changed in 2000 with John's sudden death. In mid March we were in Florida and on 3 May he died. It was an enormous shock, but I could only be grateful that he was spared the suffering his illness would have brought. I had wonderful support from my friends and the whole church community which did as much as anybody, with the exception of our two wonderful children, to get me through the next year.

I gradually built a life that was just for me. I learned to go on holiday on my own, but happily. I enjoyed spending time with my three grandchildren and made several visits to Hong Kong, Belgium and Germany where my son and his wife lived. I came to love Hong Kong and enjoyed exploring on my own and never felt threatened. Meanwhile my daughter developed MS and had to make enormous adjustments to her life; I am incredibly proud of the way she has continued to cope. And I had a second



'trip of a lifetime', but this time just my lifetime, to New Zealand.

In 2004 I began volunteering as a receptionist at the Iain Rennie Hospice which gave me the opportunity to learn about their work in some detail. Last year I had the exciting milestone of my 80th birthday, with wonderful celebrations in both Tring and Germany, where my son and his family now live.

Finally I must mention my long lasting passion for rugby. I began watching Wigan Rugby League team when I was 8 years old. Over the years as I lived in southern England my allegiance shifted to Rugby Union and I have been a Saracens supporter for over twenty years. In fact, watching sport on TV is one of my favourite pastimes.

I am still usually quite busy, but have always equally enjoyed my own company. Only in lockdown have I fully realised how much the company of other people means to me; in fact, how necessary it seems for my happiness and well being. Yes, it is great to be able to CHOOSE to be alone; not so good to be FORCED. Roll on 'normality' in whatever shape or form it may take so long as it can include the company of friends and neighbours and family as often as we choose.

Dorothy Townshend
St Peter & St Paul



Feedback

Thank you for including the article in the June edition of *Comment* on the Foundling Hospital in Berkhamsted. As an ex-pupil of Ashlyns School, I found it most interesting.

Lockdown in Biggleswade has been interesting. The people on both sides of our house have had major works done – one building an extension while the other has been gutting the house and garden. It has not been quiet! Fortunately we can go down to the river with a flask of



coffee and sit with a book.

On the domestic front our washing machine has been recalled so hand

washing has been the order of the day. Then while working in the garden I had a fall which resulted in a chest infection – rather scary when there's a pandemic going on around us but antibiotics worked well.

Finally we celebrated our 45th Wedding Anniversary – alone in the garden, socially distanced from everyone, of course!

Rosamund & Ian Drakes
formerly *St Peter & St Paul*

On being a Curate



We did not just chat and play pop music at the 14-26 Club when I was a Curate. I started what we called 'Beat' services once a month with drums and guitars, quite informal

but a chance to preach the gospel openly in a church context. The group were all club members and we got about 100 people altogether to the first Sunday evening event. Some of the older congregation disapproved, but the Rector and the PCC backed it, so it got off to a decent start. It was hard work but worth it as some young people who had never been in Church before later came forward for Confirmation and joined the Church Young People's Group.

I felt we should do something practical to help the Community as well. We linked up with Task Force, a London-wide group set up by a young Jewish criminal lawyer, Antony Steen, later an MP. This was to enable young people to do gardening, take the elderly for short walks or to the shops and generally benefit the Community. I wanted Christian service to be an integral part of what we existed for.

Christmas 1962 was the coldest on record and the last of the London smogs before the Clean Air act came and there was a freeze-up for six weeks. We had planned a pantomime for the Community and had started on 'Robin Hood and his Merry Men'. The old Church Hall we met in was heated by a coke boiler. No deliveries were possible in the frozen snow so everyone put double the clothing on and we asked the audience to

bring rugs and extra coats!

Jenny taught a chorus of girls to dance the latest rage, The Madison. The old stage was a bit bouncy and the needle on the record player kept jumping(!) but we managed and everyone, including the audience, loved it. Next week a number of the cast got bronchitis, but no one minded – the show had gone on and the 14-26 Club had triumphed over the weather!

The congregation at Clapham were a genuine mixed bag of the population: there were families, students, teenagers and about a third were West Indians or Nigerians who lived in large numbers in the parish at the time. They were always dressed in their finery on Sundays for Church, the West Indians in white with large hats and smart shirts and ties, and the Nigerians usually wore tribal robes. It made the rest of us seem rather drab. The West Indians sometimes played Christian calypsos and the Nigerians once did a service in Yoruba, the dialect of the area in Nigeria where most of them came from. They were very much part of our Christian community.

The Rector was in many ways ahead of his time as he began an InterRacial Club to encourage the whites, the Nigerians and West Indians to join together in activities when it was not the norm. Each week the topic was chosen by either the Nigerians or West Indians. The only trouble was that the Nigerians did not come when the West Indians were running the evening and vice versa! The whites tramped along to both. The reason was plain: the West Indians were mainly train drivers, underground staff, hospital cleaners and other unskilled workers, while the Nigerians were nearly all students or in white collar jobs.

Culturally they did not have a great deal in common. While in the end it did not achieve what it set out to do, for its time, it was a real attempt to weld the community together led by the Church. Whenever there was a racial incident in Clapham, it is interesting the Rector was often the person asked to mediate.

I worked there for two years and Jenny and I wouldn't have missed the experience for the world. It opened our eyes to a different way of life and we learnt a lot from it. We were touched two years ago when the then-leader of the Youth Committee, whom I had married to his wife, also a member of the Club, invited us to his 50th Wedding Anniversary party.

My last happy memory of Clapham was taking the wedding of two lovely members of our worshipping family from Nigeria, Isaiah and Christie. They appeared in their tribal robes as did their friends, and the Church was a riot of colour. The reception was in the Church School across the road and the menu was neat whisky and curried goat! It was a very hot day and Jenny and I were already hot before nearly expiring with the food and the drink and certainly sleeping well that night. We later much enjoyed taking Isaiah and Christie punting down the river in Cambridge when they spent a day with us the following year.

I learnt a lot at Clapham and wouldn't have missed it for anything, not least the leadership of my wonderful Rector.

I had been invited to do a second curacy in 1963 at the University Church, Cambridge, where we spent three eventful years and where Mark, our eldest son was born. But that is another story.

Ian Ogilvie, Tring Team

Eunice and Bill Hall – Diamond Delight!



On Thursday 23 July St Cross played host to Eunice and Bill as they came to Church for a private blessing to celebrate their Diamond wedding anniversary.

Accompanied by

their grandchildren, they enjoyed a short service conducted by Revd Jane Banister, followed by a family celebration at home. Sixty years is a long time: so where did it all start?

Eunice came from Long Marston, daughter of well-known village councillor Cyril Chandler and his wife Elsie.

Bill was not quite so local – he came from Aylesbury! His family owned a grocer's shop in Walton Terrace (modern location between the 'blue leanie' and the gyratory system), later moving to Northern Road in Aylesbury.

Bill and Eunice met at Rivetts Social Club, on the first Saturday after New Year in 1959. Eunice and her friends would

cycle from Long Marston to Aston Clinton and then catch the bus into Aylesbury. On this occasion Eunice's friend Jean had brought three gentlemen with her, whom she had met at a New Year's Eve ball a few days previously. Her thought process was that one of these gentlemen (Bill) would be a good match for one of her girl friends, albeit not Eunice. However, the best laid plans etc. and although her



match-making proved very successful, it was not quite as Jean had originally envisaged.

Eunice and Bill were not married at All Saints' Long Marston, despite the village being Eunice's home, due to a concern

with the minister. At an earlier wedding Revd Anthony had halted proceedings, silenced the organist, and informed the gathering there would be no more music until all the ladies present had covered their heads. Known for his high church demands, Revd Anthony was deemed too risky to preside at Bill and Eunice's ceremony but an alternative was at hand. The couple were both members of

Cheddington Badminton Club, and the president of the club was the vicar of Cheddington and Mentmore, who happily agreed to officiate at their wedding. The service took place at St Mary's Mentmore, the Church where Eunice's own parents had been married and where she had been christened. There were six bridesmaids, including the matchmaker Jean, who had propelled her friends down a road of enduring

love and companionship, still going strong after sixty years.

Many congratulations!

Alison Cockerill
St Cross, Wilstone



Celebrating human dignity

At St Albans Cathedral we stand with the Black Lives Matter movement to be allies for change – building a strong, just and fair community where the dignity of every human being is honoured and celebrated; where black voices are heard, and where black lives matter.

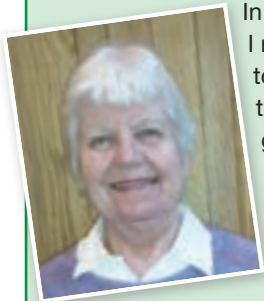
We are deeply grateful to the artist Lorna May Wadsworth who has given permission for us to use her striking painting of the Last Supper as part of a prayer installation. In the painting Jesus is a black man, and so calls us to 'look with fresh eyes at something you think

you know'.

This painting will be a part of a prayer station in the North Transept, where you will be able to light a candle and say a prayer in support of this movement.

St Albans Cathedral

After lockdown



In truth, I never felt I really 'left' church to return; the clergy team did such a good job supplying services at busy times, like Easter, and in 'ordinary time', too.

I try to be a 'glass half full' person rather than 'half empty', so in many ways, the lockdown has been a time of enjoyment. I am very blessed to have my husband at home with me, and with my sister in south Cumbria, we have planned and achieved so many things. We are all as daft as each other and keep each other going by concocting all sorts of happy things.

We have been on holiday twice, a virtual tour to Amsterdam to see the tulip fields and art galleries and museums, and later we had a short break camping in the garden. The really old 1960's tent came out of the loft, along with the camping stove, and we cooked bacon butties in the garden at 6.00am. It was so lovely!

This week we had a Horticultural Show. We entered the home produce classes which meant two solid days of baking – biscuits, cake and bread – doing some cross stitch (which I haven't done for ages) and Graham has even learned to knit, but sadly the dishcloth didn't get completed for the show so only won 3rd prize.

What about worship? Each Sunday we put on our Sunday best, lit a candle, and listened to the 8.10am service on the radio. We really enjoyed having the variety of services; some we could identify closely with and often wept, some were more challenging, but helped us to think of others who find it easier to worship in a different fashion. Later we looked at the Tring Team service with the spiritual communion. I really like the spiritual communion prayer, as it uses words I have prayed from the days of my confirmation classes in 1960. It was lovely having our church brought into our living room. The place felt special and our lives in the house feel more dedicated. The online services have been good because we have been able

to worship with my sister and she has been able to join our services.

I suppose I have always been flexible in my worship, maybe open-minded is the word I want. In the days when I was teaching in the north east and joined a climbing club, it was a big decision to make. After attending church every Sunday for years, I chose to go out with the club for the day on Sundays and attend a mid-week service instead. You can worship God in the outdoors in so many ways. Thinking about this and the impact of the living room services, I didn't know what to expect when we returned to St Peter & St Paul's. I accepted the adjustments to the service without any concerns and made sure I was as little threat as possible to anyone else. I wasn't excited to be back, but strangely a feeling of reassurance and relief crept over me, happy to be worshipping in a familiar place with others, just as has been done for generations. What a blessing!

Jill Smith
St Peter & St Paul

Crossword

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 6. Style of church architecture (13) | 1. Where we are (4) |
| 8. Greatly respected (7) | 2. Position to pray (5) |
| 11. Beg for an answer (5) | 3. Make an offer (3) |
| 12. Let go (7) | 4. That which has the most in it (7) |
| 13. Attempt (3) | 5. Heaven (8) |
| 15. Meat jelly (5) | 7. Aristocrat (4) |
| 16. Transgression (7) | 9. Carved screen behind the altar (7) |
| 17. Increased (5) | 10. Leaves (7) |
| 18. Married (3) | 11. Book of canticles (7) |
| 19. Comforted (7) | 14. God who forgives (8) |
| 22. Assists (5) | 16. Tyrants (7) |
| 23. Angels (7) | 20. Groups of cattle (5) |
| 26. Where we live (13) | 21. In a rush (4) |
| | 24. Stringed instrument (4) |
| | 25. The highest (3) |

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26										

Answers on page 39

'A perfectly good man' by Patrick Gale



On Sunday 28 June, twelve members of Book Group met on Zoom to discuss 'A Perfectly Good Man' by Patrick Gale. In this book, Gale lays bare the lives and the thoughts of a whole community and asks us: what does it mean to be good?

It tells two stories in tandem. One story tells of the effect on the lives of a wife, a mistress and three children by the love of Barnaby Johnson, a parish priest in a remote mining community in the windswept west of Cornwall, and how fault lines are opened up in all their relationships when Barnaby apparently assists the suicide of a young man paralysed in a rugby accident. Threaded through this is the story of how the perfectly good man of the title came to devote his life to the challenge of living as a priest in the 21st century.

Modest Carlsson, who stalks Barnaby and looks for ways to ruin him, is an uncomfortable and unpleasant character recurring throughout the book. We decided that he was definitely not liked, either by us or those around him, but not understood, either. To achieve the telling of both these stories at once, the chapters flit backwards and forwards in time, each one told from the perspective of one of the characters at a set point in their lives. Opinion among the group was divided 50/50 on this, with half thinking this was too confusing and half thinking it was effective.

Overall, however, the group generally liked this book, although many of us felt that perhaps it was too predictable,

against credible and engaging episodes. Barnaby was painted too glowingly, and it was hard to really get to know him, with some of the other characters a little one dimensional. We didn't really come to any firm conclusion on what it means to be good, but the majority felt that it's definitely a book worth reading.

I think it's fair to say that, like every other group, Book Group are looking forward to when meetings can resume face-to-face. However, we have had some good and useful discussions on Zoom, finding that they have been more useful as book studies than our physical meetings, even though, of course, we miss the social aspect.

Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul



Choices

Choice 1

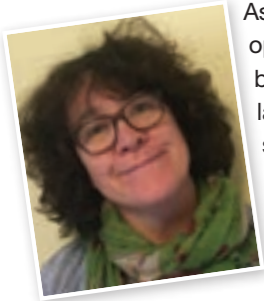
*Bury or burn
Oven or worm?
No Viking fire,
No Aegean funeral pyre,
Just that slow gliding coffin
Smoothly gone to ash.
Could all that love and life
Be shrunk so small?
Could a heap of gritty ash be all ?
Little grains of me
To be flung across the winds of eternity
Stored in a cupboard
Quite forgot
Or perhaps they'll choose an ashes plot.
Burial seems kinder
Tucked neatly in a box , intact
Arms a cross, in earth's embrace
A grave and quiet place
An artful stone as a reminder.
The church nearby assuring grace.
Make the choice while still there's time.*

Choice 2

*Laugh or mope
Despair or hope.
Walk through the meadows
Where a warm breeze blows,
There, purple vetch and sweet clover grows.
Pink bindweed weaves across your way,
A joyful day.
Then lurking nettles crowd the path.
Death's sting's too near
To forget to fear.
A cheeky robin chirps as if to say
Take note!
Life's too brief to mope
Choose hope...*

Caroline Ellwood
St John the Baptist, Aldbury

Back to school?



As schools started opening up their buildings to larger numbers of students in June, parents across the land – secretly, perhaps – breathed a sigh of relief. Home schooling was nearly over! They were going back!

In the spirit of full disclosure, I'll start off by saying our family was extraordinarily lucky during lockdown. Our eldest was in Year 11, and the cancellation of public exams meant that he became more or less nocturnal, entertaining himself with various projects – not all of which involved binge-watching – and appeared occasionally to forage in the fridge. Our youngest was in Year 5, and showed herself to be the most methodical, most motivated, most organised of us all. We were lucky in that we didn't have to battle with her to get the work done, or sit with her while she grumbled, we didn't have to cajole or plead, blackmail or threaten. And I know – and believe me, I know – how extraordinarily lucky that made us. And I give thanks daily for it.

Couple that with the fact that my husband was at home, then furloughed, from mid-March so was on hand to help with Maths – and that I'm working flexibly from home so could answer the occasional English question – and we felt relatively relaxed about the whole business.

What we did not do was put any pressure at all on our youngest to get the work done. She learned, I'm certain, as much about organizing her time and making her own choices as she did about fractions and fronted adverbials. And we learned about the strength of her character, as well as the resourcefulness of our eldest, the importance of respecting the space we each needed, the challenge of taking each day as it comes, and the limits of our domestic bandwidth.

I know it was not as easy for other families, and that the stresses and strains of what we've all been calling 'home schooling' have driven some – many, probably – to absolute distraction. I've talked with so many other parents about

tears and tantrums, depression and despair, anger and anxiety. It's been hard. Way beyond hard, sometimes. One of the things that made it harder for parents who were doing their very best, whether they and their children always realised it or not, is that we were calling it 'home schooling.'

Teachers bring to the classroom – to 'schooling' – an enormous range of training and experience. They know what they're doing. They know what works and what doesn't, how and when to try different approaches, what's central in terms of content and understanding and what isn't.

And, perhaps most importantly, they don't have to teach your children at home. They don't have to eat breakfast with your children, argue with them over whether mushrooms are gross or not, retrieve their countless dirty socks from under the bed, negotiate over bedtimes and meal choices and snacks, usher them back to bed at how-early? in the morning, listen to endless monologues about Minecraft or Lego or whatever, comb bits of Blu-Tack out of their hair... They don't have to live with them.

I know, from my own experience, that the teacher-student relationship can be an intensely affectionate one. But it's nothing at all like the intensity of the love of a parent for a child, with all its attendant joys and frustrations and anxieties and worries and delights – and it's overwhelming with 24-hours-a-day, all-in-the-same-house-together-all-the-time intensity. Don't misunderstand me: there are moments when we've all, all four of us, loved being home together. And moments when we haven't.

Home-schooling works best when it's an active and informed choice. I lived for four years in a part of the USA where home schooling is relatively common,

usually on religious grounds. Across the region, there were formal and informal networks to support parents, groups of families who pooled resources, children who met up in 'classes' to learn together. There was still a 'school' in which these children were learning, even if it wasn't a building. Home-schooling families weren't struggling to supervise (or sometimes even understand) work sent by teachers on the one hand, while working from home on the other. And home schooling wasn't set against a backdrop of pandemic and lockdown and fear. Parents weren't calming anxieties about whether Grandma would be ok, struggling to find answers to impossible questions, or recognising behaviours that were rooted in fear but flowering in anger. They weren't home schooling alone, day in, day out, unable to visit places and people that would make all the difference. They had made a conscious choice and they were devoting time, energy and resources to that – and often, only that: which is why it worked. Most of the time.

The way things were during lockdown – working from home or waiting uncertainly on furlough, juggling schooling and life and family – meant that being able to 'home school' in a way that felt as if you were 'doing it right' was almost impossibly difficult, if not simply impossible.

We were not 'home schooling.' We were doing the best we could in difficult circumstances. And that's surely got to be enough.

Pippa Brush Chappell
Bishop Wood School Governor

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Barry Child
barry@childassociates.co.uk
01442 826092
07879 497704

Letter from Orkney



Hello Commenters and Tringsters: at last, we are being released! In our case that will mean an outside pint, providing you can weather the wind blowing the froth

off the top. We are enjoying summer like never before, loads of work in the garden being done, rebuilding drystone walls, tending to our cold frame and the big one – clearing and laying the base for a 'Polycrub'. 'Crub' is a Shetland term which I think means a growing area (Google it). They are made of large plastic tubing set 650mm into concrete and bent over to support Polycarbonate sheeting, complete with ends, windows and a door. Ours will be 5m x 4m with two large raised beds 3m off the ground, a parking space for the mower and a small seating area with wine rack for when we stop gardening.

I am still Oil and Acrylic painting but, sadly, Island exhibitions are still on hold though online there is still much to do. Carrie, unfortunately, had to stop her 'Orkney Rocks' Choir but linked up with Gareth Malone on the internet and has

now just received a copy of the CD in which she took part. There is even a little picture of her in the video (she is really chuffed).

We are so blessed up here; being a sparsely populated Island, we have been Covid-free for six weeks and, even at the height of the crisis, we were able to walk the sea shore alone. Our total so far is nine positive cases with no fatalities, thank God.

One of the highlights of lockdown is 'Date Nights' where we dress up and go to the 'Stromness Dining Room' (it is very local, here in Whitesails, our home). The evening starts with a surprise Bon-Bouche and an aperitif, followed by starter, mains and cheese. Then the entertainment... Snakes and ladders after a Gin and half a bottle of wine can be great fun (I can guess what you are thinking: 'Barnpots!'); followed by the host (Chef) throwing a set of nine storycubes. These are dice with a different picture on every side, like a rainbow, bridge or fountain. The Host then concocts a story using every picture shown on the dice within it. Bearing in mind the gin etc. the stories can get quite bizarre and surreal – but good fun – then eventually comes the collapse in front of the telly.



Summer Puffins



Today I thought it would be nice to send a couple of 'Bon-Bouche' recipes as these can be used for nibbles on a cracker or rice biscuit or alternatively as a sandwich filling or salad accompaniment, or dip with breadsticks.

Mac Dodge
St Mary's Stromness

Italian/Orkney Style Bon Bouche

Ingredients

½ tub of Philadelphia Cheese
2 tbl of double cream
4 tbl Sliced black olives or
1 pk Smoked Salmon (small)
1 pk Basil leaves or
½ pk of Chives chopped
A good pinch of salt
Pepper to taste

Method

1. Blend the cheese and cream adding more cream if required to make a smooth stiff mix.
2. Add the olives/chopped salmon and continue to blend using good quality Olive oil if necessary.
3. Tear up all the Basil leaves and add to the mix plus the Salt and Pepper then blitz it all to a creamy spreadable. If using chopped chives, fold these in afterwards.
4. Serve on biscuit with a Basil leaf and half an olive/cherry tomato or single spear or flower of chive.
5. Use as a dip with breadsticks or with Sour Cream Pringles.

A reflection on the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's prayer is so widely known and so established a part of the liturgy that it is simple to recite it without attending to the actual words.

A brief reflection shows that it has a special characteristic: many prayers are delivered in the first person singular, 'I', but throughout the Lord's prayer, it is the first-person plural 'we' that can give us pause for thought.

'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.'

The reference is repeatedly to 'we' and 'us' and 'our'.

The Church's teaching is that its members are the body of Christ; they include all who have gone before, are present now, and possibly all those who are to come: the 'we' and 'us'.

The Lord's prayer includes the church throughout the ages, gathered together; when we pray the Lord's prayer, we celebrate with all our brothers and sisters in ways which can take on a new

significance if we ponder their meaning as we pray.

Christian Fellowship is a wonderful gift which can only be appreciated by our being a committed member. The Lord's prayer in its simplicity celebrates this. When the time comes to pray this prayer, emphasising the plural brings this out, and easily adds a new depth of spirituality.

Michael Sherratt
Corpus Christi



No justice, no peace

In June this year I joined the Black Lives Matter march in Newcastle. I wish to assure you that I kept a safe distance from other demonstrators, but it was impossible not to be drawn into the passionate and heartfelt energy of a thousand people demanding justice. It's just not possible to demonstrate on one's own – it's a communal thing and its effectiveness comes in numbers and the ability to encourage one other that we are not alone.

We listened to speeches, we knelt, we were silent, and, of course, we marched. 'No justice, no peace.'

I have been privileged in my work for Traidcraft in visiting many producer organisations all over the world and I have always been vaguely aware of the general background of corruption and political violence in which our suppliers live. It was most obvious for the organic sugar producers in the Philippines, some of whom had lost family members to state sponsored violence during protests over land rights, and with the tea communities in Sri Lanka emerging from years of insurgent and government fighting. Nor will I be able to forget the terrors of everyday life in Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala. In these countries, it is frequently the Government or its proxies that have perpetrated many of the worst atrocities.

The effects of violence on any community are deep and generational, but one of the common threads is that when things get violent, it gets turned on the minority communities first. No matter how poor the overall population may be, there is always a sub-group or an outlier village of refugees, migrants, Rohingya, H'mong, Indiginos, Tamils or other less powerful families to attack.

The key to protecting these groups is, of course, a legal framework that is colour blind and we used to pride ourselves that we have just such a system in place here in the UK. Clearly, we don't. The Windrush scandal should have opened our eyes to the discrimination we have preferred not to see for generations.

When slavery was abolished in Great Britain, most families who owned slaves were richly compensated by the Government for their economic losses, and the sums ran into the equivalent of millions of pounds in today's money. In fact, when the British Government paid out £20m to some 3,000 slave owning families for the loss of their 'property' when slavery was abolished in Britain's colonies in 1833, this sum amounted to 40% of the Treasury's annual spending and equates to about £16bn in today's money. The slaves who were freed were less munificently treated and received nothing apart, astonishingly,

from the right not to be enslaved. This injustice, incorporated into British law, remains at the heart of our system. A roll call of families who profited from this 'compensation program' reads like a who's who of the best of British society.

It was good to be a part of a demonstration, and to be vocal in calling for justice. Many who have fought for economic justice for over forty years must have felt a similar sense of revulsion back in the 1970s and 1980s. I am encouraged that there is another wave of justice fighter, just as appalled, just as determined and just as focused. There is hope.

We stand at an interesting moment. In the aftermath of the pandemic there will be choices to make. What sort of an economy and what sort of a society do we want to have? What will our Government invest in? There is, it would seem, always enough money if there is a will. That was the case in 1833 and in 2009 when the banks got their slice of the cake.

If ever there was a time to stand up and be counted, whether in demonstrations, in campaigning or in personal witness, then it is now. I pray that our church communities and our civil society will find the courage to fight for justice, because without it, there is no peace.

Robin Roth, Traidcraft's Mission and Transparency Lead

Get your face-coverings here!



If you haven't already got a number of face-coverings ready for your visits

to all indoor places, including coming back



to church services, do consider buying yours from the Parish Craft & a Cuppa team. We have made over 100 in various colours and sizes and are still accepting donations for Dementia UK in return for a mask.

Do contact me on email at jjgoody@ntlworld.com.

**Janet Goodyer
St Peter & St Paul**

Where do you stand?



Black Lives Matter is one of those things which I find it hard to write about. As a privileged white middle class man in the uber 'establishment' establishment, the

Church of England, I am aware that it is bit rich for me to be pontificating on the matter. However, I equally feel that, inadequate as my voice might be, and however much I might put my foot in it, we should add our voices into the Black Lives Matter movement.

I don't want to get drawn into the statue debate, apart from saying that my personal view is where there is a questionable statue you can balance it with something modern reflecting a different point of view. We can better acknowledge the mistakes of the past by pointing to a better future. I like the fact that in Parliament Square, as well as there being a statue for Smuts, the pro-apartheid leader, there is also one of Nelson Mandela; as well there being a statue of Winston Churchill (and whatever you think of him, his views about India are unacceptable) there is a statue of Mahatma Gandhi. I have always wondered about the headstone in

Aldbury Churchyard about the memorial to the person who is proudly described as a 'Eugenist'. After the horror of the Nazi eugenics programme, is it acceptable to have a headstone proudly saying this? I am not sure what we could do to balance this.

Then what about the church? Some of you will have been aware from the press that our Diocese was singled out for blame. An ordinand was told not to apply for a post because he would not fit into a monochrome white parish. Now to be fair to the Diocese, Bishop Alan is as unhappy as any of us that such a comment was made. It is his desire for each church to grow and flourish in every aspect of life, including diversity.

He says, 'As a diocese we have been proud of the progress we have made to become a more diverse community over recent years and we have been at the forefront among dioceses in rolling out a programme of Unconscious Bias training. I and my senior colleagues attended the first session last year. Although progress has been slowed by Covid-19, we will eventually take all the clergy and all those involved in making appointments through the training. Among a number of other initiatives, we have a proactive programme to increase the number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) ordinands and Readers and, over the

past year, have been delighted that we have more BAME people in the pipeline than ever before.'

Having been on the training myself, I am confident that whatever the past of the Church of England, there is a growing desire to reflect the diversity of our nation. Whilst I do not know what we can do about this on a local level, the thing I am convinced about is that there is an issue which needs to be addressed. There are those in our society who deny that racism is an issue. We cannot pretend that it is not. The recently retired John Sentamu has frequently been stopped by police, including once when he was leaving the Stephen Lawrence enquiry. I doubt any other Bishop has randomly been stopped. If a black Bishop experiences this, how much worse is the experience of a young black man? We must listen to the voices and experiences of those who don't fall into my privileged category.

We must also be prepared to counter and challenge unacceptable language and 'jokes'. I was shocked about a cartoon shared on a rugby parents' chat; and was glad that it was one of our Church of England school governors who called out the person who posted it; but was slightly dismayed that almost no one else added their voice of dismay.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

Alice in the pandemic

Alice first became aware of something amiss in late February of 2020.

'I don't know when I will see you again, Doctor,' she said, when she was leaving the surgery, 'we're about to experience a pandemic.'

The doctor didn't reply. Alice probably read her mind which correctly thought, 'How one earth does she know?' But of course, Alice had decided what she thought would come along – and it did.

Life changed overnight for her on 24 March. Alice lived alone; she had done for many years. She had been married and widowed, she had a family that visited regularly, but pandemics didn't allow for visits.

The suggestions for safety were announced and adhered to with the occasional mistake, getting too near to the post lady who called, come rain or shine, when Alice had post. To-date, after being isolated for what seemed an age, Alice decided life wouldn't ever be the

same again and welcomed the much-needed change to be considered when it was time and could be thought about.

The time sped by for Alice: visits to doctors and dentists were not allowed, but urgent needs could be resolved. As March turned into April and then May, Alice spent time in her porch enjoying the sunshine. June dawned bringing talk of easing the lockdown in specific ways. Social distancing, 'bubbles' became a way of life. Some people broke rules and invaded the beaches giving cause for concern.

Alice didn't feel sure that facts and figures given by some people in responsible posts were entirely true; and she found she was sighing a great deal more.

On the bright side, she spent hours in the garden growing flowers and vegetables with some success. Family visitors started again with hugs (albeit not really allowed but hands having another wash helped no end).

Time passed, bringing hope for the

future. Ordinary people had been extraordinary in the help they gave to each other. It seemed nothing was too much trouble for most people who were asked for help.

Alice is well, eagerly looking forward to what comes next: huge personal gratitude and awareness of the immense cost in lives lost and the aftermath that this brings, never forgotten.

Alice, ever hopeful, thinks and says not to take the slow improvement in parts of the world for granted and ignore the plight of people in other places. It's essential that we all put our heads together and talk, and then act, in the best interests of mankind before it is too late.

Alice, thinking aloud, says it's never too late for good-thinking people with resolve to bring about change; it never was.

**Peggy Bainbridge
St John the Baptist, Aldbury**

Introducing Climate Sunday

'Climate Sunday' is an initiative that has grown out of an idea originating with Christian climate-change charity Operation Noah that was then adopted by the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI-EIN). It was intended to be a one-off event on a Sunday in September 2020, in the immediate run-up to the international climate talks, COP26, due to be held in Glasgow in the autumn. With the postponement of COP26 to 2021, the Climate Sunday project has grown and its scope is described below by Andy Atkins, former Executive Director of Friends of the Earth and current CEO of A Rocha UK. **Nicky Bull, High Street Baptist Church**

Over the last few months, UK churches have responded to the Covid-19 crisis with compassion, courage, sacrifice and innovation, to show the love of Christ in practical ways. I'm not always proud of the Church, but I've been moved and excited to see it – us – stepping up in this way.

Sadly, though, Covid-19 is not the only or even the biggest crisis out there. The climate crisis has been creeping up on the world for decades, and time to prevent widespread chaos and loss of life is running out. That's why a broad coalition of Christian charities and denominations has today launched the Climate Sunday initiative – to make it easy for all churches to take action, together, in what will be a critical year ahead.

The Covid-19 pandemic may have led to the postponement of the UN climate conference (COP26), originally scheduled for November this year, but it has not cancelled the climate crisis. The drop in greenhouse gas emissions during the economic shut down will make no real difference long term if we return to business as usual. Two years ago the world's leading scientists of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that humanity had just over a decade to cut emissions of greenhouse gasses steeply if we were to have even a 50/50 chance of keeping global temperature rise under 1.5 degrees above the pre-industrial average. Yet by early 2020, just before the pandemic, the world remained firmly on course to overshoot this goal by several degrees. We were, and still are, heading for global climate catastrophe; and time to avoid it is exceedingly short.

Amidst the still unfolding tragedy of Covid-19 there are positives we can grasp and apply to climate change: those countries that acted early on good science have suffered much less; governments and people are capable of extraordinarily rapid and radical action if they understand the need.

For many churches, action on climate change is not new. Quietly but in ever growing numbers, over the last few years local churches across denominations and styles of worship have been responding to this moral issue with creativity and determination. More than 3,400* local churches are now registered with the main church greening schemes. But with the climate crisis accelerating and the UK due to host the rescheduled COP26 climate talks in November 2021 in Glasgow, we believe the time has come for all churches across the UK to pray about and act on the climate crisis, as we have done in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our vision as a coalition is to see God's love and desire for justice manifested through the church on this critical issue of our age. The need and the opportunity are great. They include bringing pastoral support to a younger generation already experiencing climate anxiety and grief; teaching of God's love for all his creation; reducing carbon emissions from church buildings, land, congregational travel and purchasing; serving the local community by taking part in practical projects, such as restoring local green space, to help them adapt; and witnessing to our God of Justice by joining wider civil society calls for a fair transition to a sustainable economy.

The idea is very simple. We are calling on all churches to hold a local Climate Sunday any time during a one year period starting on 6th September (the first Sunday in the annual season of Creationtide). We will provide free resources to suit every tradition and style of worship. During their local Climate Sunday, we invite each church to do one or more of three things:

- **Climate service:** Hold a climate-focused service, to explore the theological and scientific basis of creation care and action on climate, to pray, and to commit to action
- **Commit:** Make a commitment as a

local church community to taking long term action to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Call:** Join with other churches and wider society by adding their name to a common call for the UK government to take much bolder action on climate change in this country in advance of COP26, and to strengthen its credibility to lead the international community to adopt a step change in action at COP26.

Then, two months before the COP talks in Glasgow, on Sunday 5 September 2021, we will hold a national Climate Sunday event to celebrate the commitments made by churches at local level over the previous year. We will also present the UK government with the combined commitments and calls which all local churches have made – to show our political leaders that they will have our support to act boldly, justly and compassionately on this issue.

We cannot guarantee the outcome of COP26, but whether it is successful or not, the current pace of climate disruption will still require individuals and whole sectors of society to act fast – out of fairness to those locked in poverty, those who need more support to face the effects of climate change, the young and all future generations, as well as to the rest of nature. Only we Christians, and our church communities, can only do this for ourselves; no-one else can do it for us. As followers of a loving and Creator God, we should be the sector of society most prepared to act first, boldly, in faith and service.

The Climate Sunday initiative is there to help us in this critical year ahead for climate and the UK's international leadership. It will help us take our next steps as local Christian communities, on this moral, pastoral, economic and environmental issue of our generation. And it will help us do it together, to learn from each other and to multiply our combined impact for good nationally and even internationally.

Andy Atkins, CEO of A Rocha UK, Chair of the Climate Sunday Steering Group

Every UK church community is invited to take part in this initiative and can register for further information at: <https://www.climatesunday.org>

Confessions of a novice veggie grower...



My favourite television programme is *Only Fools and Horses*. For those of you who enjoy this programme, you may remember the episode

entitled 'Mother Nature's Son' where Del Boy 'discovers' the historic Peckham Spring coming up from their allotment. Of course, in reality it is from a hose hidden from sight, but they soon end up bottling the water and selling it. As part of this ruse, earlier on in this episode, Del Boy invites Giles (a 'big player' in local organic vegetables) to meet him to explain how growing vegetables works. Giles turns up and appears to turn his nose up at being asked to comment on an allotment.

Well, I don't have an allotment (and certainly never appeared in *Only Fools*), but we do have a very small garden, which like many households, no doubt, we have put to good use over the last six months.

Lisa and I have tried before to grow our own vegetables with some success a few years ago using space at the end of a long garden, and perhaps less successfully in a very small allotment that flooded regularly.

However, just prior to lockdown I had a small visit to the Tring Garden Centre and purchased a small temporary growing shed, a bag of compost and what plants I could lay my hands on.



This consisted of tomatoes, mange tout, broad beans and strawberry plants. I threw in some carrot seeds for good measure. Our aim has been to try to teach the children a little about growing vegetables and the lesson that not everything comes from the supermarket!

As I mentioned, our garden is small



with grass in the middle (or what is left of it after its use as a cross between Lord's and Wembley Stadium) and soil around the edge (which amounts to no more than a couple of square metres, if that). The garden is also not really a sun-trap. Despite this I set to work trying to turn the weed-beds around the edge of our lawn into something that might be a welcome home for some seedlings. I even built a DIY trellis for my beans (only subsequently to discover that they were French Beans, rather than climbing beans!).



My first problem was that I peaked too early and got caught in the one of the later frosts of the season. For a number of nights, I went out in my pyjamas and dressing gown to peg fleece blankets over the small plants. My two small tomato plants were in the greenhouse; one seemed to be OK, but the other did not seem too well.

As one tomato plant grew, the other looked dead. I watered it, spoke to it, changed the soil and cut off the bottom of the root. Nothing; for weeks. There were a number of times when I nearly put it into the green recycling bin: until a tiny green leaf was seen and then, within a matter of weeks, it grew to some size. It was a wonderful metaphor of something appearing to be dead and now being very much alive!



I certainly will never be a 'big player' in the homegrown vegetable market, but I have really valued being able to wander around my garden over the last few months watching things grow (and escaping from my 'home office' for a few seconds), to be able to invite the children to pick produce when it is ready and then eat it. If you've never tried it before, don't 'be a plonker' and give it a go... what's the worst that can happen?

**Kevin Rogers
High Street Baptist Church**



What will it take to cool the planet?

Bill McKibben is an American environmentalist, author, and journalist who has written extensively on the impact of global warming. He is the leader of the climate campaign group 350.org. In this article he introduces an online 'simulator', allowing anyone to investigate for themselves the impact upon climate change of a range of measures. It is reproduced here with permission from Bill. **Nicky Bull, High Street Baptist Church**

I want to encourage you to watch a video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XagC8pAOVg&feature=youtu.be> and then play with a Web site: <https://en-roads.climateinteractive.org/scenario.html?p1=3&v=2.7.19>.

Both come from the remarkable people at Climate Interactive, a project that grew out of M.I.T.'s Sloan School of Management. I've admired the group's co-directors, Elizabeth Sawin and Andrew Jones, for many years, and watched their En-ROADS simulator grow from fairly crude beginnings into a truly sophisticated and useful model. It allows you to change different variables to see what it would take to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions enough to get us off our current impossible track (screeching toward a world something like four degrees Celsius hotter) and onto the merely miserable heading of 1.5 to two degrees Celsius envisioned in the Paris climate accords.

I pointed out last week that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us something interesting: even locking down most of the planet didn't cut emissions as much as we might have thought. (By early April, daily CO2 emissions decreased by seventeen per cent.) This suggests that a great percentage of the trouble is hardwired into our systems, and not solely a function of our habits and choices. Indeed, the simulator shows that, if you reduce the growth of both populations and economies to the lowest level the programmers considered possible, the planet still warms almost 3.5 degrees Celsius.

But now reset the variables and go into the submenus for coal, gas, and oil, and perform a little experiment: stop building any new infrastructure for these fossil fuels beginning in 2025 and, all of a sudden, you're at a world that warms only 2.8 degrees Celsius by 2100. That's why it is such good news, for instance, that New York State last week quashed



plans for the Williams natural-gas pipeline across the New York City harbor: if you keep building stuff like this now, it locks in emissions for decades to come, busting our carbon budget. It's why the climate movement has fought so hard against pipelines and fracking wells and L.N.G. terminals: with ever-cheaper renewable power, when you manage to stop such projects, sun and wind have a chance at filling the vacuum.

And, once you've made this basic course change, you can go back to work on other steps that the simulator can model. Stipulate an all-out effort at making buildings and transport more efficient, and cut way back on deforestation – and now you're at about 2.5 degrees. Figure out some ways to "highly reduce" methane emissions from oil and gas wells, cows, and other sources, and suddenly you're nearing the two-degree mark.

None of these things are easy, of course. In fact, all of them are very hard. But stopping new infrastructure is possible – it's basically a battle with the fossil-fuel industry, which, as I've been pointing out, is losing financial muscle with each passing week. Last

week, according to the Financial Times, in a fascinating interview with Bernard Looney, the C.E.O. of BP, "Looney noted that as crude prices have plunged, renewable energy projects had been able to attract funding, suggesting the pandemic has weakened the investment case for oil. 'It's the model that is increasingly respected and admired by investors as being resilient and having a different risk profile,' he said."

Bill McKibben
The New Yorker 21 May 2020
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Prayer for the climate



Back in 2015 and with the major United Nations climate talks taking place at the end of that year (COP21), Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) called on people of faith to pray for world leaders and their negotiators to reach a meaningful agreement. To the delight of millions around the world, this was agreed in December 2015 but it was only ever a first step and even if all nations managed to implement their pledges, that would still not prevent a rise in average global temperatures that would render large parts of the world uninhabitable within this century. More needs to be done to increase the ambition of the Paris COP and so the postponed meeting of COP26 in Glasgow next year is crucial.

Following the example of Filipino Yeb Saño, his country's delegate to the 2013 climate talks in Warsaw, and taking inspiration from Micah 4:1-4 and Isaiah 60:1-3, Maranda St John Nicolle and Isabel Carter founded Pray & Fast for the Climate, encouraging Christians to both fast and pray on the first day of each month. Since 2015 they have produced a monthly digest of prayer points and their website describes their desire for 'God's kingdom to be raised up in our world in all aspects of life'. They believe that 'care for creation is an essential part of that' and so they bring their prayers and fasting for the climate 'before God, who has the power to influence the decisions which will be made by politicians, leaders and negotiators, in order to allow people to dream, to hope and to shape a greener, just, and sustainable world'.

This year, with the Covid-19 pandemic adding another layer of crisis and concern around the globe, they have included it in their prayer points. What follows is a summary of the resources produced between March and July 2020.

In March, the prayer points centred on: the announcement by the Church of England that they were setting a 2030 target for achieving net zero carbon

emissions; the warming of the oceans, with a study having shown that the temperatures of the world's oceans reached a record high in 2019; using the season of Lent to respond to the challenges of the climate crisis; the thawing of permafrost in the Arctic; and the appeal court ruling in the UK that the UK Government had not taken its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement into account when approving the third runway at Heathrow.

Join us in praying for climate action and climate justice

In April, the key points were: gratitude for the sustaining message of Easter; prayers for the time of coronavirus; the plans for COP26; thankfulness for the wonders of nature; and responding to the changes of recent months with plans to rebuild well, consistent with a green transition.

In May, prayer points included: quotes from a meditation by Pope Francis on the Easter message of resurrection; news of advances in energy-storage technology; prayer that the shock of coronavirus does not derail progress on real decarbonisation; a remembrance of Sir John Houghton, a pioneering climate scientist who died in April; good news from the Dutch Government, introducing new measures to respond to the climate emergency; the decision to postpone COP26 to 2021; and a call to raise awareness about the scale of biodiversity loss, with around 25% of all animal and plant species threatened with extinction.

In June, there was reflection on Laudato Si' Week, five years after the publication of Pope Francis plea for humanity to care for our common home.

Pray
and
Fast
for the
Climate

In addition the prayer points covered: the work to be done in preparation for COP26, now confirmed for November 2021; a record-breaking heat wave in the Arctic; a major divestment announcement by 42 faith institutions from 14 countries all pledging to take funds out of fossil fuel corporations; deforestation in the Amazon increasing during the pandemic; the launch of a web-based carbon footprint calculator for churches; green recovery plans for the EU; and prayers for areas affected by Cyclone Amphan in India and Bangladesh and major flooding in East Africa together with coronavirus and locust swarms.

July's prayer points included: more bad news from the Arctic concerning the rate of warming in that region and news that last winter was the hottest on record in Siberia; advance notice of the launch of Climate Sunday in early September 2020 [see elsewhere in this issue], an initiative that will run for a year and will culminate in a special service in September 2021 in Glasgow before COP26. All UK churches will be encouraged to hold at least one special service during the year to mark creation care as being of particular importance; growing calls for a green recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic; church perspectives on a just recovery; and news of a report showing that primary forest cover is being lost at the rate of an area the size of a football pitch every six seconds.

Each of the monthly sheets includes prayers and there is often biblical reflection. This is an extremely useful and wide-ranging resource for information and guidance on where prayer can be focused. Full details at: www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk

Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church

Lockdown - the pleasure of the countryside



I am sure we have all been enjoying our walks in the countryside much more during lockdown. With other options closed to us, the countryside has been the one place

away from home where we could all go to get our daily exercise. And nature continues during the year, come what may.

Since the middle of March my wife and I have been noting all the wildflowers we came across, noting the date each came into flower. Up to the end of June we have identified over 200 species. Many of these have been seen during walks from our home in Tring, some in the wild parts of our garden, and others just over the county border in Buckinghamshire. What has impressed us is just how many wildflowers there are in our road verges and in our open spaces. On a walk in June alongside the A4129 (formerly the A41 before the bypass was built) we counted, in one short stretch of verge, over ninety pyramidal orchids! We have had some other exciting finds too, such as discovering greater butterfly orchid near the A41 bypass and Martagon lily near Tring Park.

We were a little disappointed to find in June that some of the public road verges had been mown and this got me wondering whether something more could be done to ensure our wildflowers are better looked after so they could be appreciated right through the spring and



summer and allowed to shed their seed ready for the following year. Bees and other insects are of course dependent on their nectar and pollen and the flowers in turn are dependent on the insects for pollination.

So what can be done?

Well, Hertfordshire County Council have their Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy 2020 and say in this 'We will improve nature on our land by 20% by 2030'. As a large landowner themselves, one of the ways they can do this is by 'Conserving the UK's pollinator species by delivering the Hertfordshire Pollinator Strategy.' In the Hertfordshire Pollinator Strategy, the county council say they 'will seek to protect and increase the amount and quality of pollinator habitat and manage the land in its control to provide greater benefit for pollinators. Where possible we will engage with tenants and local people to provide opportunities to make Hertfordshire more pollinator friendly.'

Monmouthshire County Council

has already carried out excellent work in cooperation with others to make the town of Monmouth a better place for pollinators, so much so that Monmouth has been named as the UK's first bee town.

Steps are being taken elsewhere, too, to manage public areas for wildlife. The charity Plantlife is running a campaign to manage road verges throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to benefit wildflowers and other nature – see their website <https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign/#campaign>. And locally, in Wigginton, first steps have, I understand, already been taken to 'wild' the southwest part of the recreation ground, on Vicarage Road. The objective is to enhance biodiversity by encouraging an increased variety of native plant, bird and animal species whilst providing an area for people to enjoy.

Tring also has the potential to become a better place for pollinators. And who knows, perhaps like Monmouth, Tring



Passing through Tring...



There have been several moves from Tring within the church family in the last few years, and while we have not faced the daunting task of moving to Australia,

like the Lippitts, or even to relatively nearby Orkney like the Dodges, nevertheless uprooting ourselves from Tring has had various aspects to it, not all easy – a move away from a place you have lived in even for only a few years is hard.

For some readers, our stay of about six and a half years is but 'passing through', and I have to agree with that when I have heard people speaking of the old days and also of other people whom they knew in childhood and so on. However, I guess there are some of us who are 'movers', either because they get moved around by their parents when young, or for work reasons when they are adults, or even – dare I say it – because of 'itchy feet'!

I realised fairly early in life that I would never have roots in the way that some do, but I have wanted to become involved in the community I found myself in as best I could. However, this didn't really happen when we were busy having children and moving on because of David's work in the early years of our marriage. We did settle down in Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead, for over twenty years, though in three different houses. We also lived in Newhaven for twenty years, in two different houses, the latter having a fantastic view of the harbour and beyond towards Seaford along the coast.

We moved back to Hertfordshire in order to see more of our children and grandchildren, but guess what? Not too long after we settled in Tring, our bachelor son went to live in rural Pennsylvania (though we knew he was keen to get back there), and our younger daughter and family moved from Essex to Boscombe (Bournemouth)! The other two are staying put in Berkhamsted and Walter's Ash, but we hope they will come to the coast from time to time.

So what of our time in Tring? It has been good, with friends made at church and at the resourceful U3A, with

music a-plenty for us to enjoy, quite often at the church – especially Music and More – thank you Anna le Hair and friends! The Parish Book Group was something I appreciated, and David was a member of a lively housegroup and the choir. I found myself more involved than I had intended with the Berkhamsted Quakers, a small group with some issues to resolve during my time there; happily they are doing well under lockdown, thanks to Zoom. We were able to do some voluntary work, David with DENS, and I enjoyed being a volunteer first with Age UK Dacorum, then at Dundale School, listening to some Year 3 and 4 children practise reading.

It has been strange to leave during lockdown as we have had to say goodbye 'virtually' rather than with a piece of cake in Church for example, but in some ways easier perhaps than trying to say 'goodbye' in person which can be hard emotionally. However, we hope we may attend a service in Tring when things have become more normal!



A big thank you to the clergy team at St Peter & St Paul for jumping into the Zoom age (other platforms are available) and providing services at this difficult time: we have appreciated it.

And now? At the time of writing this, we are renting a furnished flat in Southbourne. It is the upstairs of an Edwardian style house, with access to part of a large garden, complete with trees and birdsong, more than I had hoped for! We have just found a suitable flat also in Southbourne, a few minutes from the cliff top in one direction and to a small parade of shops in another, including a well-stocked Co-op. So, we are hoping that the sale will go through smoothly and we will have moved there by the time you are reading this.

So thank you, Tringians, for making us feel welcome in your midst!

Margaret Whiting
formerly St Peter & St Paul



could become a bee town too? The Justice & Peace Group are currently contacting other organisations in the town and generally highlighting the subject on social media. Suggestions from readers of *Comment* as to what might be done would be welcomed and these should be emailed to me please at michaeldemidecki@gmail.com.

Michael Demidecki
Justice & Peace Group, Tring



Church investments in major oil companies

In early July, and with oil prices having crashed during the coronavirus pandemic, the Church of England investment fund managed by CCLA announced that it had sold its last remaining shares in fossil fuels, worth an estimated £8.4million. Although the reasons behind the decision were given as wholly financial, this move was nevertheless applauded by those who have been campaigning for all denominations to divest from fossil fuels in response to the climate crisis.

In May 2020 Operation Noah, the Christian charity active on climate change, published the latest report from its Bright Now divestment campaign, in which it analysed the position of the major oil companies and how their activities were measuring up against the targets set by the Paris Agreement from 2015. The following is taken from the report's executive summary.

Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church

In recent years, Churches and wider society have begun to recognise that we are now facing a climate emergency.

Several UK Churches, including Quakers in Britain, the Church of Ireland and the United Reformed Church, have already completed divestment from fossil fuels. The Church of England General Synod has set a 2030 net zero target and Catholic parishes in 20 out of 22 dioceses in England and Wales have switched to renewable electricity.

Climate science and the increasing urgency of action

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in October 2018 demonstrated the need for rapid emissions cuts to limit global average temperature rises to 1.5°C. In order to achieve this, global carbon emissions must fall by 55% between 2018 and 2030, according to the UN's 2019 Emissions Gap report.

Without rapid action to cut emissions, there are growing risks of triggering feedback loops, such as melting permafrost, which would lead to further, potentially unstoppable warming – with unthinkable consequences for

humanity and the natural world on which we depend.

Major oil companies are not Paris compliant

The Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI), a project launched by the Church of England and supported by several Churches, found in its 2020 State of Transition Report that none of the major oil companies are aligned with the Paris Agreement targets. Carbon Tracker's 2019 Breaking the Habit report found that all of the major oil companies continue to sanction projects that are not Paris compliant.

Between now and 2030, major oil companies, including Shell and BP, plan to spend huge sums (\$149bn and \$71bn respectively) on exploration and extraction of new reserves. While the UN has called for an 'orderly wind-down of fossil fuel production', Shell and BP intend to increase production by 38% and 20% respectively over the next decade. In addition, BP and Shell have the highest expenditure of all major oil companies on lobbying to block, control and delay climate action.

Some oil companies, including BP and Shell, have recently announced non-binding 'ambitions' to reach net zero emissions by 2050. However, none of these companies are planning to end oil and gas production, instead seeking to rely on technologies that are unproven for large-scale deployment and may not be economically viable. This is not compatible with limiting global average temperature rises to well below 2°C, let alone 1.5°C.

2020: A year to choose the future

The year 2020 has taken on a new significance as a year of stark choice: the climate emergency is still happening, and the decisions we make now will shape our ability to safeguard a liveable planet and affect the future of humanity for thousands of years. What future will UK Churches choose? Will they continue investing in companies that are fuelling climate breakdown, or will they invest in a clean energy future where all life can flourish?

Several UK Churches have already divested from fossil fuels, including Quakers in Britain, the Church of Ireland and the United Reformed Church. In others, such as the Church of Scotland, the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church, Church bodies have made divestment recommendations which should be acted on as a matter of urgency.

The 2017 Methodist Conference called for the Central Finance Board to divest from oil and gas companies whose business investment plans were not aligned with the Paris Agreement target of global average temperature rises well below 2°C by 2020. It is time for them to act on this recommendation and fully divest from all fossil fuel companies.

The Church of England General Synod in July 2018 voted to begin divestment in 2020 from oil and gas companies that are 'not taking seriously their responsibilities' in the transition to a low-carbon economy, and complete divestment from those not on track to align with the Paris Agreement by 2023. This process must begin now.

Divestment from fossil fuels and investment in the future

The global divestment movement has grown rapidly in recent years. By April 2020, nearly 1,200 institutions with a total of \$14 trillion of assets had made commitments to divest from fossil fuels. Even the oil companies are acknowledging the impact of divestment!

Nonetheless, while positive steps are being made and cuts to investment in oil and gas companies are beginning to take place, the process is not moving fast enough. The first few months of 2020 have shown that fossil fuels are an increasingly risky investment.

As well as divestment from fossil fuels, increased investment in clean technologies is vital to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon economy. Churches must seize the opportunity to demonstrate prophetic leadership at this key moment in history and ensure a brighter, cleaner future for all.

Be inspired!



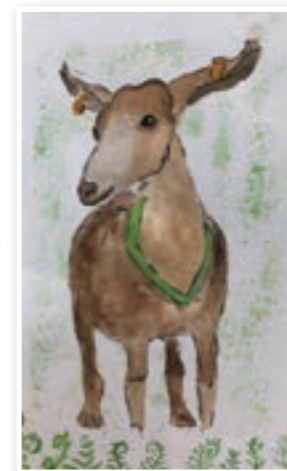
Nature. According to Google, 'the phenomena of the physical world'. According to David Attenborough, 'the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty'.

According to the average tourist, the largest mountain, the brightest rainforest, the tallest waterfall or the deepest sea. But to me, nature means this... life. Without nature, would life exist? Would the birds have a sky to fly across? Would the fish have a sea to swim in? Would humans have the resources to shape their lives?

What are you sitting on right now? (If you're going to be pedantic and say that you're standing, then look around and find a chair.) A sofa? A stool, a rug, a bed? Is it made of wood – from trees? Is it made of plastic – from natural gas, oil or plants? Or perhaps it is made from wool or cotton from sheep and plants?

My point: everything is made from nature. Without it, not a single thing could exist on this planet. We say something is man-made, but who made the materials that man could use to make it man-made? (Say that three times, twice as fast.) Nature.

(I could make this article very long, debating whether evolution caused these materials or God, but I think I'm going to avoid straying too far from my point. I'm meant to be seeing some family friends next week, and I can't be late. So let's just leave it that everything is made from nature, and



I'll leave it to you to decide whether God created nature too. I am sorry for any inconvenience caused.)

Anyway, what I think I'm trying to say is that everything is nature. Without it there would be nothing and yet how often do we appreciate it? I don't mean the occasional 'ooh look, a pretty butterfly!' kind of appreciation, but a full-on realisation of just how amazing nature is.

OK, here you can choose which paragraph to read, depending on the belief you decided on earlier (you know, the God or evolution one):

The Go God Group

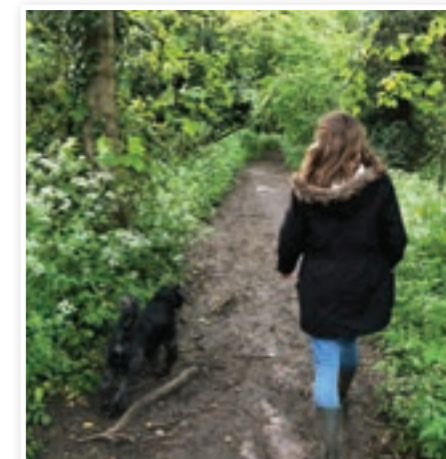
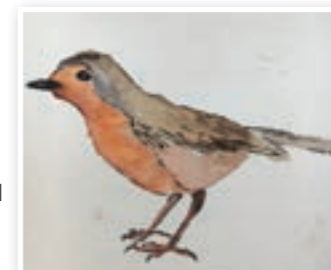
Doesn't nature just prove how amazing God is! I mean, imagine designing every single thing you see outside, from the seemingly endless oceans filled with every kind of joy and life imaginable, to the microscopic cells found in a millimetre-long section of a leaf, one of



the trillions (OK, there are lots more than trillions, but I don't know what comes next, maybe zillions?) that cover the world's surface. Just at one point today, stop and look at something God has made, whether it's a plant, the sky, an animal or another person, and think about every little component within it/them and just appreciate the power of God.

The Enthusiastic Evolution Association

Just because there might not be a God behind it, doesn't mean it's not still amazing! How complex and wonderful is life that we have evolved to be as perfect as we are. How many years did it take for us to move from monkey things (I definitely need to find out more about the origins of humans) to the beings we are today! Did those neander-thingies ever imagine that around 40,000 years later, their kind would have



developed so much that we can fly without wings in planes, or store mind-blowing amounts of information within tiny devices like phones? And thinking of that, where do you think humans will be in another few thousand years? Natural wonders and evolution will never cease to amaze me. (If you're that person who, when given a choice, will read both paragraphs, then this will probably sound quite similar...)

So today, perhaps find something outdoors and just appreciate it. You don't have to touch it or take a photo, but just look at the detail and intricacy that must have gone into its making. Just stop and appreciate it and allow your mind to be temporarily boggled by its total awesomeness – unless you've picked a really weird thing to look at, like a slug: you might not find much awesomeness there, but I'm sure you can use your imagination.

I hope you are inspired to get out and study some nature! One of the ways I find it easiest to appreciate nature is through art. Find something beautiful and draw it, or paint it, or make a collage. As long as the thing you are drawing is natural and beautiful, your art will always look great. I have included some watercolour paintings that I have done of some birds – as I say, when you are painting something natural, the colours always seem brighter and the painting is more alive.

Thank you for reaching this point, which means you have enough patience to listen to the contents of my brain on paper, and I hope it has inspired you. Nature is always there, just waiting for you to hurry up and appreciate it!

Happy Nature Appreciation Day (I may have made that up, but I think it should become a national bank holiday anyway).

Fern Asquith, age 14
High Street Baptist Church

What churches can do, we can also do



In April this year the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England produced a two-page document designed to help churches through the process of aligning with the CofE's stated aim of achieving net-zero carbon status by 2030. Entitled 'A practical path to "net zero carbon" for our churches', it outlines measures that local churches can take over the coming decade in order to minimise their carbon emissions. However, the topics covered are for the most part equally applicable to householders and can be used as a guide to help everyone in their attempts to reach a similar and very necessary goal. So, based on the Council's recommendations, these are the first things to consider:

Your building

Maintain your roof and gutters, which will prevent damp entering and warm air escaping; ensure that windows shut tightly, to reduce heat loss; insulate heating pipes; draught-proof doors; insulate your attic or loft; install cavity wall insulation.

Heat and light

Switch to 100% renewable electricity and 'green' gas; match your heating settings to your use, only having heating on when needed; consider a Hive or Nest type of heating control system; replace lightbulbs with LEDs wherever possible; when your current appliances fail and cannot be repaired, replace with A+++ rated appliances; if you have sufficient outdoor space, plant a tree; consider offsetting your household carbon footprint through Climate Stewards.

If you have already done all these things, you could also install solar PV panels to generate electricity; when your boiler needs replacing, look at a system that does not use fossil fuels (air source or ground source heat pump; all-electric heating); when your car needs replacing, purchase an electric vehicle.

Nicky Bull

High Street Baptist Church

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A manifesto for troubled times



The apostle Paul's letter to the Romans is more than just a message to one community; in a sense it is a kind of encapsulation of Paul's thinking about Christ – the life of faith in Jesus Christ as saviour of all. It was written not just for the Jews and Gentiles in Rome but for all humanity of every race... for all of us.

It is a manifesto written in troubled times for a deeply conflicted and troubled world where many people felt lost and rudderless. These are troubled times in a deeply troubled world and the letter to the Romans has some important messages for us today: messages to make us calmer and give us hope and life and peace. It counsels us all, no matter what times we live in, to live according to the Spirit, to live fully aware of the Spirit which dwells in each one of us, to live lives of reconciliation and hope and peace.

Prue and I lived with our young family on Merseyside in the 60s and 70s. The height of 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland was reached during this period and the communities of Merseyside and Ulster were very closely linked in character and tradition and the potential for conflict. In my business I was responsible not only for our large Head Office in Liverpool but also for the considerable business we had across the water in Northern Ireland. I travelled to, and stayed in, Belfast at least twice a month, every month, during this period of 'The Troubles'. During the twelve years that I followed this routine, and despite the often alarming media headlines of the

times, I never experienced anything but kindness and consideration from both communities on both sides.

Both Liverpool and Belfast had large communities of Protestants and Catholics – as they were labelled at the time – but my experience was that most people just got on with living, their lives helped by the everyday kindness and consideration for each other that is such an essential ingredient of all human society. I have worked and travelled in many troubled places in the world and my overriding experience has been that no matter what the 'Big Picture' and despite the labels that are given, people everywhere mostly just get on with their lives as best they can. People are just people and ALL lives matter.

Peace and Reconciliation, Truth and Reconciliation, have become major movements in South Africa, in Ulster, in other troubled places of tension around the world and these movements have healed and settled many old wounds. They have also been the stuff of everyday life and interaction, the very fabric of society.

Yes, we live in troubled times. Yes, there are conflicts and name-calling and labelling going on all the time. There are big issues to be solved. Surely we can do that best by not taking one side or another but by seeing both sides, all sides – and making peace and reconciliation our everyday habit and aim. The problem with taking one side against the other in any situation is that if you back one, you enrage the other, and the pendulum of prejudice swings ever more wildly from side to side.

The truth is that both sides, all sides, matter.

Desmond Tutu had it right with Truth and Reconciliation. The Peacemakers of

Northern Ireland had it right. At the end of any struggle, when all the fighting's done, you have to make the peace. That's what the Holy Spirit is always there to remind us. In times of trouble – as at all times in all of our lives – God is with us; God the Holy Spirit is within us every day of our lives.

The lesson of history is clear: in no conflict does either side actually win. At the end of it all, and no matter how much rage has been spent, and how much blood spilled, the survivors have to find a way of making peace and living together.

The words of Pope John 23rd ring out across the history of conflict and trouble with a clear and wise and righteous message. At the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, when he was expected to back one side of the conflicted church against the other, he spoke out clearly. The concept he advocated could have been the Holy Spirit speaking: 'We will not seek to find out who was right, we will not seek to find out who was wrong... We will only seek to be reconciled...'

When so many issues are temptingly presented for us to take sides over, when there are so many opportunities to lay blame – to become ever-more partisan – perhaps we can pause and stay calm; perhaps we can follow the Holy Spirit in the way of peace.

We cannot choose the times we live in, but we can choose to follow the clear advice of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and choose the way of life and hope and peace in each aspect of our lives, every day. As the old saying goes 'You in your small corner and I in mine.' On our daily journey let's follow the Spirit, seek reconciliation and find extraordinary peace.

Grahame Senior
Tring Team

Parish registers

Baptisms

We welcome these children into our church family and pray for their parents and Godparents.

Leia-Rose Alice Mason
Harry Janes

Weddings

We offer our congratulations and prayers to these couples as they begin their married lives together.

James Tucker & Kimberley Wright
Miles Walbank & Rachel Henwood
David White & Jennie Tarling
Andy Luton & Katherine Tollinton
Thomas Edgley & Becki Tricks

Funerals

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

Valencia Hart 84
Alexander John Oates 82
John Patrick Bowden 80
Norman Jeffery 82
Robert James Keers 35
Ronald Edward Marston 66
Douglas Clifford Sinfield 30
T.L. Harold Cooper 90

Growing in the faith



I have greatly enjoyed writing pieces for and I have learnt a lot in doing so. However, when your editor suggested that readers might be interested in my faith journey and in what led me to the ministry, I had my doubts! The exercise has led me to a lot of reminiscing and the realization that we often remember relatively little about our early years, coupled with the regret that we did not ask more questions of our parents.

For me, faith and priesthood have always been intertwined. I was born, the eldest of four children, in Seaforth Vicarage in Liverpool just before the Second World War and was baptized there by my grandfather. So you will already have realized that I am the third generation of priests, and many of you (if not all!) know about the fourth generation in Tring. The Vicarage was bombed and eventually we settled in nearby Crosby from where my father cycled in to his parish. Sadly, the church in Seaforth was later pulled down for structural reasons and the parish is now part of another.

Just before the end of the War we moved to a mining village in the West Riding of Yorkshire where my memories start with the regular Sunday Eucharist. I soon became a boat boy and from then on incense has been a smell to evoke worship. As children we played at 'church' – apparently I was always the celebrant(!) and smoking string stood in for incense. A memorable annual event from that time was the May Queen Procession with hymns and ending with Solemn Evensong in Church.

During our time there I was prepared for Confirmation by the Chaplain of a local Convent who also taught Latin at the school I attended. One of the classes (I was a class of one) took place to my discomfiture in the Staff Room. I was confirmed at what was then an unusually early age of ten. I also made my first Confession then. Though I remember little, it was from those days that using a book for regular prayer rather than my own words became a feature of my prayer life. Fixed forms

and the words of the liturgy, as well as other people's words, I find very helpful. The pattern of life then at home was one that has greatly influenced me. In all my father's parishes there was a daily Eucharist and my father almost always said Morning and Evening Prayer in Church. In those days, too, fasting before Communion meant most Eucharists were in the early morning.

When Father moved to Long Eaton in Derbyshire, the pattern remained but Sunday morning worship was a bit more elaborate. As there was a curate there we had High Mass with priest, deacon and lay subdeacon and everything done according to the book. I rose through the serving ranks to lay subdeacon! This has led to a sometimes unfortunate tendency to dislike sloppy or informal worship. There the liturgical year was fully observed with candles at Candlemas and Ashes on Ash Wednesday. Visual aids, such as candles, ashes and so on, were far less common then than nowadays.

It was at about that time (the early 1960s) that liturgical change started, eventually resulting in Common Worship – a form I find generally preferable to the Book of Common Prayer. BCP language is fine, but Cranmer's liturgies needed updating to say the least!

All this time my faith and vocation seemed to be linked. Apart from my desire to become an engine-driver (as all small boys did) or a zoo keeper (strange, as I am not really an animal lover) I seemed to expect to follow my father's example, a practice which was much more common then. But all through my life there was no pressure or expectation, just support.

At school in Nottingham my O level choices were those suitable for one who hoped to read Theology. I was one of the last expecting to do National Service, but as things were running down, the authorities decided my eyesight (I have always been short-sighted) made me medically unfit. Instead I worked for eighteen months as a hospital orderly in a TB hospital – a very valuable and enjoyable experience. That was the one time in my life without a regular liturgical life. Worship depended on when I could get home as it was a residential job. The nearby vicar celebrated Holy

Communion for the nurses but it was months before I, as a mere orderly, found out about this.

Then came university and one particular episode when a fellow student told me the exact date and time when he became a Christian. I found this strange as he was also a vicar's son. I thought one became a Christian by baptism and gradually grew into one's faith. He had a similar experience of church life but still had this particular revelation. Some, of course, do but my experience is that the realization of a vocation is gradual and comes from growing up in the worshipping community and gradually growing in the faith. A few have moments of conversion; for many it is a slow growth and the effect of family and other people, times, circumstances and events.

There was, as I realize now, no youthful rebellion and no disturbing doubts about my faith. There have been, however, many changes which I have accepted, sometimes reluctantly or had doubts about; there have been others which I have welcomed. Amid so many changes in church and society, I remain convinced that a priest needs two things – an altar and a people – a place to worship and a people to serve in worship.

I am immensely grateful to all the parishioners I have known and most thankful of all, that in a Theological Library, I saw somebody from whom I have never since been parted.

Martin Banister
St Albans Cathedral



What defines us?



We booked our summer holiday this year in January before we knew what 2020 was about to bring to the world. We were still able to spend that week in Devon and 'bubbled'

with a friend who has been isolated through the lockdown; it was great to have a change of scene and a change of company.

On one of our many walks that week, we recalled friends we had in common from times past and this led to a conversation about our common humanity. You may see it differently but...

Someone we knew was in prison for child abuse. He had been a teacher and later went into the priesthood. His time in prison was long after the events of which he was accused and he must by now be quite an elderly man. My friend's father had liked the man very much and had found him very helpful at a time of need, recalling his support and compassion. It set me thinking. Are our lives defined by

one good or bad act (or even a series of them)? Does that act make the rest of our lives a lie, merely a pretence?

When I became a Christian in my teens, much was made of original sin. It was not this sin or that sin which sent Jesus to the cross to die for me – it was sin itself which separated me from God. My sin may have been telling a lie and someone else of robbing a bank but there was no distinction made – if I had been the only person ever to have sinned, Jesus would still have gone to the cross. Whatever you think of that way of thinking, it helps prevent judging others – all sin is sin, no matter how big or small. If you need a proof text, Romans 3:23 says, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'. We all need the saving grace of Christ; we all need his love and forgiveness.

If our lives were laid bare and everyone knew what we were really like, or seen the things we have thought or said or done or the bad choices we have made when not on our best behaviour, would they think of us differently? If they saw us as God sees us, would our friends and families, those in our churches,

workplace or community still love or respect us?

Becoming a foster carer last year brought people into my life who might not otherwise have crossed my path. One of the saddest facts was that time and time again, children who had been badly parented themselves became the parents who failed to care for their children (that is not the same as all badly parented children become bad parents!). This sometimes went back several generations. All of us make choices and some of us are so much luckier than others – the choices are between one good thing and another good thing. For others, most choices are undesirable.

The expression my mother often used was 'There, but for the grace of God, go I'. Was that man in prison bad through and through? Will he always be defined by his crime? Were all his previous acts of kindness and compassion wiped out by the deeds that sent him to prison? Or was he, like the rest of us, a fallible human being in need of God's forgiveness?

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul



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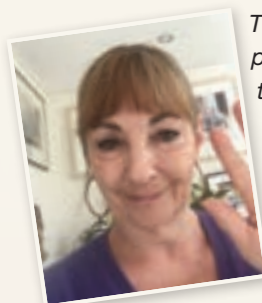
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War diary of a Jewish refugee



This is the third part of an article that started in the June edition of Comment supplied by Jackie Robinson who lives in

Aldbury. Her late mother,

Rosi Schul, came to the UK in 1939 as the teacher accompanying a Kindertransport.

Poland, 3 November 1938

All the German Stuttgart teachers were running backwards and forwards carrying and dragging what they could. And whoever saw me exclaimed, 'You as well, Rosi!' The Golds were already inside with more of their family – Erich Eckstein and Gerd Loew with whom we had had supper the previous Sunday. Eckstein's friend, Ruth, insisted that I should tell the Golds to get rid of their passports because people without passports were being sent home again. I could not do that. I was frightened of being left without them as they were the only people I could count on.

Eventually I was pushed through the gate. In the passageway there were people standing around with their belongings, others sitting on them or talking together in groups. I soon saw the Gold family and stayed near them. We had time to observe so much – a mixture of tragi-comedy, especially when one saw how many wanted the Doctor to pronounce they were unfit to travel. Everyone suddenly developed a different illness but the Aryan doctor rejected their pleas. People were continually sent out despite their pretended symptoms. Some of the Stuttgart people were squashed thirty or forty into a cell – a cell intended for four. Next to me was a miserable fragile-looking old lady, whose legs buckled at every step and, despite being such a wreck, the Doctor had declared her fit. She moaned relentlessly. She had no clothes, no suitcase and no people she knew with her. And so it was, for

hundreds of desperate people there. I had lots of heavy luggage and I didn't know what to do with it. I was with the Golds who stood there quite composed. To see the children sitting and standing around tore at one's heart. Little Inge sat on her case and watched all the turmoil around her in bewilderment. Although there was a special cell for all the children, Inge stayed with us. People were running around with baskets of washing, food and drink. More and more people recognised me and a hundred times I heard, 'Rosi, you as well'.

We stood there for some hours, until eventually we were called forward with our luggage to retrieve our passports. Downstairs there were green lorries and cars, which were to take us to the railway station. The officials sneered contemptuously as they pointed to and called out people's names. They roared fiercely when anyone didn't respond immediately. On and on each person dragged their luggage out – a familiar image of Jewish fate. Every person portrayed a tragic picture.

Now we Esslingers had not yet handed over our passports and therefore we were the last to leave. A staircase led down to a gateway and into the street. About thirty people were loaded into each lorry. Anyone not moving quickly enough was shoved roughly and their luggage thrown in after them. Cattle would be treated more respectfully. Children screamed, women cried and the Oberkommissar, cursed and swore as he pushed people forward. German onlookers gaped and stared gleefully.

God, it became a problem for us. Is Man good? The lowest creature in the whole world is Man. Murder, looting and evil of every kind exist within mankind. Instincts, which lie dormant, emerge at the slightest provocation.

It was rainy and cold outside and the lorry was open on all sides. I looked out trying to hold back my tears and hang on to every memory of my wonderful time passed in Stuttgart. We passed Koenig Strasse – The Koenig Strasse.

Thousands of memories surfaced. Around the corner we passed my favourite Ice Cream Parlour and then we came upon 12 Schloss Strasse, which was the meeting place of us ardent Zionists and which had been run by our adored leader, Gershon Weil, at that time.

Eventually we arrived at the main railway station. As we were pushed into the huge entrance hall, we were confronted by crowds who had followed our trucks and who now formed lines on either side of us. These spectators were both hostile Nazis and sympathetic German Jews. We had to pass between this human corridor. Some of the young Jewish men from the table-tennis club recognised me and called out my name. Some of them took photographs. I climbed into a train carriage with the Golds and the Horowitzes and there was plenty of room. Three Gestapo men watched over us as we settled down. My case was heavy and I was relieved that at last I could put it down. I thought I would go mad with yearning as I looked through the window onto the all-familiar and beautiful Grand Station.

At last I could let my tears flow – something I had not allowed myself to do all that day. It is simply a human need to cry – and the satisfaction of crying gives one an enormous relief. One should always let people cry at such times and not console or stifle them. Everyone was shocked to see me break down. Jokel Horowitz did not recognise his usually cheerful, fun-loving cousin. I couldn't hold myself together any longer. There was a very old couple sitting opposite me and the woman moaned and cried incessantly, 'They wouldn't even let us take a second shirt with us – we weren't allowed to take anything when they summoned us in the night'. I heard the old man answer her over and over again, 'How can you complain? It is a sin. Haven't we lived in contentment and peace long enough? Just be grateful that we were given it for so long.' Then he looked across at me and spoke in an unbelievably comforting



who had just lost everything and who probably only owned a silver-plated Shabbat candle stick and a gold watch. He had only been able to bring a shoe-box containing a few apples and some bread and butter. He took out one apple and, cutting it, offered me half. This made me feel ashamed and I stopped crying.

My thoughts went back to Esslingen. What would be going on there now – and where were Mama, Papa, Menne, Deli and the others? I hoped I would see them again in Poland. Where would we really end up and what would happen to us all? My thoughts were interrupted again and again. There was a woman sitting all alone with absolutely nothing. 'What shall I do?' she cried, 'Why go on living?' It was the same everywhere. Everyone had a story to tell about how they had been picked up and what they had been told. Most of them were given absolutely no information about what was to happen to them. Some unscrupulous policeman had told people they would be back home in an hour – and other such lies. Only later would they realise that their lives were to change forever.

I talked with Ruth Gold. We young girls had shared many good experiences recently in Esslingen, Stuttgart and especially Rentlingen where a particularly nice young man at a party had pursued me, paid me compliments and danced with me all night. Yes, Rentlingen – they would be very surprised when they heard that I was among the deportees. I chatted with Mrs Gold and with one of the SS men who seemed very decent – but of course it didn't cost him anything. He thought that we would be back in Germany within two or three days. He said that this was only a formality to prevent Polish Jews from becoming 'stateless'. We had to get our passports validated by 29 October 1938. Germany was acting on behalf of Polish Jews so that we could move between the countries more freely. He continued, saying that even though these and many other measures were being taken against the Jews, there were many Germans who disapproved but had to remain silent. His words made me feel quite light-hearted ... we would return to Esslingen, I felt sure of it.

In Leipzig we had a longer stop and the Jewish community brought food parcels to our train. They took our letters to send on to our families. I had written to the Rothchilds and home.

We travelled further and further away from our beloved Esslingen. Mrs Gold was very kind and we ate all our food together, agreeing that we should stick together when we arrived in Poland. Finally we arrived at the Polish border 'New-Benschen'. The train stopped and all the SS alighted and stood on the platform discussing the situation with German officials. The attitude of the Germans was despicable towards us. They ordered that all windows were to be closed and threatened and scolded when anyone tried to open them even a little way. When they checked our passports and suitcases, we realised that we could have taken anything we wanted. Their inspection was very superficial. Each of us was allowed no more than ten marks. After a very long and gruelling wait, we finally moved across the border into Zbaszyn (Benschen). Germany lay behind us.

Charles Spurgeon – frequent visitor to Tring



The question of sticking to your beliefs came up in conversation recently. Should ministers stick to their ethical positions come what may?

John Stott, the former Rector of All Souls Langham Place, always took a strong line against nuclear weapons. He thought that they violated any Christian understanding of how war, if it is ever necessary, should be conducted. When it was suggested that he might tone down his thoughts on this subject, he completely refused.

Another preacher who took a similar view, on a different issue, was Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher.

Born in Essex in 1834 and brought up a Congregationalist, Spurgeon became a Baptist in 1850 and was admitted to the church at Newmarket. His baptism followed on 3 May in the River Lark. Later that same year he moved to Cambridge, where he later became a Sunday School teacher. Spurgeon preached his first sermon in the winter of 1850–51 in a cottage at Teversham at the age of 16, while filling in for a friend.

From the beginning of Spurgeon's ministry, his style and ability were considered to be far above average. The Anglican Church Historian Owen Chadwick described him as a genius. At the age of 17 he was installed as Pastor of the small Baptist church at Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, where he published his first literary work, a Gospel tract, written in 1853. A Deacon from the New Park Baptist Church in Southwark heard of him and, at the age of 19, he was invited to preach there. The congregation of eighty smiled at him with his country bumpkin voice and bright cravat and pocket handkerchief – but invited him to be their Pastor.

Within a few months of Spurgeon's arrival at Park Street, his ability as a preacher made him famous. The following year the first of his sermons in the 'New Park Street Pulpit' was published. Spurgeon's sermons were published in printed form every week and had a high circulation. By the time of his death in 1892, he had preached nearly 3,600 sermons and published forty-nine volumes of commentaries, sayings, anecdotes, illustrations and devotions.

Immediately following his fame was criticism. The first attack in the press appeared in the Earthen Vessel in January 1855. His preaching, although not revolutionary in substance, was a plain-spoken and direct appeal to the people, using the Bible to provoke them to consider the teachings of Jesus Christ. He was in favour of humour from the pulpit; he was well read and intelligent, yet he could understand ordinary men and women. He knew the English people and understood that they loved serious truths best if they met them in a comic frame.

The congregation quickly outgrew their building, and moved to Exeter Hall, then to Surrey Music Hall while a new Church, The Metropolitan Tabernacle in Elephant and Castle was built. The use of the Surrey Music Hall was considered scandalous as it was a place of entertainment. In these venues Spurgeon frequently preached to audiences numbering more than 10,000. At 22, Spurgeon was the most popular preacher of his day, but critical attacks from the press persisted throughout his life.

But he was not at all popular in the Southern United States because of his unflinching opposition to slavery. In 1883 he wrote: 'Not so very long ago our nation tolerated slavery in our colonies. Philanthropists endeavoured to destroy slavery; but when was it utterly abolished? It was when Wilberforce roused the church of God, and when the church of God addressed herself to the conflict, then she tore the evil thing to pieces. I have been amused with what Wilberforce said the day after they passed the Act of Emancipation. He merrily said to a friend when it was all done, "Is there not something else we can abolish?" That was said playfully, but it shows the spirit of the church of God. She lives in conflict and victory; her mission is to destroy everything that is bad in the land.'

Later he said: 'I do from my inmost soul detest slavery... and although I commune at the Lord's table with men of all creeds, yet with a slaveholder I have no fellowship of any

sort or kind. Whenever [a slave-holder] has called upon me, I have considered it my duty to express my detestation of his wickedness, and I would as soon think of receiving a murderer into my church... as a man stealer.'

This did not go down well amongst the slave owners. In Florida they said Spurgeon is a 'beef-eating, puffed-up, vain, over-righteous pharisaical English blab-mouth.' In South Carolina the personal criticism came out as 'Spurgeon is a vulgar young man' with 'soiled sleek hair, prominent teeth, and a self-satisfied air.'

His sermons, which in 1862-1863 sold one million copies, were censored. Sermon bonfires illuminated jail yards, plantations, and bookshops throughout the Southern states. The following article appeared in an Alabama newspaper, '...we do hereby invite all persons in Montgomery who possess copies of the sermons of the notorious English abolitionist, Spurgeon, to send them to the jail yard to be burned on next Friday, this day week. A subscription is also on foot to buy of our booksellers all copies of said sermons now in their stores, to be burned on the same occasion.' And they did.

But Spurgeon stuck to his principles. Chadwick has a very interesting paragraph in his 'The Victorian Church': 'The Baptist denomination found him uneasy company. When he went to Tring none of the three Baptist chapels wanted him. One chapel refused because he was a Calvinist, another because he was not a sound Calvinist, and the third let him into its pulpit fearfully. But he knew his Bible, was widely read outside his Bible, never preached without preaching a cross, and perfectly understood how to array his Gospel.'

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team

COMMENT

The magazine of the Churches in Tring



Please submit your article to the Editor by the 1st of the month. Aim for 400 or 800 words and please send a head and shoulders colour photo or jpg and any other photos in high resolution. Contact comment.magazine@gmail.com



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Team Rector Revd Huw Bellis 01442 822170 or 07411483229 huw@tringteamparish.org.uk

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Team Vicar Revd Michelle Grace 01442 851200 Aldbury: michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk

Curate Revd Sarah Marshall 07538 888502 sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk

Open churches for Services

We have services in our five churches throughout the month. You need to book through our website, to allow space and for track and trace.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events.

Full schedule listed there, and type of service. Generally, Aldbury, Sundays at 10am, Tring, Sundays 8am and 10am, Wednesdays at 10am. Long Marston Sundays at 6pm. Wilstone weekly, day TBA. Puttenham 2nd Sunday of the month 3.30pm.

Open Churches for individual Prayer

Tring Church open weekdays, 10am - 12noon, weekends 2 - 4pm

Wilstone Church open Tuesdays, 10.30am - 12.30pm,

Long Marston Church open Wednesdays, 3 - 5pm

Aldbury Church open daily, 11am - 1pm

Puttenham likely to be open for a time on Sunday afternoons.



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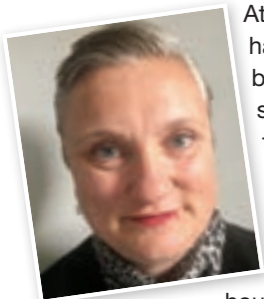
The Foodbank in Tring Church is open on weekdays,

10am - 12noon, to collect food and to drop-off food donations.

www.dens.org.uk



Safe shopping



At the end of June, I had a busy weekend by lockdown standards. I went to the optician with my youngest daughter, shopping for replacement household equipment

for my uni student daughter and, as my husband had some time off and was keen to make the most of it, we braved a couple of large out of town shops to pick up supplies for our ongoing home and garden improvements.

We also popped into a supermarket we don't usually visit but was located near the other shops we needed. Throughout the weekend we found that people are interpreting the rules very, very differently.

This was the weekend BEFORE so called 'barmeggedon' when the pubs, cafes, restaurants and more were due to open and social distancing was relaxed a little.

At the Optician things were straight out of the movie Contagion. Locked door. Everything gelled and wiped repeatedly. Staff and customers in masks, perspex screens, opticians in extensive PPE and I wasn't allowed to accompany my teen into the examination room. I was, however, given lots of reassuring information and kept fully abreast of what was happening.

There was one comedy moment when my daughter tried on glasses which sat nicely on her mask. She looked at me. I looked at her – and we both burst out laughing. She was allowed to remove her mask to check the glasses looked good and fit well without the fabric facewear. Well done, Specsavers – we felt very safe, although it was quite an odd experience, especially as we had to repeat ourselves and ask for information to be repeated through muffling masks.

The day was HOT and I was very glad to take the mask off once out of the store. As a family with autistic members, we probably could avoid mask wearing for some of the family, but luckily everyone seems ok with them.

I visited two branches of the same store and noted they had slightly different approaches to social distancing with one operating a more efficient one way system than the other. Store layout had a lot to do with that though. There was

plenty of hand-gel and we saw trolleys being wiped thoroughly outside. Overall though, a less intense experience and I did gel my hands on leaving as I saw lots of people picking things up and putting them down.

The supermarket was a bit of a joke. Unlike our local Tesco where a very rigid and effective one-way system operates and there is a controlled check-out, this was a bit of a free-for-all. There was a nice atmosphere though, probably because it felt much more like the old days. I did quite a bit of side-stepping and swerving to try to keep 2m away from people, although many shoppers didn't seem to care.

I find the new normal of having to wait while someone browses the items you want a little annoying. The queue for the pork pie shelf was amusing – obviously a must-have item on a Sunday morning. I must learn to be more patient.

The DIY store where previously rules had been rigidly applied was much more relaxed than our last visit, but also much less busy. Another difference from our last visit was the fact that the nearby McDonald's was open for breakfast. The queue was minimal so...

Oddly, even though I usually love shopping, I still have no desire to head to the High Street yet. I'm sure as time goes on I will relax a little more, but for now



I'm content for my husband to pick up most of what we need at the supermarket where he works.

Afra Willmore
St John the Baptist, Aldbury

Finding God in the Psalms



We seem to have abandoned the Psalms from regular Sunday worship in the Church of England. Some of them can feel obscure, even irrelevant, and the usual plainsong chanting can

be inaccessible without expertise and practice. Yet we know that the Psalms would have been the core of worship for early Christians, and the Gospels (and Epistles) are peppered with quotations from them. In the words of the author and theologian Tom Wright 'Sing these songs, and they will renew you from head to toe, from heart to mind. Pray these poems, and they will sustain you on the long, hard but exhilarating road of Christian discipleship'. The Parish Book Group studied Wright's Book 'Finding God in the Psalms' during the summer and met (by Zoom) at the end of July to share our reactions to the book and attitudes to the Psalms.

Wright's book – based on a US lecture – looks at the Psalms from three perspectives: '...people who pray the Psalms will be learning to live in God's time as well as in their own, in God's space as well as in their own, and even in and as God's 'matter' – the stuff of which we're made – as well as in and of our own.' There is a chapter devoted to each of these themes. Some of us struggled to relate to this way of looking at the Psalms, but we were all engaged by his third idea – 'matter' matters, the phrase used by Richard Coles in his sermon on St Alban's day. We have gained a new understanding of this from having to live in a virtual world (devoid of 'matter') during lockdown. "Matter" matters because it is God's "matter", made not as a temporary ornament for a world doomed to decay and death but as the raw material for the new world full of glory.'

Also we were all very moved by Wright's deep knowledge of the Psalms. Wright argues that the Psalms don't just tell us things, the singing of them changes us. We need all of them, not just a selection. His final chapter is showered with instances when the Psalms felt directly relevant to his life and faith, in good times and bad. In public worship we have largely side-lined the Psalms, and so perhaps also in our

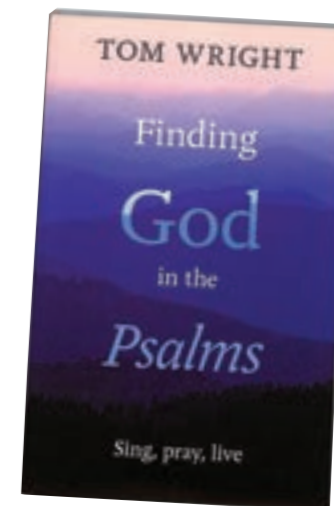
private reflections.

Some of us came to Wright's book with an appreciation and affection for the Psalms, some with a sense of puzzlement. Nearly all of us felt that the Psalms have been neglected too much in our public worship. We should look for ways to incorporate them and to explain their power and relevance. Perhaps the current injunction against singing hymns gives an opportunity to discover – or re-discover – the Psalms in our worship together?

The Parish Book Group has continued to gather regularly during the lockdown, and will have a session on 27 September; it just might be a physical meeting, back in St Peter & St Paul's Church. At the time of writing we don't know what the set

book will be for that month. Get in touch with Jon Reynolds or John Whiteman to find out more.

John Whiteman
Tring Team



After Ten Years' of being Tower-Terrified, what did Tring's Teddies do in Lockdown?

"In the absence of a trip to France, Priscilla had a new pond in the garden for her teddies: here is Priscilla's beloved Teddy, Thelma (Red Top) and his friend Snuggly relaxing by the pond."

See this Autumn's FOTCH Newsletter to find out!

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Tweet of the month

The Great Crested Grebe is a local species and anyone who visits Tring Reservoirs any time of the year would be hard pushed to miss seeing this beautiful bird. Unfortunately, its very beauty was almost the cause of its extirpation in Britain in the 19th century. It became fashionable to use Great Crested Grebe feathers in the millinery and clothing trades as a fur substitute; one lady started a campaign against the use of Great Crested Grebe and Kittiwake in fur clothing and, together with another lady, formed the Society for the Protection of Birds, which eventually became The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds – probably the most significant conservation charity in Britain today. On a local scale the population of Great Crested Grebes was one of the reasons that Tring Reservoirs were made a National Nature Reserve in 1955.

The scientific name for Great Crested Grebe is Podiceps cristatus. Podicipedidae is the family name for all Grebes and comes from two Latin words: podicis, which means vent or anus, and ped, which means foot, a

combination which refers to the fact that Grebes have their feet towards the back of their bodies and close to their vent. So Podiceps is a combination and contraction of the two Latin words podicis and ped and cristatus is the Latin word for crested.

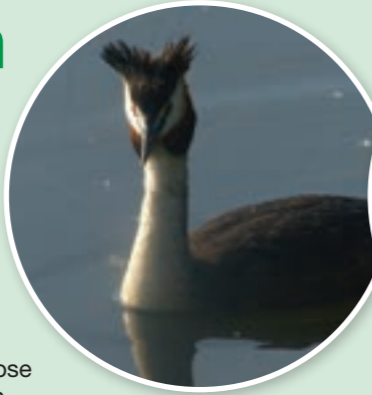
The placement of a grebe's legs and feet close to the vent means they are very awkward on land but good at moving on and under the water. Unlike ducks, grebes do not have webbed feet but have lobes instead. These lobes are small flaps on the side of their toes that fold in when toes are moved forward to minimise drag and extended out to maximise thrust to propel them through the water.

The Grebe family are also known for their elaborate courtship display. The first phase of the Great Crested Grebe's

courtship is for one bird to rear up almost vertically but with its head held down – this can only be done because the feet are set so far back on the bird's body. Various other moves in the courtship include both birds rearing up vertically, head shaking at each other, spreading their wings at each other and diving to collect weed from underwater and then both birds rearing up vertically holding the weed in their bills.

So here we have a beautiful, special bird, the death of which in the past resulted in an organisation that has done a lot of good over the years. I'll leave it to you to spot the parallels.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul



Golden Wedding bells

Congratulations to David and Joan Eeley who celebrated 50 years of marriage on 15 August! They were married at Alexander Road Congregational Church in Hemel Hempstead in 1970 and now worship at Akeman Street Baptist Church in Tring.

Joan and David met in the Christian Union when students at Hemel Hempstead Grammar School and continued to live in Hemel till 1992. They are blessed with a daughter - Kathryn (now married to Pete and living in Cambridge) and a son Mark (married to

Tammy and living in Cheddington) and have four grandchildren. 'We are so thankful to God for all his many, many blessings over all these years,' said Joan.



Closure threatens Bible Societies

'The financial fallout from the coronavirus pandemic has left dozens of Bible Societies around the world at risk of closure' according to the magazine Christian Today.

While we have been locked down in our homes, so has most of the world. Closure of bookshops has impacted the sale of Bibles worldwide, and closure of Churches has impacted vital fundraising work by churches.

In countries like Jordan, Burkina Faso and Egypt, the Bible Societies are one of the few places where people can buy a Bible, but in addition to the work of Bible translation, many run programmes to support vulnerable minority groups like street children, the blind and the illiterate.

Founded in 1804 by Christian campaigners including William Wilberforce, the Bible Society is now one of 150 in operation around the world today. Eighty-eight of them are now threatened with closure. The Bible Society in England is appealing for donations to save the most at-risk Societies such as Gambia, Sri Lanka and Costa Rica.

The Bible Society has survived two world wars and the 1918 flu pandemic; can it survive Covid-19? It needs our help.

In the presence of God

*Although I cannot see you, Lord, I feel your presence here:
The evening breeze upon my cheek
A light caress of happiness,
The darkness falls, a night bird calls,
I know your voice, I hear you speak,
I feel you standing near.*

*The sunset's peace that ends the day, a time that I like best,
A favourite time also for you:
In Eden's calm you offered balm,
A place to walk, a time to talk
In fragrant cool of evening dew,
A special time you blessed.*

*Your thoughts fall softly in my heart, your voice is in my ears;
Your gentle presence cloaks me round;
My strength renewed, I am imbued
With deep content for all you've sent;
I feel you, though I hear no sound,
I'm strong, I have no fears.*

Jenny Revel, St Peter & St Paul

Stephen Hearn
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Many happy memories

When we first met Canon Vincent Berry, the parish of Corpus Christi was in a state of uncertainty. We had no Parish priest, the previous two priests had died in situ, and we had endured a couple of years without our own Parish priest. These were difficult and trying times for our parish, but we survived, mainly due to the efforts of Wendy Hinds.

Our parish needed stability; we needed a leader; we needed a focal point for our parish. And the Good Lord sent us Canon Vincent. He guided us for twelve years, looking after our spiritual needs in his own gentle and caring way. Canon Vincent was the right man at the right time for Corpus Christi.

So many happy memories...

There was the Canon's beloved dog, Petroc. We were reminded of the Sunday 10.30am Mass when the new First Communion children were introduced to the parish. The Canon and Wendy had, as usual, locked Petroc in the sacristy... Picture the scene: Wendy and the Canon on the altar, kneeling, swinging the incense, and then the gentle ripple of children giggling. Yes, Petroc had got out of the sacristy and had joined them on the altar. Such a holy dog, sadly missed but never forgotten.

And who could forget Midsomer Murders? You know, my sister-in-law who

lives in Dallas, Texas, saw it on TV in the USA a few weeks ago, and recognised the Church. Canon Vincent arranged for Midsomer Murders to use the Church and the presbytery: £1000 per day if I'm not mistaken! Not bad work if you can get it. And if you haven't seen the programme, the priest gets murdered in Canon Vincent's chair in the front room of the presbytery. And yes, there for the whole wide world to see, under the front window, the paint is peeling from the radiator. Truly authentic. A real Parish Priest's front room.

Canon Vincent most memorably led the project to build the new office extension, using all his knowledge and experience, ensuring the extension was done with great sympathy and skill such that the extension looks like it has always been part of our beautiful Church, as if it's always been there; and, of course, the beautiful cross hanging above the altar, his very kind gift to the parish. His memory will live on for years.

Canon Vincent retired to the local village of Weston Turville. He occasionally helped out by saying Mass at the weekends when our current priest was away; he kept in touch with many parishioners, and was regularly seen at social gatherings like the Quiz Nights. He was always up for a party and enjoyed

going to concerts and recitals, as seen here when he met Lesley Garrett after a wonderful concert at the Church of Christ the Cornerstone in Milton Keynes.



I'm not sure Canon Vincent really knew much about Tring when he first came, but he grew to love the place and the people, so much so that he told everyone he would be buried in Tring Cemetery. As Vincent's surviving sister Anne said, 'It is comforting to know that parishioners will be able to visit Vincent for a chat – or maybe a moan! He will always listen'.

On behalf of the whole parish, Canon Vincent: thank you for being our Parish priest. Thank you for everything you have done for us. We will never forget you. Rest in peace.

**Margaret Donnelly & Paul Wright
Corpus Christi**

Memories of Canon Vincent Berry

Almost a month ago I was asked to jot down some of my memories of Canon Vincent Berry ('Canon' for short). In all honesty, I did not know where to start. I asked myself 'Who is the Canon?' Put simply, I came up with the following conclusion: the Canon is one of the most kind-hearted individuals that inspired me in faith, intellectually, and in what it means to be a 'good' human being; but most of all, he was a loyal friend who, with time, became like family.

My friendship with the Canon started in September 2013 when I was appointed as Corpus Christi's Student Youth Worker. I was in the process of moving to Tring and, as Canon was going on holiday, he offered for me to stay in his house until December. Straight away I knew that the Canon was a very generous man, but I did not know how close our bond would become.

My first memorable interaction with Canon was an email, where I referred to

him as 'Cannon Vincent'; he was quick to inform me, 'I do not go BOOM: instead a Canon of the Church is spelled with 1 n'. This wonderful yet sweet interaction was the base of our friendship, one of fun, laughter and a smudge of nerdiness! We quickly grew close and thoroughly enjoyed spending time together. When back from his trip, he was soon to offer for me to stay with him for the three years I was at university, as it was clear we got on so well.

I will never forget each and every day when I would walk in at 5.15pm and he would always have a huge smile on his face and remind me, 'It's Pointless time' (a TV quiz show). I quickly learned the Canon was an extremely intelligent man. On almost any TV quiz show he would more likely than not get the answer within seconds. I started to test him on his knowledge, very often consulting him on my theology degree. Of course, he could almost always give me quick

facts and put me in the direction of some theologian or another! I would always love the days he would not know something. He would always have to stop whatever he was doing and research until he could fully answer my question!

The Canon was always so wonderful with the young people we worked with. For every single Youth Club we ran, he would always be sure to make an appearance, even if briefly. The young people always looked forward to this and really looked up to him as someone of whom they could ask any theology question. The Canon was always incredibly skilled at creating real and true community, empowering the community as a whole to thrive under his leadership.

Whenever I think of the Canon to this day, my heart fills with joyful memories of a good, honest man, that I know is sitting in heaven, looking down on us all. RIP Vincent, my friend.

Dan Marsh, formerly Corpus Christi

In memory of Canon Vincent Berry

The Canon was born on 25 September 1937. He was blessed with four sisters and was educated at St Paul's Primary School, Enfield.

He was accepted as a candidate for the priesthood in September 1956 and went to Allen Hall, St Edmund's College in Ware, Hertfordshire. On 24 May 1962 he was ordained to the priesthood at Westminster Cathedral. Father Vincent celebrated his first Mass at St Paul's, Wood Green, the following day. His first appointment was to the parish of Hounslow as Assistant Priest, from 1962-68. He then went to work with the Crusade of Rescue, alongside Canon Philip Harvey and Canon John McDonald, where he remained until 1970.

This was followed by two years as a member of the Diocesan Mission Team, based in Poplar and assisting with parish renewal across the Diocese, helping to implement the teaching and practice of Vatican II to which he was deeply committed.

In 1972 Father Vincent was appointed Assistant Priest at South Harrow and Northolt, and in 1976 was appointed Parish Priest. He remained until 1986 when he was appointed Vicar General. During his years as Vicar General he lived at Clergy House, and assisted in the Cathedral.

In 1990 Father Vincent was appointed a Canon of the Metropolitan Chapter of Westminster. In 1990 he took up his appointment as Parish Priest at Hendon where he served until 1997 when he was appointed Parish Priest at St Mary's, Chelsea.

Canon Vincent left Chelsea in 2006 to take up his next and final appointment as Parish Priest at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Tring, where he remained until October 2017. It's clear that when Canon Vincent joined Corpus Christi, the Parish needed a character of Canon Vincent Berry's standing and he created a wonderful caring community building up the congregation and Parish accordingly.

Whilst in Tring Canon Vincent oversaw building and refurbishment projects, had a gift of bringing people together for the good of the parish and gifted the church with the beautiful cross suspended above the altar.

On Sunday 24 September 2017,



The Cardinal presided at the Mass of Thanksgiving in Tring which was followed by a party. Canon Vincent then went to live in his own home in Weston Turville, near Aylesbury, during his retirement.

Canon Vincent's life as a priest for fifty-eight years was a mirror image of his personality away from the church: calm, dignified and a listener to all around him. Canon Vincent had a skill of bringing others together, was excellent with the children and younger generations in the Parish, had compassion for everyone. He enjoyed eating out, visiting family and taking trips to visit family and friends. He also had a passion for sport – be it football, cricket or rugby. On his last visit to

family in Australia, he went along and watched England play cricket at the MCG in Melbourne. His last outing was at Twickenham on 23 February this year to watch England beat Ireland 24-12 in the Six Nations. I shall remember Canon Vincent from that day with a big smile and a glass of Champagne in hand. It was his first ever visit to Twickenham.

Canon Vincent dealt with his prognosis with the very same dignity as he faced all of life's hurdles. He never complained or fussed, was the perfect patient, was always grateful for any help he received and was stoical to the very end. Canon Vincent sadly passed away on Sunday 14 June 2020 on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Feargal Tierney, Corpus Christi



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Useful contacts

TRING TEAM PARISH

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

School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

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

School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

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

Curate

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

Diocesan Lay Minister

Mike Watkin
 01442 890407

Parish Co-ordinators

Roy Hargreaves
 01442 823624
roy.hargreaves@btinternet.com

John Whiteman

01442 826314
john@tringteamparish.org.uk

Church Wardens

Chris Hoare (Tring)
 01442 822915

Ian Matthews (Tring)

01442 823327

Jane Brown (Aldbury)

01442 851396

Ray Willmore (Aldbury)

01442 825723

Christine Rutter (Puttenham)

01296 668337

Ken Martin (Wilstone)
 01442 822894

Rev Jane Banister
 (Long Marston)
 01442 822170

Tring Team Administration

Administrator
 Trish Dowden
admin@tringteamparish.org.uk

Janet Goodyer

pewsheets@tringteamparish.org.uk

Hall Bookings

Janet Goodyer
 01442 824929
jjgoody@ntlworld.com
tringparishhall@hotmail.com

Hall Secretary

Barbara Ancombe
 01442 828325
Bandb33@talktalk.net

Safeguarding

Jon Reynolds
 07712 134370
safeguarding@tringteamparish.org.uk

ST MARTHA'S METHODIST CHURCH

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

Senior Steward

Rosemary Berdinner
 01442 822305

AKEMAN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

Minister
 Rev David Williams
 01442 827881

Administrator

Emma Nash
 01442 827881

CORPUS CHRISTI ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Parish Priest
 Father David Burke
 01442 863845
davidburke@rcdow.org.uk
www.rcdow.org.uk/tring

HIGH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Assistant Minister

Kevin Rogers
km_rogers@outlook.com

Administration/facilities hire

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COMMENT

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

Distribution

Barbara Ancombe
 01442 828325
bandb33@talktalk.net

Treasurer

Chris Hoare
 01442 822915

Advertising

Sue Mayhew
 0845 8681333

Design

Kev Holt, Ginger Promo

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

Crossword puzzle answers From page 10

ACROSS

6. PERPENDICULAR
 8. REVERED
 11. PLEAD
 12. RELEASE
 13. TRY
 15. ASPIC
 16. DEFAULT
 17. ADDED
 18. WED
 19. SOOTHED
 22. HELPS
 23. ANGELS
 26. HERTFORDSHIRE

DOWN

1. HERE
 2. KNEEL
 3. BID
 4. FULLEST
 5. PARADISE
 7. PEER
 9. REREDOS
 10. DEPARTS
 11. PSALTER
 14. REDEEMER
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 20. HERDS
 21. DASH
 24. HARP
 25. TOP



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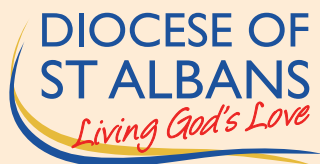
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