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Editorial



April this year brings with it the end of Lent, the Good Friday Walk of Witness on Friday 10 April at 11.00am outside St Martha's Church (COVID-19 lock-down permitting) and Easter Sunday on 12 April (which happens also to be our Ruby Wedding Anniversary - nothing like as impressive

as the Tapsons though: see page 4!).

I came across a new Christian song in February this year by Hillsong called 'So Will I'. Maybe you already know it? I find the words very moving, both as a worship song but also for the reference to why Jesus died on a cross for us. If you have the facility to listen to it on YouTube, you will hear that when the singer reaches the words 'And as You speak / A hundred billion failures disappear / Where You lost Your life so I could find it here... /' the audience

(congregation) all cheer. I love it. Usually I am a traditionalist where hymns and Christian songs are concerned but this one has words that both uplift the soul and speak biblical truths. The word sin may not be used and there is no mention of the blood of the lamb in this song... but how well it speaks to us as we approach Good Friday - and the triumph of Easter Day: 'If you left the grave behind you so will I.'

The Editor

Our journey through Lent



As we continue our journey through Lent, Easter draws ever closer.

I wonder what Easter will mean to you this year? Which of the days will be more important: the sacrifice and struggle of Good Friday or the shock and joy and resurrection of Easter Day?

Spring is often our dominant image when we think of Easter - daffodils, tulips, eggs, chicks all represent new life and the joy and potential of what can be; important messages as we remember the new life that God offers to each one of us and the joy that that can bring. I wonder though, do those images sometimes lull us into a false sense of comfort and ease? Are we at risk of losing the sense of fear and shock and bewilderment that are also connected with Easter and with new starts?

In today's world, there are few people who have lived all their lives in one place. Most of us have moved to new towns or cities, even if we have returned to a place later in life. I have called eight towns 'home' over the years and suspect that there will be more to come as well. Each move has been prayed about and chosen and has held the promise of good things to come, but each move has also held sadness and struggle. In the end it was always the right thing to do and brought joy and growth, but that doesn't mean that it was easy.

The struggle of Good Friday is clearly seen on the cross, but sometimes we gloss over the struggle and bewilderment of Easter Day. In Mark's Gospel, if we finish the Gospel at verse 8, which many

commentators believe is the original ending, we are never told of any of the resurrection appearances, instead we are told that the women saw a young man dressed in a white robe and were told that Jesus had been raised and to go and tell the disciples. But instead of doing that they 'fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.' In Luke's Gospel the disciples are 'startled and terrified' when Jesus appeared amongst them and Jesus has to prove that he is not a ghost. In Matthew's Gospel the guards became like dead men because of fear of the angel who rolled back the stone; and in John's Gospel Thomas refuses to believe that Jesus could be alive and Peter has to face what he did when he denied Jesus when he is asked by Jesus, 'do you love me?'. In each of the Gospels there is an element of fear and struggle associated with the Resurrection, as well as the joy that we usually associate with Easter Day.

For me, that reminder of the fear and struggle that can be associated with new starts is a helpful image. In the book I'm reading at the moment the disabled writer tells of his arrival at university after years of study and struggles for independence and yet, as his parents leave him, he cries. New starts are not always easy; it can be hard to say goodbye to people and things that we have valued as we move into the unknown, not always certain whether we have made the right decision or what the future might hold. In those situations, the Easter story brings hope as we see the victory, the new life, the freedom that came as a result of the Resurrection. And as we look on into the early life of the church, we see

how the church grew as Jesus' disciples committed themselves to spreading the Gospel and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, were enabled to help others also to make a new start, a new start that brought hope, freedom and new life.

The Easter message is one of joy and celebration, but new starts are not always easy: they can challenge and confuse and sometimes even scare us. Perhaps that's why we need the forty days of Lent to get ready?

As we celebrate Easter this year, I pray that you can celebrate the hope that it offers to each one of us, know the joy that God gives and that you are able to grasp the gift of new life that God offers to each of us. It's not always easy, but it is worth it.

Rachael Hawkins
St Martha's Methodist Church

Welcome to the team!

I have been responsible for Comment distribution for the past six years but will shortly be leaving Tring for a new home near Bournemouth.



Barbara Anscombe has volunteered to take on this responsibility from now on for which she has my heartfelt thanks. Please come to her for any new subscriptions and changes of address on 01442 828325 or bandb33@talktalk.net.

David Whiting, St Peter & St Paul

Amazing men and women



The Church of England does not canonise new saints in the way that the Roman Catholic Church does, but it does add new heroes, as they are called, to be commemorated in our yearly calendar. The idea is that these are inspirational Christians, whose influence and gifts have stood the test of time. What is notable is how these saints include women and men, and come from all over the world.

Two of the newer saints in the calendar for April raise some very interesting issues for the church. 28 April is Peter Chanel, from the Roman Catholic calendar of saints, who was a missionary in the South Pacific and was martyred in 1841. He was born in Cras in France, and, after ordination, joined the Marist missionary congregation in 1831. In 1836, he was sent to the islands of the South Pacific to preach the faith. He and his companions brought medicines as well as the gospel and were much loved and respected. He lived on the island of Futuna in the Fiji group, and the chief's son there asked for baptism. This so infuriated the chief that he dispatched a group of warriors to murder Peter on 28 April 1841. Within a year the whole island

was Christian. He is regarded as the patron saint of Oceania.

As a form of penitence, a special action song and dance known as the eke, was created by the people of Futuna shortly after Chanel's death. The dance is still performed in Tonga.

On 30 April, we commemorate Pandita Mary Ramabai. She was born in 1858, the daughter of a Sanskrit scholar who believed in the education of women. She converted to Christianity, but remained loyal to many aspects of her Hindu background, pioneering an Indian vision of the faith. She became well known as a lecturer on social questions, becoming the first woman to be awarded the title 'Pandita'. She spent many years working for the education of women and orphans, founding schools and homes. She also translated the Bible into her mother tongue, Marathi, from the original Hebrew and Greek. Personally, she lived in great simplicity and was a prominent opponent of the caste system and child marriage. She died on 30 April 1922.

For me, there are some interesting issues raised by these two saints. One is that their practical work is vital to their faith and to how they are remembered. Peter Chanel was a parish priest in France before he went abroad, and it was his particular care for the sick that was noted and much valued there as in the islands. Pandita Ramabai worked

all her life to improve conditions for women, and the Mission that she set up in Mukti still provides housing, education and vocational training for many needy groups.

The more difficult issue is that of those missionaries who came from a different country. Could they achieve the same as indigenous Christians, or would they be viewed in a different way? And does each country, each culture, need to develop its own version of Christianity, one that holds true to the central tenets, but still reflects more of local life? It is so difficult to work out, not least as the spread of the Christian faith is inextricably tied up with imperialism.

I also struggle with the commemoration of some saints as martyrs. It shows great courage on their part, although I don't think Peter Chanel had a choice, but it also seems to negate all the work done in their lifetime. It is his care for the community that matters more than his death, surely? It is very encouraging however, that Pandita Ramabai is in the calendar, and not for reasons of political correctness. We need to have a variety of Christian role models, ones that reflect our church as it is, and not simply those in power.

The saints are there to encourage us, to sustain us, and to open our eyes. We celebrate their gifts and their variety.

Jane Banister, Tring Team

Congratulations to the Tapsons!

Ted and Pat Tapson celebrate their Platinum wedding anniversary on 1 April. Platinum is precious, strong, enduring and doesn't tarnish, which well represents a relationship that has lasted 70 years.

Pat met Ted, a Petty Officer in the Navy, at a party on her 21st birthday while he was on demob leave. They married on 1 April 1950 in St John's Church, Wembley. This little Church was not Pat's Parish Church but was prettier,

so she gave her aunt's address to be allowed to marry there. Pat's mother made her long, white wedding dress and she had two bridesmaids, her best friend and her sister-in-law; Ted wore his grey demob suit. They had a reception for thirty-five people afterwards and Pat's father paid 10s 6d per head for the food while Ted's parents paid for the drink.

Pat and Ted had a week in Weston-Super-Mare for their honeymoon.

The Editor



Exploring Matthew's Passion narrative



In Advent I wrote an article introducing Matthew's Gospel.

In many of our churches we will be reading our way through Matthew this year. On Palm Sunday, 5 April, it

is traditional to read the whole passion narrative from one of the Gospels and this year it will be Matthew's account. The word Passion means suffering and the Passion narratives tell the story of Jesus's last days on earth. The theologian Stanton writes 'The missionary preaching and worship of the earliest Christian communities focussed on the death and resurrection of Jesus... So it is reasonable to suppose that at their celebrations of the Last Supper, the first followers of Jesus recounted with particular care the events of the last days of Jesus in Jerusalem.'

You might remember from the Advent article that Matthew bases his Gospel account on the one he received from Mark. To Mark's account he adds some material shared with Luke and also some important blocks of teaching and sayings of Jesus. However, his Passion account is almost identical to Mark's. A brief read wouldn't spot many differences. A closer inspection enables us to see some of Matthew's themes.

The correct interpretation of the law

This is a theme throughout Matthew's Gospel. We see it again as Jesus enters Jerusalem. In Mark's Gospel Jesus enters Jerusalem, goes back to Bethany for the night, and then goes to the Temple. In Matthew the entrance into Jerusalem and the overturning of the tables in the Temple is one single act. It gives it a greater effect. Earlier in his Gospel, Matthew has Jesus arguing with the Pharisees about the Sabbath. Jesus tells them that Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, and that he is greater than the temple. The first encounter was in a cornfield. Now Jesus is standing in the temple overturning the tables. In Matthew's Gospel the Son of Man, the Lord of the Sabbath, is the only one who can restore holiness to the heart of the temple and get rid of the religious rules and regulations. He has a few verses which are unique to his Gospel (21:4-17). The blind and the lame who had been

excluded from the Temple come to be healed.

The way of righteousness

For Matthew, righteousness is the right conduct demanded by God of his disciples and it is no surprise that he continues this theme in the Passion narratives. However, Matthew's description of the disciples is ambivalent here. They swing between obedience and disobedience. They swear allegiance to Jesus, but they will flee. Outside the inner circle is the crowd. We assume many in the crowd will have heard the sermon on the mount but still they cry out 'crucify him'. They betray Jesus because they, like us, stand far off. Matthew wants us to come closer, to be obedient to God. However, despite Israel betraying the gift of the law, and despite us staying far off and the disciples betraying him, Jesus will not abandon us. He will be with us until the end of the age.

Theology of the Eucharist

Matthew makes a small but important alteration to Mark's account of the Last Supper. He expounds the words of Jesus and at the giving of the cup adds the phrase, 'for the forgiveness of sins'. Matthew started his Gospel explaining the meaning of the name Jesus (salvation) and reminds us that the central meaning of the Passion is freedom from sin. This gives to our understanding of the Eucharist a strong emphasis of salvation. It is interesting to note that Paul and Luke emphasise instead a new covenant. The earliest written text of the Last Supper is found in 1 Corinthians, written down fifteen to twenty years before Mark's Gospel. In this Paul says,

'This cup is my blood, my new covenant with you. Each time you drink this cup, remember me'.

Conflict with the religious leaders

One of the difficulties for the modern reader in reading Matthew is his strong condemnation of the Jewish religious leaders which has been translated into anti-semitism. The Pontius Pilate of history was a fairly barbaric man but Matthew appears to portray him sympathetically and lessen his role in the crucifixion. He even adds the story of Pilate's wife only found in Matthew's Gospel. In the same way, at the moment of Jesus' death, the (Gentile) centurion recognises that Jesus was truly the son of God. We, the readers, have known this right from the beginning of the Gospel. The disciples have struggled to come to terms with it. The religious authorities reject it. By the time Matthew is writing, the whole people of Israel have rejected it. Instead the church will be spread in the Gentile world.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team



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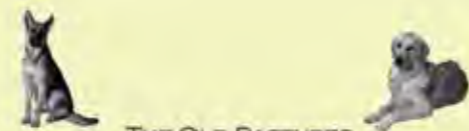
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The undated picture



Most people in Tring know The Victoria Hall in Akeman Street. A lot of those will have climbed the stairs to attend a function in the big upstairs hall. I did that a year or so ago, and was interested in the four large black and white photographs on the stair wall taken years ago. Photos like that always attract me, and take me back to my youth. But on this occasion it was the last, and only undated one, that caught my attention.

was brought up in the Salvation Army, became a Junior Bandsman around the age of 10, and in due course a fully-fledged musician with them.

My two younger brothers, Dennis and David, followed a similar path and in due course we all played there. I graduated from cornet, to tenor horn and eventually euphonium, playing second euphonium to the Corps Sergeant Major, Les Wright on first euphonium. I remember Dennis playing cornet and David on tenor horn. Then Dennis became Deputy Band Master, David moved to solo horn and I became solo euphonium. Les Wright had relinquished the euphonium to me so that he could play bass, as they

bandmaster after some time, and did that until they disbanded, when he went to play in the Berkhamsted and Boxmoor Silver Band, often called the St Peter's Band because they practised in the hall next to St Peter's Church, which was a contesting band. I can't remember whether they actually won anything.

My father was a hard taskmaster when I was learning to play these instruments. If a note was wrong, he would ask where that note had come in. I would say 'which note?' and had

to admit I had no idea. His

favourite phrase then

was 'Look, play it

as it's written, not

as you think it's

written'. And he

often reduced

me to tears,

because here

I was, a lad of

8, 9, 10 and the

eldest, and my

mother would tell

him to stop getting

on at me. My father

would turn around

and say 'He'll never

make a musician

while he's got a hole

between his ears';

but one morning I

woke up and it all

seemed to come

together.

I've been playing

ever since. Even

though I left the

Salvation Army

many years ago, I could still practise with them occasionally. In later years some corps relaxed their rules and turned their bands into 'worship bands' which allowed non-members to play, and I have done that on occasion as well. And when Tring Salvation Army disbanded I bought my tenor horn from them. These days most of my playing is done at home – I have found the best place to play is the landing, where the acoustics are better than anywhere else. So if you happen to pass our house one day and hear some hymn tunes, old melodies or songs from musicals, in no particular order, being played with the occasional wrong note, you'll know I'm on the landing! And I hope to go on doing so for some time to come.

Brian Impey, St Peter & St Paul



It was a photo of Tring British Legion Band playing in front of the War Memorial. After some research involving Facebook (where would we be without it?) and the knowledgeable Mike Bass, it was ascertained that it had appeared in The Times on Monday 8 November 1954; and the amazing thing for me was that the conductor, facing the camera, was my father.

We were always a musical family. My paternal grandfather was a band sergeant in Tring Salvation Army, and my father was a Junior Bandsman when he was 14 but, as he got older, he drifted away. In due course he joined the British Army and spent time with the Royal Army Service Corps in Egypt. However, he taught me to play the cornet, aged 8. Due to my grandfather's influence, I

were a bit short on people. (It was up to the bandmaster to decide who played what.) Dennis also learnt to play the piano – being taught by Ann Wright (nee Gascoigne), who was the pianist for the Salvation Army Songsters. My mother, on the other hand, never played an instrument, but was a good singer who belonged to the Women's Home League (equivalent to the Mothers' Union).

Occasionally, Wednesday afternoons even saw Dad and his three boys performing for the Good Companions in the Salvation Army Hall.

By then my father was involved with the British Legion and sometimes I would go down to The Victoria Hall on a Tuesday evening and listen to them practising in the downstairs room, which was their band room. He became their

A new altar frontal for Tring Parish Church



What it's about

About four years ago the town of Tring celebrated its 700 years of being a charter market town. At that time Revd Huw Bellis suggested the idea of a new contemporary altar frontal for the Lady Chapel to mark the occasion. Although we were enthusiastic to get this done, the planning of this got off to a slow start and the big Poppy Project for 2018 took a lot of our time and energy, but we have been quietly getting on with design and permissions necessary, which have now been completed.

We have had a traditional frontal in the Lady Chapel for quite a long time now and we wanted to create a contemporary frontal to use instead. The new frontal will be used for most of the year, for about forty weeks, but at Christmas and Easter we remove the frontal and place the Nativity set and Easter Garden in the space behind.

Tree of life

We considered a number of themes and have settled on a design of our own of a tree of life. It will include the Church's seasonal colours of green, blue, gold, white, red and purple, among other colours.

There will be a piece of vine twisting round the trunk with grapes and have some wheat with poppies in the corners to symbolise the bread and wine. We were delighted when Jenny Scholes offered to pay for this, anonymously at first, but since she died last August, her son Andrew wants it made and given in memory of her. Jenny was a keen stitcher and delighted others with her work of birthday and Christmas cards. There will be lots of interest and symbolism, and we hope it will delight and inspire all ages,



both our own congregation and our many visitors. Before Jenny died, she saw the design and materials being considered and was pleased with the concept and the vision of how it will be achieved. It had her blessing!

How you can help

The materials we will be using are mainly batiks with embellishments and will be sewn with some relief rather than flat on the background. A lot of it will be appliqued on to the background after it is constructed. We need interested and competent people in the town to help with the construction, in particular with pieces like leaves that can be made at home and attached later. There will be a variety of items needed, some using more basic skills, some more complex. And you don't need to be a member of our church – or any church! If you're interested in joining the team or want more information, please contact me on 01442 824929 or jjgoody@ntlworld.com.

Janet Goodyer
St Peter & St Paul



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The Confirmation that nearly didn't happen!

My Confirmation day happened getting on for eighty years ago but I still remember it well – and the events that led up to it.

The date was 19 September 1943, the place Christ Church, Collier's Wood. As you may well realise, this was during the second world war, and earlier in the year when I had my 18th birthday, I decided I wanted to volunteer to serve in the war, to do my bit for the country and the war effort. So, having decided that the NAAFI (the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) was the service I wanted to apply for, I went for my interview at the headquarters opposite the Imperial War Museum. They accepted me and I was told I would get my posting, but it could be anywhere that they needed me.

At the time I was going to Confirmation classes at St Barnabas, Mitcham, with the service fixed for 19 September at Colliers Wood. I was called up on 23 August starting my duties at Stoutham Barracks near Guildford. In those days, there was no expectation of having time off to suit: you were allocated leave when the NAAFI decided, and certainly not when you've only just started the job! So, with trepidation, my first question to the woman in charge was: could I have

a weekend off? She asked me why I needed it, so I told her I had been going to Confirmation classes and that was the date of the service. Luckily for me she obliged, and I was given the weekend off.

I remember the day well. I remember walking up the Church aisle with another girl towards the Bishop of London. I knelt before him and I

remember his hands on my head as he confirmed me. A special day!

Beth Scraggs, St Peter & St Paul



52nd Berkhamsted Walk

Join in the 52nd Berkhamsted Walk on Sunday 10th May 2020 to raise funds for The Children's Society. The walk is Berkhamsted's longest-standing sponsored walk and since 1968 has raised over £300,000.

The money raised is given to The Children's Society, who work tirelessly



on projects to help children of this country facing neglect and abuse, with nowhere else to turn. All walks this year start from Kitchener's Fields, Castle Hill, Berkhamsted HP4 1HE by the Cricket Club.

There is an 18-mile walk for the adventurous, a 12-mile Bluebell walk and a family friendly 6-mile walk. The 6-mile walk includes a nature quiz to keep the



youngsters entertained.

Find out how you can participate at www.berkhamstedwalk.com.

To find out more about The Children's Society's work, take a look at www.childrensociety.org.uk.

Vicki Blake
Berkhamsted Committee for
The Children's Society

Tevey - my inspiration



Tevey is a dairyman, the invention of author Sholem Aleichem (real name Solomon Naumovich Rabinovich) who wrote a series of short stories

around 1894. In these stories Tevey, a Jew in the Ukraine, tells Sholem about his life and his family. Sholem Aleichem is the Hebrew for 'May Peace be upon you' the traditional Hebrew and Yiddish greeting.

The stories of Tevey were turned into several plays, and most famously into the film and musical 'Fiddler on the Roof'. I have performed in 'Fiddler on the Roof' on stage twice and seen the film several times. I have also read several of the short stories. I have even used clips of the 'Fiddler on the Roof' film during sermons! So I am obviously very taken with Tevey.

Tevey links very closely to my Celtic Worship background (I am an Associate Member of the Iona Community) which may seem strange. How does a Yiddish milkman link to Celtic saints? He also links to my membership of a Benedictine Monastic Community – Turvey Abbey, where I am an oblate. The secret lies in Tevey's conversations.

In the musical and the stories, Tevey is in conversation with God all day long. Sometimes he is grateful, sometimes he

takes God to task for not helping him properly, but he has this conversation all through the day. Tevey always talked as though God was next to him, listening and taking part in the conversation.

Some quotes from Tevey's words to God:

'Dear God. Was that necessary? Did you have to make my horse lame just before the Sabbath? That wasn't nice. It's enough you pick on me. Bless me with five daughters, a life of poverty, that's all right. But what have you got against my horse? Sometimes I wonder, when it gets too quiet up there, if You are thinking, "What kind of mischief can I play on My friend Tevey?"'

'I know, I know. We are Your chosen people. But, once in a while, can't You choose someone else?'

'Am I bothering You too much? I'm sorry. As the good book says... aaahh, why should I tell You what the Good Book says?'

'As the Good Book says, "Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed." In other words, send us the cure. We've got the sickness already. Well, I'm not really complaining. After all, with your help, I'm starving to death. Oh, dear Lord! You made many, many poor people. I realise, of course, it's no shame to be poor. But it's no great honour either. So what would have been so terrible if I had a small fortune?'

Tevey sees God as there all the time, part of his daily life, right beside him to

be talked at. And this is the same point of view held by the Celtic saints. Celtic worship from the early days is full of prayers just about daily life, everyday tasks. An ancient Celtic prayer for milking: Bless, O God, my little cow, / Bless, O God, my desire; / Bless Thou my partnership / And the milking of my hands, O God. / Bless, O God, each teat, / Bless, O God, each finger; Bless thou each drop / That goes into my pitcher, O God!

Benedictines believe that a nun or monk walks constantly with God, and that God is always there beside them when they do their daily tasks. St Benedict says, 'We believe that God is present everywhere.'

'Benedict treated the human body and human work as fundamental parts for a holy life. In his view, work was not only dignified, but conducive to holiness. Prayer is more likely to take root in our lives when it is anchored in practical work.' Benedictine University, Illinois.

So I believe that Tevey, the Celtic saints and St Benedict are all saying the same thing. God is with you in everyday life, all the time, beside you. He is concerned in all that you do – even the small things. So perhaps we should be like Tevey and have a chat sometimes!

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

Mental health and the gospel



Many of you may have been forced to learn Boyle's Law in O Level or GCSE classes in Chemistry at school. Robert Boyle, after which the law is named,

was born in Ireland, the son of the First Earl of Cork but lived for most of his life in England. Boyle's law states that the pressure of a given mass of an ideal gas is inversely proportional to its volume at a constant temperature; or to put it in more user-friendly language, the pressure of a gas tends to increase as the volume of the container decreases. When I did A Level Chemistry, I was told ideal gases don't exist and it is rather more complicated. Don't worry; you will not be tested on this.

Every year there is a Boyle Lecture organised by the International Society for Science and Religion and held in St Mary-le-Bow, a Church about 300 yards to the east of St Paul's Cathedral. This is the famous church of 'the Great Bell of Bow' of the children's nursery rhyme and within the sound of which all true Cockneys are born.

This year's lecture was given by Professor Christopher Cook of the University of Durham. He first trained as a doctor at St George's Hospital in London and then did post graduate work in Psychiatry. Before going to Durham, he was Professor of the Psychiatry of Alcohol Misuse at the University of Kent, where he trained for the priesthood (I don't think the two were connected...) being ordained priest in Canterbury Cathedral in 2001. Along with four degrees in Science, he has a Masters and a PhD in Theology, so he is very well

qualified to talk on mental health and the gospel.

This was one of the most interesting Boyle's lectures I have attended. It was also apparently the first of the 193 lectures held over the last 329 years given by a qualified medic, which is all the more surprising as Boyle had a medical degree himself. Prof. Cook said that the importance of the subject was obvious and 'mental health problems challenge ourselves as human beings and our relationships with one another and with God'. He asked if a person says he has heard a voice from God, is that person having a profound spiritual experience or are they suffering from schizophrenia?

Prof. Cook imagined a church member, Agnes, who becomes seriously depressed. Fortunately, she receives medical help but unlike a person who goes into hospital for surgery, she does not receive many visits and few flowers or cards, because people in church, as in society generally, do not know how to deal with mental illness. Life in her church continues as usual, but Agnes is excluded from this. If she is lucky, she gets a visit from a mental health chaplain, but the expectation is that the doctors will make her better and theology has nothing to do with it. Prof. Cook admitted he was caricaturing but said 'Mental Health and Christian Salvation are in different compartments of life, separated by a deep and unfathomable chasm. Doctors deal with the former; clergy deal with the latter. The former can be addressed through science; the latter is addressed by theology, spirituality and biblical studies.' Prof Cook pointed out that in some Charismatic and Pentecostal churches (not all) severe depression may be viewed as purely a spiritual matter

without need of medical intervention. He regarded this as bad as the other position with 'a great big ugly ditch' between the two forms of understanding.

In recent years there has been a change said Prof. Cook. In 2011 the Royal College of Psychiatrists adopted a position statement 'Recommendations for Psychiatrists on Spirituality and Religion' in which the importance of sensitively addressing spiritual and religious needs in clinical practice was affirmed. In 2015 a similar policy document was approved by the World Psychiatric Association. These documents came about after an 'explosion of scientific research interest in the ways in which spirituality and religion impact upon mental health'.

Prof. Cook said that generally, with some exceptions, spirituality and religion seem to be good for human wellbeing. 'People who belong to faith communities are less likely to suffer from common mental health disorders and tend to have better outcomes following treatment when they do. In some cases, spiritual and religious interventions specifically benefit recovery. Prof. Cook spent the rest of the lecture unpacking this theme, looking as he did at Jesus' teaching on worry in the Sermon on the Mount which he summarised as 'Don't worry: pray'.

A response was given by the Revd Prof. Fraser Watts, a former clinical psychiatrist and Director of the Cambridge Institute for Applied Psychology and Religion. Dr Watts agreed with the main speaker, commended his work and raised the issue of the potential dangers of religion for people with obsessive personalities.

The whole evening was stimulating and well worth the train fair into London.

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team



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Running the London Marathon

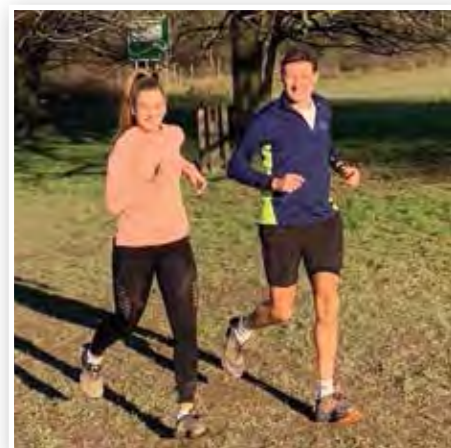
I am a Tring resident and a trustee director of the Ridgeway Learning Partnership, and on Sunday 26 April 2020, I will be running the London Marathon with my teenage daughter Lottie, to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support.

What motivates a 50-year old man to start running? Why attempt a marathon? Why did I choose Macmillan?

Parkrun addiction

I've always enjoyed being active and being in the great outdoors, especially walking, cycling and skiing. I used to run occasionally, as a way to relax and unwind, but like so many other people, I can properly trace my love of regular running to Parkrun.

Parkrun is a collection of free weekly 5km timed runs that take place every Saturday morning at over 1,400 locations in twenty-two countries across the world. Parkrun started in 2004 and is now a global phenomenon. Over 6 million individual runners have completed a Parkrun.



Tring Parkrun had been going for over a year when a chap in the office (Richard – thank you!) kept telling me about this great Saturday morning event I was missing.

Lottie and I discovered Parkrun on a cold, wet February morning back in 2016. I can't remember what finally made us take the plunge but we dragged ourselves around a very muddy, hilly course in over thirty-five minutes, swearing never to return.

In Steve Redgrave fashion, it took four months – but we returned. By now, the ground was somewhat firmer and we managed to complete the course in a slightly more respectable time. And so the addiction started. There is simply no

better way to start the weekend than a 5k run in the fresh air, whatever the weather, and then you're all set for whatever the weekend holds in store, energised yet relaxed, having already done your exercise for the weekend and ready to eat, drink and be merry.

At the time of writing, I have completed 122 Parkruns, mostly in Tring Park but fifteen elsewhere. The highlight was my 100th parkrun last year, when I dragged the family along to see me finally beat my PB (personal best), from over two years before, by one whole second! What progress! What a relief!

Why a marathon?

'Everyone has a book in them', so the saying goes. More recently, I've heard the phrase expressed as 'everyone has a marathon in them'. Well, possibly not everyone. For them, it really is about writing a book, making a film, or perhaps something else. However, for me, running a very long way in a straight line without stopping seemed just the thing, and a good match for my undeveloped artistic, creative and writing skills.

As I turned 50 and looked at my Bucket List, running a marathon seemed like one item that would be best tackled sooner rather than later. I try to live life believing 'it's better to regret something you have done, than something you haven't done'. Therefore, 2020 was the year for a marathon; time to stop procrastinating; time to stop making excuses for not running it this year. It's not going to get any easier if I put it off for another five to ten years.

Why run for charity?

The London Marathon is synonymous with fundraising. Last year, the London Marathon raised £66 million for charities. 2020 marks the 40th edition of the London Marathon. Since 1981, over £1 billion has been raised for good causes.

Even if I'm not going to wear a fancy dress costume or dress up as a rhino (running 26.2 miles is hard enough, as it is), it seemed like a missed opportunity not to join the fundraising community.

Why choose Macmillan?

Looking down the list of charities, there were so many great charities and worthy causes. However, one charity stood out. Cancer is likely to affect many of us during our lifetime, either directly or indirectly.



In the last year, family members and close friends have been diagnosed with and treated for oesophageal, pancreatic and prostate cancer. Macmillan has been there for them all, providing invaluable care and support.

Many cancer charities are focused on research for a specific type of cancer. Macmillan provided the opportunity to support a great charity that provides care and support for all kinds of cancer sufferers and their families.

How much training is involved?

The internet is full of 16-week marathon training plans. Many recommend 3-4 runs per week including at least one long run each week, which gets progressively longer each time, reaching 20-22 miles three weeks before race day, and then tapering down.

Lottie and I recently attended a 'Meet the Experts' session in London, designed for first-time marathon runners.

The morning included a variety of sessions with advice on 'How to make it to the start line' (how to avoid injury) on the basis that 98% of runners that start will finish the course; 'nutrition, hydration and energy' (unfortunately, they weren't talking about the 73 pubs en route!); and 'What to expect on race day' (with three separate starts, served by two different underground stations, and 40,000 runners, it's not like a Parkrun, where you can turn up five minutes before it starts!)

How is the training going?

On Sunday 1 March, Berkhamsted Rotary hosted its 38th Annual Half-Marathon – an opportunity to assess how the training was going, in the company of 800 other runners, including some friendly family competition. My 17-year old son was determined to beat his old man!

Whilst the distance of 13.1 miles appears to be mathematically half that

of the full distance, it is often said that the half way stage of a marathon is 20 miles. For this is when the dreaded 'wall' strikes, when glycogen (stored energy) within the muscles is depleted.

My time of 1hr 50 was encouraging, but I am under no illusions that many miles of hard training and a proper nutrition strategy are required over the coming weeks, in order to double the distance travelled.

Do you have a target time?

The four-hour marathon is a target for many marathon runners. In reality, fewer than 25% of runners complete the marathon in under four hours.

Simply completing it is my primary aim. Sub four hours would be fantastic but training will have to go unbelievably well for the next few weeks, if I am going to convert a 1h 50 half-marathon into a sub four-hour marathon.

In conclusion

If I survive, I may be back in a future edition of Comment to tell you how it went and share the experience of the day. Oh, and for the record, I beat my son by four minutes, but he's already exercised the re-match clause for next year!

Let me close by wishing the 40,000 other runners in the 2020 London Marathon a great day and a great run. And for those looking to take their first steps in running, may I recommend

Parkrun – wherever you choose, although you will have to travel a long way to beat Tring Park!

Julian Crane
Ridgeway Learning Partnership

If you would like to sponsor us to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support, please go to: uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Team/LottieandJulian.

DIocese of ST ALBANS
Living God's Love
Easter Monday Pilgrimage
to St Albans Cathedral
13 April 2020
TREAD LIGHTLY ON THE EARTH
Service 3pm
Meet/Picnic from 1pm | Procession in from 2:30pm
#StAlbansEMP
Join us walking from Tring Church, assemble at 7am, or meet us en-route, or come and meet up at the Abbey. Contact Huw 01442 822170 for more info, or to let him know you're coming and to book lifts home. Drivers are needed to bring people home.

Feedback



I enjoyed reading John Whiteman's article on the magnificent chancel or East window of St Peter & St Paul's Church in last month's Comment ('People, look East').

In looking at the window, usually from my place in the choir stalls, I have always been struck by how cleverly the Victorians designed it. Not only is there a sequence of five illustrations of the most important points in Christ's life in the top row, with the depiction of his crucifixion being literally the crucial event in the centre, but also each image is pre-figured in the picture below it in a sequence of illustrations of stories from the Old Testament.

From the left, the nativity of Christ is accompanied by a picture of Adam

and Eve: Christ is sometimes called 'the second Adam', as in the hymn 'Praise to the holiest in the height'.

Christ's baptism contrasts with the story of Noah's flood: Christ was born again through immersion in the purifying waters of the River Jordan, symbolising death, burial and resurrection; in Noah's story mankind was free to live and multiply again after the destruction of all living creatures, apart from those in the ark, and purification of the earth by the waters of the flood.

The crucifixion of Christ mirrors the story of Abraham and Isaac, with the significant difference that, unlike Christ, Isaac was saved by divine intervention at the last moment (I have always found that story very unsettling).

Christ's resurrection has below it the Old Testament Joseph in the pit, into which he had been thrown by his jealous brothers. If the depicted event is meant to pre-figure Christ's resurrection,

I think it more likely that it shows Joseph being pulled out of the pit by the passing Midian merchants, prior to their selling him to the Ishmaelites.

Lastly, Christ's ascension is mirrored by the depiction of Elijah's dramatic ascension to heaven in a fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses.

Martin Wells, St Peter & St Paul

Thank you for sending Comment month by month. It's always good to hear news of what's happening in Tring – but also some very interesting articles on wide issues.

In this area we have many of the so-called free newspapers – half of which are full up with advertisements, but I no longer know of any Church which produces their own 'Parish' magazine.

So thank you to all of the team for producing and despatching.

Hilary Chapman, now living in Cromer, Norfolk

Light and healing and glory



Some weeks ago, I opened the oven door and cursed. I hadn't burnt the tea, I hadn't forgotten to turn it to the right temperature, but I had opened it with my glasses on:

that glorious moment when they steam up completely, and you can't see a thing. It is like that frustrating moment when you get in the car on a cold day, and despite that useful cushion thing that you bought from the car accessories shop on Tring High Street, the windscreen is covered in condensation inside.

It takes time for both to clear; it requires patience, because wiping the glasses on the apron only makes them grubbier (note to self – wash apron); and in the car, even using the handy windscreen sponge thing (also purchased from that shop down the road) just seems to move the condensation round.

So you wait – and eventually it is clear. Eventually you can see that the tea is not burnt; eventually you can drive off safely.

On those occasions, we know that our sight is blurred, we know that we cannot see. The far bigger problem is when we do not realise that our sight is impaired, and there is nothing that we can buy from that handy shop down the road that will deal with that – when we do not realise that our faith, our vision of God, has become clouded.

In the period of Lent, when we have decided to forgo alcohol or chocolate, or decided to go to Lent films or Lent groups, or decided to do none of those or similar things because we have spent so many years doing them that actually they are not right for us: in Lent we are being asked to be clear sighted. We are being asked to remove from ourselves the blinkers of hypocrisy, to be honest, brutally so, about our lives and how we live and about our relationship with God. 'Remember that you are dust' – we are all at the same point – we all come from dust and return to dust – and if we convince ourselves of more than that, then we have the blinkers on.

In Isaiah chapter 58 God raises his voice to us, and tells us to raise our voices. God tells us to speak out to those who think they are living a righteous life, who are going through the motions; and

tells us to realise if we are doing that ourselves. The message from God is that we cannot keep kidding ourselves – we are being called to let the oppressed go free, to break the yokes, to make a difference and to change the world, not just to look at ourselves; because if we do those things, if we look outwards, then there is light and healing and glory. It is a re-creation, a rebuilding, a restoring.

But the problem is that so often the speaking becomes like hypocrisy – we think that we say and do the right thing, and we keep doing that, but it is as if our sight has gradually become obscured and we have not realised it. And this can turn into losing the message, losing the passion, the fierceness that we find in that reading from Isaiah. We can become obsessed by our rotas, by keeping our Churches as they always have been, by the roles that we have taken on. Sometimes our aim is about 'protecting the ruins' and not rebuilding them, and this is not what we are called to do.

Hypocrisy is not confined to the church though – the terrible recent death of the presenter Caroline Flack shows that. Suddenly everyone has become like Pharisees – 'Look at me and how my behaviour is above reproach', and yet all these others have behaved so badly. No; we have all played our part in creating a society that has a programme called Love Island which is not about love at all – but greed and vanity and lust. And then we are surprised when it all goes wrong.

Our society is at a place where more and more voices are speaking out – whether MeToo, whether climate change – and we have more and more forums in which to do so. But the balance is wrong: 'we point the finger, we bow the head like a bulrush, we speak evil'. And what we should be doing is acting the truth. Because if the words from Isaiah tell us anything, it is about action not words. It is about looking to the Lord, and not about relying totally on oneself. That is what builds up strength and faith; that is the message we need to show, because this world has become so full of fear and fragility.

That is what we need to do to clear our sight.

To clean a woodburning stove's glass door, one uses the ashes. What is burnt, makes things clear. (No good for oven doors or glasses, but you get the picture.) The ash we put on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday makes things clear; it

rebuilds us, makes us strong; it restores us and repairs us.

Jane Banister, Tring Team

Isaiah 58:1-12

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practised righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. "Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Patterns of worship



How do we choose the ways in which we offer praise and thanksgiving to God? It's a good subject for Lenten reflection: we need occasionally to think about our patterns of worship,

something that Jane Banister, in her Ash Wednesday sermon, encouraged us to do. So I was particularly interested to learn that Graeme Berry had recently surveyed the faithful band of worshippers at the 8 o'clock Communion service at St Peter & St Paul to find out why they chose that particular service, rather than the main one at 10.00am. Graeme reported his results in the February edition of Comment. I wasn't in Church on the Sunday that Graeme had carried out his survey (not because I was trying to avoid you, Graeme!), but it was fascinating to compare my reasons for being an eight-o'clocker with the general mood of the congregation.

A key reason of mine is somewhat disreputable, but I felt less guilty when I learnt it was one I share with 60% of my fellow worshippers. It's all over by 9.00am, leaving the rest of Sunday gloriously free for all those other enticing things, like garden, or family and friends, or playing the violin. Does this go against the fourth commandment, to keep holy the Sabbath? Perhaps; although a friend of mine who is a Rabbi says that observing Jews have an obligation to mark the day, not just by attending synagogue but also by partaking of delicious food and alcoholic drink, in order to celebrate God's wonderful creation.

I also have an uncomfortable sense that the early service is an escape from the real world. Isn't it better reflected in the much wider age range, audible evidence of boisterous children and hymn singing of the 10.00am service? And it's true that I delight in the beautiful but archaic words we mainly use at 8.00am, in our slow and solemn rededication to the values of the Ten Commandments (including the fourth one!) which for me is always a high point of the service, and generally in the peace and calm that surrounds us.

Here's a puzzle; I love church music and the wisdom of so many of our hymns, and would greatly miss sharing

'the peace' if it were taken out of the 10.00am service. But the stillness, solemnity and fellowship at 8.00am allow different – not, I believe, inferior – patterns of worship to be possible, and greater opportunities to meditate on the meaning of the words we say and hear. For the record, for me that applies just as much to our monthly service using the modern language of Common Worship, which I always look forward to, as it does to the usual service, using Cranmer's 16th century English from the Book of Common Prayer.

'Worship is what we do', says Huw Bellis, rector of St Peter & St Paul, and the ways in which we worship are very important. It's perhaps too easy to say merely that we should choose to go for styles of service that suit us personally;

after all, we are offering sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, and although the sacrifices can – and should – be joyful ones in the main, they must try to avoid being too selfish or self-indulgent. For my part, I would certainly feel that I was missing something essential if I never went to any of the many other types of service in our Church: it would prevent my feeling a part of the full body of Christ at our Church. Maybe my Lenten reflections will have modified my views by the time Easter comes (this was written soon after Ash Wednesday); even so, I suspect that the 8.00am service will continue to occupy a special place in my heart and be my principal and regular act of Christian worship in Tring.

**Edmund Booth
St Peter & St Paul**

High Street Baptist Church - Tring
Growing in the message and challenge of God

Growing creation care is a priority at High Street Baptist Church. This means we strive to honour and treasure God's amazing creation. As part of our commitment to being stewards for God's earth we serve Fairtrade refreshments and have an extensive recycling area. We collect the items pictured below for recycling, and encourage people to drop in any donations during office hours (9am - 1pm Monday to Friday) or when in the building for another activity.

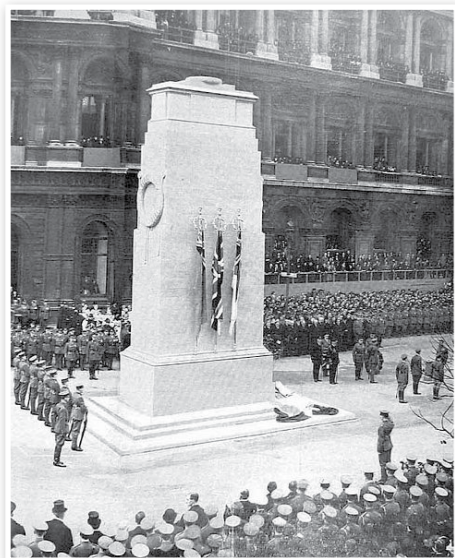
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Your memories of VE Day 1945



Over the last few years, we've marked the anniversaries of a number of critical moments in our history: the outbreak of the First World War, the Armistice, the D-Day Landings, and so on. And as the years pass, the number of people who remember those moments of conflict, of liberation, and of peace decreases – and the events themselves will one day slip out of living memory and in to recorded history.

This May, across the country and around the world, plans are in place for a three-day commemoration of the 75th anniversary of VE Day, when the guns fell silent across Europe, bringing to an end years of conflict and destruction on a massive scale. On that day in 1945, people took to the streets – and filled the pubs – to celebrate the peace and share their hope for the future. While conflict carried on further east for a few more long months, VE Day marked the 'beginning of the end' and ushered in an era of peace and cooperation in Europe that we still enjoy today.



The collective act of commemoration is an opportunity to reflect together, to remember the enormity of the sacrifice, and to celebrate with joy the peace we share.

The website dedicated to VE Day 75 says: 'We will remember the members of the Armed Forces and Merchant Navy from many countries who gave their lives or returned home injured in body and mind, the hard-working women and men who operated the factories, mines,

shipyards and farms, and ARP wardens, police officers, doctors, nurses, firemen, local defence volunteers and others who toiled day and night selflessly on the home front during difficult frightening and uncertain times.'

As part of the commemoration of VE Day this year, the 75th anniversary, I've been asked to put together a collection of memories and photos of World War II from Tring residents. As veterans of the conflict themselves, and even their children, grow older, stories about the war and its effects at home are not always passed down to younger generations. This project is a chance to ask questions, share stories, and capture some of those memories – whether first, second or even third hand – before it is too late. We are asking local residents to tell us what they remember – and to share the stories they may have been told by parents or grandparents. Not stories of Tring, necessarily, although there are people who remember life in our town during those years, but of the way the war reached into people's lives all around the world.

I will then be putting together a collection of some of these stories, alongside those of other local people and their families, on a website that will serve as a collective act of remembrance for Tring and its residents. We'll be sharing these, too, at the events to mark VE Day in May, centred around the Church, and, if possible, including some of them in a book.

I'm delighted that Bishop Wood School has already agreed to be part of the project, and I've been talking with Tring's Reminiscence Group, a representative of the local history society, and the Seniors Group at High Street Baptist Church – as well as already hearing stories for individuals. If there's something you could share, I'd love to hear it.

I would like to ensure that I have all the material – the stories, the photos – by early April, which I realise is not

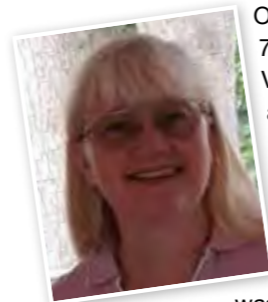


long away. This is so we can put the project together in time for the bank holiday weekend in May marking the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

If you have any questions, or would like to take part, please do let me know.

Pippa Brush Chappell,
pippabc@hotmail.com

Revised plans for VE Day 8 May 2020



On 8 May 1945, 75 years ago, VE Day was announced. The news that the war in Europe was over was met with joy and celebration. However, there was also great sorrow at the loss of life and a clear wish that the nation should commemorate the sacrifice of millions of service personnel and civilians around the world. In addition, many people were still worried and concerned that the war in the Far East was not over and they longed and prayed for peace in that sector.

This year is the 75th anniversary of VE Day and there is to be a national day of celebration and commemoration. The normal May Day Bank Holiday has been moved from the first Monday in the month to Friday 8th so that all towns can take part in the national events.

In Tring, to mark the 75th anniversary, we had planned activities that would have reflected the different emotions felt on that historic day so long ago with opportunities throughout the day to both celebrate the end of the war in Europe and commemorate the sacrifice made by ordinary men and women in order to defeat the Nazis.

Tring's official celebrations were going to start with the Mayor opening the 75th VE Day in the Memorial Garden at 11.00am. Luton Model Boat Club had planned to sail models of World War 2 ships on the lake. This now looks unlikely. Musical entertainment was to have been provided by the U3A Ukulele Group playing wartime classics from 11.00-12.00noon and the RAF Halton Band playing popular wartime tunes. All RAF engagements have now been cancelled. Tring Local History Museum will be providing a display showing Tring during the wartime years.

The plans had been to change to a more solemn time of memorial. It feels important that we continue with this to mark the end of the war in Europe but as the current situation changes, we aren't sure how this will develop. Maybe we will be able to continue with a bugler playing the last post at 2.55pm and at 3.00pm a piper will play 'The Battle's O'er' before a wreath-laying ceremony followed by a service in St Peter & St Paul's Church.

We will have to cancel the planned celebrations afterwards. Richard from Tring Brewery had planned a unique 1945 beer only to be available on that day

and Oddy Explorers were going to have provided a barbecue. There would have been cream teas with music performed by Tring Schools inside the Church. Who knows? Maybe we will be able to rearrange something for 2 September and the end of the war, rather than VE day. If nothing else we are still hopeful that the bellringers will be able to ring out for peace at 8.00pm on 8 May, so listen out for them.

Even if we cannot get together, it feels important that Tring marks VE Day and remember what that generation did for us.
Shena Moynihan, Corpus Christi



Parish registers

Baptisms

We welcome the children into our church family and pray for their parents and Godparents, and also welcome Peggy who comes as an older candidate for baptism.

Oscar Ryan
Patsy Valentina Wyatt

Funerals

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

Jean Smith 93
Jacqueline Rotheroe 83
Jamie George Jeffery 22

A changing world and how we cope



'Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change.'

That is a quote from Mary Shelley's book, Frankenstein, and the last weeks

have proved this, just in case we did not know it. We are in unknown territory, and what many of us are desperate for, is what we do not have – certainty. So all we can do is our best. So here are my pearls of wisdom:

1. Be kind – always a good place to start.
2. Everyone has different needs. Some are rejoicing at the thought of being on their own, others are petrified, most of us are somewhere in between. But all of our feelings are valid and important.
3. Seize the day. My diary is now empty, so I have no excuse not to wash the car, sort out the garage,

read all those books. Our garden will look incredible in a few months.

4. Go 'old school' and use the phone. Let us not spend all our time emailing, but ring people up, have a conversation.
5. Talk about something other than the virus. Learn more about other people.
6. Be even kinder – go the extra mile.
7. It isn't all about us. We may want to carry on regardless, but is that fair on others? And is it fair on the NHS?
8. None of us have all the answers, so we need to listen, to think, and not always to make kneejerk reactions.
9. We will learn a lot about ourselves and our society in the next weeks. May we acknowledge that and build on it.
10. Be kind – it is vital.

As churches, we are waiting for more advice, but we are certainly hoping to keep our Church buildings open for as long as possible. The

Church of England website has some incredible resources which they are adding to daily. We will find new ways to pray – you could say Morning Prayer while skyping a friend; discuss the day's Bible reading with your housegroup, whether on email or telephone.

And when it comes to Easter, we will celebrate. It won't be as we normally do, but we are God's children, full of imagination and creativity, and we will find new ways to worship the risen Christ.

I end with the prayers from the Archbishops' letter:

'May the wisdom of God lead the doctors, nurses and researchers so that they may know God's protection; so that God will guide the leaders of the nations into the ways of justice and peace.'

'May the love of Christ surround us and take away our anxiety and give us his peace. May he hear us and heal us, and fill us with hope and action. Amen.'

Jane Banister
Tring Team

Tring and the Coronavirus



A very detailed report in the Sunday Times of 8 March 2020 suggested that nationally we should expect 100,000 deaths due to this virus outbreak. This note is an attempt to put this in a local context.

Our national population is currently around 60 million. Tring and its villages have a population of around 15,000. Our local environment is healthy, with low levels of air pollution and a generally gentle climate. Commuters can experience a less positive ambient.

So how many deaths should we expect locally? Simple maths from the figures above show that statistically we could experience twenty-five virus-specific deaths. We would expect these losses mainly to be elderly, possibly isolated individuals, with existing health problems. It seems that younger people may suffer flu-like symptoms but should recover fairly quickly.

What can we do to keep this figure as low as possible? First it is to be aware of those most at risk.

If the elderly are the most vulnerable, depression is a danger and maybe we can all help. Keeping in contact with an elderly neighbour, friend or relative costs little and does not necessarily imply physical contact; the fact that someone cares is what matters. A brief telephone conversation can make someone's day! Physical concerns and needs can be passed on to closer carers, where felt necessary.

Winter is usually associated with a peak in the death rate, for a variety of reasons including just plain old age. Speaking as an 85-year-old, I am all too aware of this. The early months of a year can be very depressing.

Jenny and I are very lucky – we have children and grandchildren who regularly text/call and fairly frequently visit. Others are not so fortunate. We need to take care of them.

Bill Bradford
St Peter & St Paul

God's love

'Knowing God loves me has kept me going through it all. For the first time in my life I know myself to be loved, truly loved, and it's a love that will never fail – I won't be snatched from it; it won't withdraw; it won't turn brutal and sadistic; it won't lie to me. This love pulses beneath everything I am. It is enough. I have finally worked out what my freedom is for – it's to be loved and to love in return, as simple as that.'

Paula Gooder in 'Phoebe'

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The Bishop's Coronavirus Golden Rules



Golden Rule One

Each one of us can think about how we can protect and support our neighbours. So much of the public rhetoric is sowing fear about the

danger of other people.

So, taking all the official precautions, offer help and reassurance to others – and don't demonise anyone or any group.

Golden Rule Two

Think about who may be suffering more than me. For those of us who are healthy there is much less to worry about but the elderly, the housebound and those with chronic health conditions may be very anxious. How about each church

undertaking an audit of all the vulnerable people they know and sharing out the responsibility to phone them each day? There's nothing like a friendly voice to offer solace when someone is worried. A smile can bring cheer, even on the phone. If you visit, follow all the official precautions or don't go.

Golden Rule Three

Don't give into panic and start hoarding food. There is plenty to go around, so practise the Christian discipline of sharing. Ask your neighbours what they need and do your best to help them get it. If you are self-isolating you will of course need some supplies.

Golden Rule Four

Live today to the full. None of us ever know what the future holds. In the

Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-34), Jesus challenged his followers to live each day fully and not be afraid. Every time we are tempted to give in to fear, we need to make a conscious choice to respond in trust and openness.

And, along with just over half the adults in the UK, don't forget to pray. Here's a suggestion from the Revd Louise Collins, a Team Vicar in Borehamwood, Herts:

Dear God, our Shield and our Defender, guide and protect my neighbours in this time of health emergency; deliver them from all harm and may your love and care ever grow in this place.

Bishop Alan
St Albans Cathedral

C S Lewis on the Coronavirus

I was recently sent an article written by Matt Smethurst of The Gospel Coalition which refers to the global pandemic we know as COVID-19. I reproduce it here with thanks. It suggests that we read C. S. Lewis's essay from 'Present Concerns: Journalist Essays' 1948, replacing the reference to 'the atomic bomb' with 'coronavirus'.

'In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. "How are we to live in an atomic age?" I am tempted to reply: "Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an

age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents."

'In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anaesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already

bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

'This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds.'

The Editor

Inspirational biblical characters: Deborah



She was the only female judge and only one of four prophetesses mentioned in the Hebrew

Deborah was a both a judge of the Hebrews and a prophetess in the period of Israel's history prior to the formation of the kingdom under King Saul.

Bible (Old Testament).

We know nothing of her personal life other than she was married to Lappidoth and we know nothing of him. She was living around 1100 BC.

What sets her apart is that she was a judge, a military strategist, a prophet and a poet. In particular she was instrumental in the defeat of Jabin, king of Hazor who was attacking the northern tribes of Israel. She instructed a military commander named Barak to lead the

Israelites into battle. Barak wasn't too sure this was achievable and would only go into battle if Deborah accompanied them. She said she would go but prophesied that Barak would not be the hero of the hour; that honour would be given to another woman.

Intrigued? Read the story for yourselves in Judges chapters 4 and 5.
David Whiting, St Peter & St Paul

Marriage and relationships



Like many churches, the Methodist church has, over a number of years, been discussing marriage and relationships and what we, as the Methodist Church, believe.

Our national decision-making body is the Conference which meets each summer. In 2019 Conference received a report called 'God In Love Unites Us', produced by a task group which had been set up by the 2016 conference to consider the definition of marriage and to prepare a new statement of the judgement of the Conference on marriage and relationships. The report 'God In Love Unites Us' is the result of those discussions. The 2019 Conference asked churches to study and prayerfully discuss the report and, in the Spring, District Synods will vote on the report ahead of the final vote at Conference in June.

For many people, the main discussion point of the report is the possibility of marriage between same-sex couples, but it's important that the report is recognised as looking at relationships as a whole – what makes good relating, the theology of marriage, sexuality, co-habitation and civil partnerships. It is not just about same-sex marriage!

The reports headings are: God has made us to be in relationships and to be sexual; God guides us in all our relating; God's guidance for marriage: developing our vision; Widening the practice of marriage; Next steps for the Methodist Church.

Key to the discussions of the task group has been a Conference report from 2006 called 'Living With Contradictory Convictions In The Church'. It's a report that recognises that there are many subjects on which we, as Christians, differ in our views, and yet God calls us to live together as his people. The task group recognised that Methodists have widely differing views on the subject of marriage and relationships and that these views are often strongly held. They have therefore suggested an approach that recognises these different views but could allow us to journey on together and find ways to live together with contradictory convictions. This would include a two-stranded definition of marriage

which would allow for those people who believe that marriage is between a man and a woman and those people who believe that marriage can be between any two people. It also gives a summary understanding of the principles of good relating: 'All significant relationships should be built on self-giving love, commitment, fidelity, loyalty, honesty, mutual respect, equality and the desire for the mutual flourishing of the people involved' and follows this with a summary understanding of cohabitation.

A copy of the report is on the Methodist Church website along with the provisional resolutions. We have also been holding local discussion events so that people have an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and what it means to live as people with contradictory convictions.

The study guide concludes with the identification of three key themes which run through the report: Be open and positive about sexuality and relationships; Value all relationships of grace; Widen and justify the understanding of marriage as being between two persons.

The report's final thought is to ask us to remember, in the words of the hymn, we are: 'Summoned by the God who made us / rich in our diversity, / gathered in the name of Jesus, / richer still in unity.'

My hope and prayer is that this discussion will be an opportunity for us to share views, to listen deeply and to come to a better and deeper understanding of the variety of views and people that God has gifted to all of us and that, through this, we will value more greatly the gift of marriage and all relationships.

Rachael Hawkins
St Martha's Methodist Church

Celebrations at St Martha's

Sunday 1 March 2020 was the date that we at St Martha's Methodist Church celebrated the completion of the kitchen and car parking area works.

A beautiful thanksgiving and dedication service was held at 3.00pm to a packed Church. We were also blessed to have an ad hoc choir, swelling the numbers. I am sure the rendition of the final hymn, in acknowledgement of St David's day, will have stirred people's curiosity, should they be passing the Church at that moment (what a way to spread the Word!).

Amongst the congregation were the offspring of Frank and Barbara Clark and Phyllis and Tom Jones, who were great instigators of the kitchen extension project. Their families were past Sunday School members and enjoyed being able to share with us in the delicious three course meal, provided for us by our very own Jean Buchanan.

Friends from Berkhamsted



Methodist Church joined us in our rejoicing, as did several past St Martha's ministers, members, friends and their families. Due to the new facilities, the Church now has regular Tuesday lunches, with Pilates sessions and singing lessons also taking place during the week, along with the continued weekly Craft Club, monthly Friendship Club, fortnightly Bible Study Group.

With the new housing developments taking place in Tring, it is exciting to see where the Holy Spirit will lead the church and its members in outreach of the spreading of God's Word, a continuation of the original purpose of the erection of St Martha's Church.

To God be all the glory. Thank You, Father, for this wonderful blessing.

Gill Barber
St Martha's Methodist Church

Prayers of the month

5 April

Lord God, let us approach with shouts of praise: hosanna in the highest! Let us draw close to you on this day that caused disturbance and disruption. Let us approach the throne of the one who came as a humble servant, who came to set us free, to change things for ever. Hosanna to the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen

12 April

Holy Spirit, light up our faces, to pass the Easter joy to others; give us the words, to tell Jesus' story to others; make us the loving embrace that tells others they belong; fill us with courage to pass the joy on. Amen

19 April

Prince of peace, we are sorry that we choose not to forgive but to hold grudges; that we doubt you and do not trust; that we choose to rely on our own resources and not on you; that we believe only when we have proof. Help us to forgive more readily, and to trust more willingly. Amen

26 April

A sending out prayer

Lord Jesus, as you walked on the road to Emmaus, walk with us on the roads we travel. Help us to know your presence with us, and to be your presence to others. And, at the end of the day, may we all enjoy your feast. Amen

A personal prayer

Risen Christ, friend, companion, healer: as I walk the road in front of me be by my side and never leave. Amen

Learning about Judaism

Bishop Wood C of E Junior School, like all Church Schools, is inspected on a five-year cycle under SIAMS – the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools. Under this framework, we have an obligation to teach about other faiths and to be a welcoming place for children of all faiths and of none. From a practical viewpoint, this is organised so that each year group, as well as teaching about Christianity, will also teach about at least one other faith. So Year 3 study Islam, Year 4 Sikhism and Hinduism, Year 5 Judaism and Year 6 Buddhism. As I currently teach Year 5, I would like to focus on Judaism and give an overview of some of the things we would expect to cover:

- Explain how Abraham founded Judaism in Israel
- Understand that Jews believe there is only one God
- Understand that Jews live by ten key rules
- Know some of the key objects in a synagogue
- Name and describe some key Jewish festivals e.g Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
- Explain the relevance of items on a Seder plate at Passover
- Know that the Jewish holy book is called the Torah and it is written in Hebrew
- Name and explain the meanings of some Jewish symbols

Many of the stories we explore are found in the Old Testament e.g the story of Jonah and the whale is a focus during teaching Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement, is the holiest day of the year in Judaism. Its central themes are atonement and repentance. The story is used to illustrate God's infinite mercy. As part of our reflection, the children think about things they are proud of having done and things that they can work on changing.

As part of Lent, all Bishop Wood children make a Lenten promise to change something about themselves for the better. On Ash Wednesday, we took copies of our Lenten promises to St Peter & St Paul's Church where Father Huw burnt them to create ash. These ashes are a symbol of being sorry for things that have gone wrong in the past year and represent an opportunity for new growth in the future. We help the children

to make links between what they learned about Yom Kippur and what they are doing during Lent. We also explore the things that are different between faiths at an age-appropriate level.

We have looked at Rabbi Jonathan Sacks MBE. He is a British Orthodox rabbi, philosopher, theologian, author and politician. He served as the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013. Rabbi Sacks is famous for promoting interfaith dialogue and said, 'We have to learn to speak to those with whom we wish to live'. We asked the children why Rabbi Sacks thinks it's important to speak to people from different religions and their responses were highly insightful.

'If we don't listen to what others say about their religion, we could end up fighting about it.'
'If we listen, we will understand more.'
'Each religion is special.'
'You should discuss different ideas respectfully.'
'Have a conversation and find out more.'
'You might find you are interested in their religion and they might like yours.'

In order to further enhance and extend the children's learning, we have invited a local Rabbi into school and, in anticipation of this visit, the children have been busy thinking about questions for her. Their questions were varied and thought-provoking and cover such topics as:

- What is important about the number 613 for Jews?
- Why do Jews use the Star of David?
- What do you do as a Rabbi?
- What are the main similarities between Judaism and Christianity?

As a Church of England school, our vision can be summed up in four words: Wisdom, Hope, Community and Dignity. We have a duty to uphold an attitude of learning about and respecting other people's cultures and if we do this successfully, we will have encouraged true wisdom in our children.

Angela Day
Bishop Wood School

A row of pennies



We must be a dwindling band of aged folk who remember old pennies (and shillings and pounds); they were swept away in the brave new world of decimalisation from 1971. One of my distinct recollections is of saving 1d per week as a child, to put in a strip of little envelopes that, when filled, held a shilling and were sent off to pay for the new Cathedral in nearby Coventry. I'm not sure how much difference those pennies made to the rebuilding fund, but they were a distinct sacrifice from my 6d per week pocket money. And on the basis that 'Where your treasure is, there shall your heart be' (Matthew 6:21) I have always felt a possessive interest in the Cathedral Church of St Michael in Coventry.



The new cathedral was consecrated in May 1962, but I had the privilege of worshipping there before the proper opening, down in what became the crypt. I can't remember whether I went with my Sunday School or with the choir, but I



don't think it was because I was a major donor.

There is so much that I have absorbed about the Church, and my favourite feature is probably the magnificent baptistry window; because

the new Cathedral is at a right angle to the old one, the baptistry window benefits from facing east, and shines brightly in the morning sun. I also like the symbolism of the angled windows along the two sides of the nave, each one coloured to represent a stage of life, and only visible after you have passed it. Also I like the simple expressions from the Bible, inscribed on stones. I knew, of course, that the old Cathedral was largely destroyed during a bombing raid in November 1940, but I also learnt that forgiveness and reconciliation were an immediate response to the loss. I was

taught to link the devastation in Coventry in 1940 with the appalling destruction of Dresden in 1945. Tens of thousands of people died in three days of bombing, more than have been killed in the western world in all the terrorist events since 1945.

In Coventry, straight after the bombing, a simple cross was made from charred roof timbers and placed where the altar would have



inspiration for the worldwide Community of the Cross of Nails: 'All members adhere to the three guiding principles of the Community of the Cross of Nails: Healing the wounds of history, Learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity, and Building a culture of peace. We are guided by the words "Father Forgive", and we pray the Litany of Reconciliation on a regular basis.' This is a quotation from the Coventry Cathedral website; the Litany is shown in the tinted box.

In the Spring of 2012, I was very pleased to attend a recording of the BBC's Songs of Praise' programme, which was broadcast from Coventry Cathedral to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Cathedral's consecration. I hope that I am not the only person to have gained a lifelong inspiration from the Cathedral.

John Whiteman
Tring Team

Coventry Litany of Reconciliation

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class, Father Forgive.
The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own, Father Forgive.
The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth, Father Forgive.
Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others, Father Forgive.
Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee, Father Forgive.
The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children, Father Forgive.
The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God, Father Forgive.
Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you,

'Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia'



What actually happened at the resurrection of Jesus? What is the evidence? At first it was a question of personal witness: 'I saw that', 'I heard the other'. So, in courts of

justice, witnesses were necessary to prove a crime. In more recent times we rely on DNA testing and all the scientific tests which forensic experts use.

When it comes to providing the evidence that Jesus rose from the dead, who are the witnesses? Obviously we start with the Scriptures, but we have to remember that they were written by people who believed Jesus had indeed risen from the dead and for people who likewise so believed. For about twenty years there were people who had seen the risen Jesus and who shared their belief with others; they formed communities of fellow-believers and spread their faith.

The first written mention comes in Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:10) when Paul talks of how his readers turned from idols to serve God and to wait for his Son, 'whom he raised from the dead'. This source dates from 49/50AD. But it expresses a faith in the Resurrection to a people who believe in it already, and this is the case with all Paul's letters: Romans, for example, is a letter of his faith in the Resurrection. We have no document which sets out the Resurrection with the aim of persuading unbelievers to believe.

The first 'evidence' for the Resurrection is founded on personal belief. We can gather together all that the New Testament tells us but it has to be said that the emphasis is on the basics for a shared faith rather than the evidence of the sort that would stand up in a court of law. Some of us enjoy detective stories and films and know how important it is to establish who was where and at what time and with whom and so on. We cannot do this for the Easter events. We know what Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell us, convinced as they are that Jesus rose from the dead, but we cannot make one single, coherent description of the exact details of place or of people.

Witnesses to the Resurrection

When St Paul wrote his first letter to the Church at Corinth he dealt with various problems and issues and in Chapter 15

he reaches the issue of prime importance, namely the Resurrection. He reports that some say there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul reminds them of the basic teaching and proclamation about the death and resurrection of Christ and the hope of the (general) resurrection of the dead rooted in Christ's resurrection. He goes on to say how this resurrection of all Christians will take place and concludes that the resurrection is a victory over death through Christ. As part of his argument he lists those to whom the Risen Lord had appeared.

First, he appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve. (Mark and Matthew more accurately say eleven, as Judas had committed suicide and Matthias had not yet been appointed).

Next, Paul mentions five hundred brethren most of who were still alive. This group is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament.

Next comes James, not one of the Twelve, but the James described as the Lord's brother.

Following him, Paul tells us that Jesus appeared to the apostles with the implication that this group is more numerous than the Twelve.

Last of all Jesus appeared to Paul, who describes himself as 'one untimely born'. This last is not an Eastertide resurrection appearance like the others. Paul is the only New Testament writer who maintains a personal vision of the risen Christ.

The Gospel accounts

So we turn to the Gospel writers, all of whom describe the Risen Lord's appearances but not in a way that can be put together in a single coherent narrative. As with their beginning so with their endings, each of the Evangelists follows his own particular path.

The first Gospel writer, Mark, has the three women who found the stone rolled away and the young man who tells them 'He has been raised'. They were to tell Peter and the disciples that Jesus had gone ahead to Galilee. This greatly frightens the women and they do not tell anyone. Mark ends abruptly (Mark 16:8) on a note of fear and this abruptness has produced a fuller ending from later writers.

Matthew gives more details – he mentions an earthquake and an angel rolling away the stone. As with Mark, so with Matthew, there is the instruction to go to Galilee but there is also a sudden appearance of Jesus. A little later the Eleven are commissioned to

make disciples and to remember Jesus' perpetual presence with them.

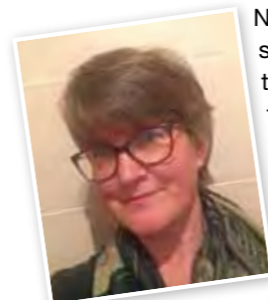
Luke has the women finding the stone rolled away but with two men (angels?). These 'men' tell the women 'he is not here; he has risen'. Luke names three of the women but has Joanna where Mark has Salome and there are others. Peter goes and sees the empty tomb and is amazed. Later that day the risen but unrecognised Jesus appears to Cleopas and his company on the road to Emmaus. He is not recognised until he eats with them. They then go back to Jerusalem and the Eleven and say 'The Lord is risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon'. Jesus himself appears and eats with the group, who, at first, think he is a ghost. Luke ends with the Ascension but goes onto write the Acts. This book starts by telling us 'Jesus presented himself alive to the Apostles by many convincing proofs'. The rest of the book tells of the spread of the Easter message and includes three accounts of Paul's vision of the Risen Lord on the Damascus road. It ends with Paul in Rome proclaiming 'teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ'.

Finally, John's Easter account starts with Mary Magdalene finding the empty tomb and telling Peter and the other disciple about it, and it is 'the other disciple' who saw and believed. Then there is the familiar account of Mary mistaking Jesus for the gardener. Easter Day ends with the Risen Lord appearing to ten Apostles and in the following week to 'Doubting' Thomas as well. John 20 ends with Thomas's confession 'My Lord and My God' and the blessing on those 'who have not seen and yet have come to believe'. Enough has been written, we are told, for us to believe and have life. However, more resurrection appearances are described, including the catch of fishes, the restitution of Peter after his denials and what Jesus said to 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. The Gospel writer says 'we know that his testimony is true'.

We can ask about the nature of Our Lord's risen body, unrecognisable to some, not to be touched but shows wounds, can eat food but apparently passes through closed doors. Further, the Risen Lord of the Easter appearances is also the Risen Lord of Paul's vision. There are unanswerable questions and yet from the first day of the week after Good Friday there are those who were convinced that 'Jesus Christ is risen and is alive and with us to the end of time'.

Martin Banister
St Alban's Cathedral

Have you ever sung in a choir?



NO?? If you can sing, you should try it. It's one of the most uplifting experiences humans can enjoy together. Using your voice to create resonance and harmony with a

bunch of other like-minded enthusiasts is a real feel-good activity. It just makes you smile – and it is now thought that it can also have a positive impact on your mental health.

Tring Choral Society has been singing together as a choir for the past 126 years! The earliest records we have date back to 1894, and the first concert that we know about took place in the Victoria Hall in Akeman Street. Now, our concerts are normally in St Peter & St Paul's Church, and we sing three concerts a year – at Easter, a summer concert in July and then again at Christmas.

We sing all sorts of classical works, from Bach to Rutter and from Vivaldi to Bob Chilcott. At Christmas we sometimes invite children from local schools to sing with us and our audience is



encouraged to join in with carols. 'O Come All Ye Faithful' with a choir of approximately eighty-five singers, a Church packed to capacity, organ with all the stops out and a full orchestra is an unforgettable experience! We usually engage professional soloists

for our concerts; very occasionally we use soloists from the choir. Most performances are accompanied by our excellent orchestra.

The choir has performed with other choirs and schools at many different venues including The Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and St Clement Danes Church in the Strand. One particularly memorable concert was at Watford Colosseum, together with St Clement Danes school choirs and orchestra, singing Verdi's Requiem. If you are unfamiliar with this major operatic work, there is one section which requires lots of brass.

At our concert, twelve trumpets played at the same time, at maximum volume – a beautiful, bright, joyful sound and fantastic to listen to!

We sing the majority of our concerts on home turf at St Peter & St Paul's, Tring. It's a great venue for us because we can put up our purpose-built staging, the top row of which stretches up to 10ft above the floor, so that our audience can see us and also, most importantly, we can all see our conductor. This setting has also been vastly improved by the recent upgrade in the Church's lighting system.

In the summer of 2011, we were singing Vaughan Williams' A Sea Symphony, during which the composer musically describes tumultuous seas and terrible weather. A ferocious storm blew up outside whilst we were singing and at a climactic moment in the piece, all the lights in the Church went out! Talk about atmospheric... power was resumed and the concert continued.

Our conductor, Colin Stevens, has been our musical director now for the last forty-six years. His passion and patience, encyclopaedic knowledge and excellent musicianship inspire us all to give of our best. Bravo! Long may Tring Choral Society continue!

If you would like to try out singing with Tring Choral Society for yourself, please come along to one of our rehearsals, which are on Mondays at 8.00pm at Akeman Street Baptist Church, Tring. Visit www.tringchoral.org.uk or find us on Facebook.

Katie Hughes, Tring Choral Society

Spring Concert

Tring Choral Society
and Orchestra
Conductor: Colin Stevens

J S Bach

St John
Passion

Saturday 4 April
Church of Saint Peter & Saint Paul,
TRING
Starting at 7.30pm
(doors open 6.45pm)

Tickets: £15, Under 18's free
from Beechwood Fine Foods, Frogmore St
email: tringchoralsociety@gmail.com

Tring Choral Society Registered Charity Number 276980 www.tringchoral.org.uk

CANCELLED

Real-life stories from DENS

Craig's Story

Since the age of 16 I had always worked. I spent thirty-five years as a long-distance lorry driver. I spent my nights up and down the country, in a different town or city every day and night. Some people hated the sound of it but it never bothered me, I loved working. The plan was to retire at 60, emigrate to Thailand and finally relax. I had a couple of properties that would see the kids through university; everything was set in stone.

One day I was making a delivery and while unloading a heavy load, the chain support broke and fell on me. I was lucky to survive, lucky to wake up. I tried to keep working after the accident; I kept telling everyone I was fine – but I knew I wasn't. I just couldn't do it anymore, and in the end, I lost my job.

Shortly afterwards my marriage fell apart. That's when my life really went downhill. One bad day turned to another, there seemed no end in sight. I couldn't keep up the repayments on the properties and eventually they were all repossessed. In the end it was all too much for me. I couldn't go on; the only option was to take my life. Thankfully with the help of the emergency services, I survived; some aren't so lucky.

I was admitted to a ward and after

a few months I moved to The Elms hostel. I had always had my own place; never in a million years did I think I would be living in a homeless hostel. I was allocated a key worker. She actually cared about people. She listened to me. She made me feel like I was fine and there was a plan to get me back on my feet again. I wasn't in the right frame of mind to live on my own and needed a lot more support, but I got there in the end.

Once I was stable, DENS helped me get my own place and I once again lived a normal life. I go for a walk, pick the kids up from school, watch the football; sometimes I go to the pub but I don't drink anymore.

Maybe I can't do the things I used to. I would give my right arm to work again, but I'm still here. To anyone who's thinking of killing themselves I would say,



life goes on. You can lose everything, but eventually you can get it all back again. That's how I look at life now.

Benjamin's Story

Benjamin came to The Elms on 22 May 2015. He was originally placed by the council at a local hotel in temporary accommodation. His story starts with a relationship breakdown and having nowhere to stay. Due to disabilities the council agreed that he was in need of a place to stay. Before they could find somewhere more permanent, he would be staying at the hostel which is where I met Benjamin.

Now, to introduce myself: my name is Sue and I work at The Elms as a Support & Resettlement Worker. I met Benjamin when he moved here back in May 2015. My role was to help Benjamin with paperwork, benefit issues and liaise closely with the council with regards to moving him on. I was also available for anything that was worrying Benjamin.

After a long and sometimes frustrating period of time, Benjamin was offered a property. However, there was a further wait whilst the property was adapted.

Finally Benjamin moved out of The Elms on Monday 14 March 2016. I helped him get some furniture from the DENS Furniture Warehouse and a foodbank voucher for a food parcel. My role within DENS is to support people out in the community, so to begin with, I visited Benjamin once a week to make sure that all paperwork was in place and he had done the changes of address with the district nurse/GP and registered with utilities.

We have now agreed to fortnightly visits as his confidence has risen greatly. Benjamin is currently struggling with many issues, which includes his physical health, but he is now in a place where



he is dealing with these issues virtually independently.

Become a Friend

By giving as little as £10 a month to DENS, you can become a friend of DENS. Your contribution will enable our services to provide vital support to those most in need; whether they are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, today and in the future. Go to www.dens.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-friend.

Exploration, adventure and documentary



In March 2020 my friend and fellow explorer James and I will be spending six weeks in Greenland with a professional film maker to produce a documentary about

exploration, adventure and the need for collective action to protect our planet.

Our expedition itself will break an endurance World Record and we seek to climb at least two never-before climbed mountains. I grew up on the stories of Ranulph Fiennes and Robert Falcon Scott and to be following in the footsteps of their exploratory efforts and to put our feet where no person has before is the exciting realisation of a childhood dream!

Our aims can be roughly broken in two:

Expedition and world record

In undertaking the planned expedition, our team intends to climb two first summits, endure 400 miles of unsupported travel across NE Greenland and set a new endurance World Record.

Climate change documentary and educational campaign

We aim to shoot and produce an impactful documentary of the expedition that follows our journey as climate campaigners and adventurers. We plan to use our film in conjunction with an educational tour in schools across the UK to share with young people a love of the outdoors, educate them in the importance of protecting our natural spaces and encourage them to get outside themselves.

Mountaineering journey & endurance overview

In total our expedition will see us crossing some 400 miles of terrain unsupported, each pulling sleds weighing upwards of 100kg for a total of six weeks, setting up camp every night in one of the harshest environments on earth. This will be one of the toughest challenges we have ever taken on: battling -30c temperatures, 100mph winds, crevasses, avalanches and rockfalls... as well as possible visits from the neighbourhood polar bears!

Our itinerary

After flights into Ittoqqortoormiit, East Greenland, we begin a two-day snowmobile infiltration toward the Stauning Alps. Upon reaching the edge of a protected area, where no powered transport is allowed, we then ski with 'pulks' (sleds) for several weeks covering 150 miles of glacial terrain before eventually entering the Stauning Alps.



Research

Drawing on all the available data we have carefully pre-selected four summit objectives as suitable to attempt. Using an adaptable team methodology, our objectives may, and likely will, shift to accommodate changing conditions and challenges as they arise in the field. Making big decisions like that in the field is one of the big rushes of an expedition like this – you have to balance safety with ambition and figure out what is worth the risk. Though that might sound crazy, it is something we all do every day when we decide it's worth it to leave the house!

The weather in the region has become increasingly unstable in recent years, with record snowfalls and large temperature changes leading to extremely unpredictable conditions. These greatly affect our ability to mountaineer, with avalanches and rockfalls a major concern. In order to give us the best chance of completing our first summit objectives we are taking a wide array of technical equipment, provided by our colleagues at Trekitt (www.trekitt.co.uk). With this equipment, and all the training in both technical skills and fitness that James and I have put in over the last two years, we should be in a good place to carry out the expedition safely (I promise, Mum).

Climate change documentary

In preparing for this expedition James and I have become increasingly concerned about climate change – as many people have – and we are now proud Extinction Rebellion volunteers.

Our aim is to use the expedition as a vehicle to publicise some of the more effective things that we can all do to help get involved in the fight against the climate emergency. Once back from the expedition we hope to serialise a number of articles for Comment looking at how and what you can do to help, but for now here's a little bit about our documentary plans.

Our film aims to redress the misconception that individual choices and habits will solve climate change. Given the amount of misleading consumer information to the contrary, we believe it is a story that needs to be told. 'The belief that this enormous, existential problem could have been fixed if all of us had just tweaked our consumptive habits is not only preposterous; it's dangerous,'

observes climate expert Mary Annaise Heglar.

Using footage gathered during the expedition, alongside interviews with a range of experts, we plan to make a film whose story shows that in order to protect our wild spaces, particularly from the threat of intensifying climate heating, that individual action (such as recycling at home, driving a little less frequently etc.) whilst good to do, will not be enough; and that much like climbing mountains, the only way to achieve significant success is through working together.

James and I, like all of us, are hypocrites. Although our entire expedition and documentary film making process is carbon neutral, we still have an effect on the planet and our environment. This does not – and should not – stop us, or anyone, from campaigning to protect our planet. While we fight amongst ourselves over who is 'greener than thou,' or dare not speak up at all for fear of being labelled hypocrites, powerful companies and governments – whose interests lie only in the short term – carry on as normal. (All of this is not to say that all of us as individuals cannot or should not do what we can to change our behaviour where possible. Every little contribution helps: but the point is that failing to do so should not be considered morally blameworthy.)

Tom Reynolds
former Tring School student

Sadly, just as Comment was due to go to press, Tom's trip was cancelled because of the Coronavirus travel restrictions.

Into the light



Mental health and well-being in the church

People with poor mental health frequently suffer in silence, are ashamed of their illness and so become isolated.

To quote a blogger, they are afraid of being accused of 'faking it', 'craving attention', or 'making a big deal of nothing'.

Christians are not immune to mental illness, but the church may seem indifferent or even hostile; it is tempting to think that, as Christians, we ought to be happy, and if we are not it is somehow our own fault. 'Into the light' was the theme of a recent talk by Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London, seeking to lift the stigma often associated with mental

health problems. Bishop Sarah suggested three steps to improving mental health care in the church.

Understand the struggle

All of creation is broken, and each of us has flaws of different kinds. We should all admit to our imperfection and vulnerability, and journey together. Bishop Sarah told us that she suffers from dyslexia, and it showed in the way she stumbled from time to time while delivering her talk.

Move towards those who suffer

Overcome the fear, don't think that you have to know how to fix the problem, but be prepared to listen. This is a skill that can be learnt.

Offer hope

Generally, membership of a faith group

is good for one's mental health because of the community and the focus away from oneself; but it is no guarantee of an easy life, and the Bible is peppered with examples of people feeling overwhelmed. We can sign-post to sources of support, albeit the resources in the NHS for mental health care are woefully lacking. There are voluntary agencies: Bishop Sarah spoke about this one: www.giveusashout.org.

There is a link to Bishop Sarah's talk here: stedwards.cambridge.co.uk/stedstalks

Sarah Mullally has been Bishop of London for two years, but became a priest after a successful career in the NHS. She was Chief Nursing Officer for five years from 1999. I thought she was impressive and inspiring.

John Whiteman, Tring Team

Visit to Notre Dame de Paris



Notre Dame is surely as much of an icon of Paris as the Arc de Triomphe or the Eiffel Tower; even in this emphatically secular nation, Notre Dame has huge historic and cultural significance for the French and they grieved for the damage it suffered in the fire which broke out on 15 April last year.

The seat of the fire was the vaulted roof over the north transept, 30m high and 12m across. Before restoration work can begin, obviously the debris must be cleared and the structure made safe and these tasks are well under way. The most complex part of the operation will be the construction of a new spire to replace the fallen one, which was already in the process of repair. All the scaffolding around the spire melted in the intense heat, then reset as it cooled, so there is a very messy tangle of metal. Trying to lift this away without further damaging the masonry is proving to be a very tricky job.

Down below on the floor of the

Cathedral all the charred timbers and pieces of stone are being identified and catalogued – the timbers are delivering excellent information about climatic conditions in the 13th century!

Cleaning up the floor of the Cathedral is a challenge: there is too great a danger of more falling material crashing down on anyone working below, so robotic, remotely-controlled equipment is being used.

The site is well secured by a high barrier; on some of the fencing is a very

informative account of the work being done – almost an exhibition in itself. Inevitably, the restoration work is going to take a long time; the familiar west front had already been restored when we visited in February and the pale, honey-coloured stone looked beautiful in the Spring sunshine. It is both a poignant counterpoint to the wreckage behind and a promise of the eventual glory of this place of worship.

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

How does it make you feel?

I am an abstract artist who is painting the world as I feel it. For twenty years I was an Art teacher in central London with a simple aim of encouraging pupils to find a joy in expression and a love of art that would hopefully last a lifetime.

That is how I see my own artwork, to forever explore, never look for perfection, encourage the mistake and take joy in the smallest marks made. With this attitude I allow my work to take form as I paint. I start with a colour palette inspired by a moment that has captured my thoughts, whether that was



a place in time, a feeling or a colour of a trail I was walking. I then give freedom to the work as I aim to recreate that thought or emotion onto canvas. As I develop the piece, I am always looking for that mark, the swipe of my palette knife, the blend of colour that excites me. Allowing myself that freedom of expression without a fixed outcome in

mind always presents the challenge of knowing when the piece is finished, but also leaves a strong desire to paint again. I never want to finish a painting with the thought that it is perfect, otherwise: why would I paint another?

I joined Tring Park School for the performing arts in September 2018 as the Examination Officer. I had been associated with the school through the TPA program for many years as both of my children spent every Saturday and many holidays on various dancing and acting courses.

I even took lessons in ballet too, as exploring and learning is a life-long gift not to let pass by. Being part of a school that has an abundance of extremely talented, dedicated and creative people is such a privilege and is hugely inspirational. I can see in my own artwork how my work has developed since 2018, my pieces have a greater sense of movement and the colour palettes often reflect the surroundings of Tring which change with each passing day.

If you would like to see my work in person, I am exhibiting at the following local events: Mentmore Arts Festival, 23-25 May St Mary's Church LU7 0QF; Art in the Nave, 5-7 June, St Mary's Church, Old Hemel Hempstead HP1 3AF.

For more information, please visit: www.alexanderjamesgordon.co.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to

read this article. I often like to ask a question of the viewer who takes an interest in my work and so I leave you with 'How does it make you feel?'

**Alexander James Gordon
Tring Park School**



Extinction or rebellion?

Young people and the church

What are we to make of statistics which suggest that we are one generation away from extinction? In February, I took part in two debates on two different forms of extinction and loss of biodiversity. They had very differing outcomes.

The occasion was the General Synod of the Church of England – the governing body. The first debate was about the hard reality of global warming and the extinction of both animal and plant species. We responded with bold (some would say reckless) ambition – a target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 (not 2045 as originally proposed). We listened to the campaigners and lobbyists and recognised lots of good work already being done, and, although the vote was close, we declared our belief that the emergency is real, and the need for further action urgent.

The second debate was about numbers of children and young people in church but we largely ignored the hard reality of the statistics – in case you are interested, numbers of children and young people in church are declining at twice the rate of adults, and we now have fewer than 100,000 under 16s in the Church of England, and most of these are in a small number of larger churches. And so we passed a watered-down motion which mumbled something about the need to do more to get children and young people into church.

For me, the contrast between the debates was startling.

The voices of young people

Top of my list of surprises was the place of children and young people within the discussions. When talking about the environment, the voices of young people were strong and clear. I was heavily lobbied by young people from my diocese and they effectively persuaded me to change my mind and vote for the more ambitious goal.

Yet when we started to talk about children and young people in church, their voice was almost completely absent. Not only was there zero lobbying, but almost no one under 30 was called to speak in the debate (as one tweet said, ‘when will the old, white men sit down and shut up’ – which of course, included me!). And all this on the same day we considered safeguarding (also very much about children and young people), with the repeated refrain of listening to the

voices of survivors.

So why the difference between the two debates? And why the involvement of children and young people in one and not the other? Was this just a failure of process, or is there something deeper going on here?

In denial

It’s worth noting that the environment is now widely talked about in all contexts and there is broad agreement on the need for action. This wasn’t always the case, but the movement has gathered pace. And young people are at the forefront of this global movement.

However, the situation is reversed when it comes to church attendance. We’re still very much at the denial stage. We’d prefer not to talk about the numbers, and we’ll point out all the gaps in the research and tell ourselves stories which show that ‘it’s all alright really’. And whatever we do, we mustn’t make people overly anxious or threaten cherished traditions.

There are of course, bands of activists who get on with innovating new approaches and try to get the wider church to take notice (Messy Church being one of the best examples). But my overall conclusion is that generally we’re at least ten years behind the environmental movement in waking up to the reality of our situation and creating a movement for change.

I am also intrigued that the Synod environment debate started with science and continued with clear practical steps to make a difference – steps ranging from multi-million pound investment schemes from the national church, to actions every local church and individual can take (I’m pleased that

Leicester got a mention for our proposals to develop solar farms on church land).

By contrast, when it comes to children and young people in Church, we singularly fail to listen to the ‘experts’ – not that anyone wants that title, but we do have employed youth and children’s workers with many years’ experience in this field and some who have PhDs and have done a lot of research. However, my own conversations with them suggest that many feel distinctly undervalued. They face constant questions about when they will be ordained, as if being a lay children’s worker isn’t a strong enough vocation. Their remuneration rates are well below that of a curate which is supposed to be the minimum needed to live and devote yourself to ministry. And there’s a feeling that they are blamed for the failures of the wider church – how many clergy are told funding for their post is not being renewed because they haven’t brought enough new people to church over the past year?

Growing Faith

That said, we are at least beginning to put in place a practical plan of action.



The Growing Faith initiative provides a great framework for churches, schools and households (recognising that schools are not a ‘recruiting ground’, but rather values-based institutions looking to help young people discover a moral compass). There are clear steps that every individual and church can take. I truly hope that Growing Faith will develop into something of a movement, but at this moment in time I don’t sense much of an urgency about this in most parts of the church.

Perhaps the biggest learning point for me in all this, (and you’ll think it is so obvious it hardly needs stating), is that when the church starts to address the issues that young people care about, climate change being one, but there are many others, and when church leaders take time to listen to young people and genuinely take on board their suggestions, then we will start to create an environment where faith and church participation can grow. This is about putting children and young people at the forefront of a movement of change in the same way as they are with the environment.

And maybe the first step is for everyone in full-time ministry to commit to spending more time with people under the age of 21 – two days per week was the bold target suggested by one activist. For, in spending time with young people, we’re also likely to find ourselves having to think about, and act on, the environment, mental health, questions of identity and so on.

We now need to accept that the church itself has been subject to global warming and is threatened with a catastrophic loss of biodiversity. In losing children and young people from our churches, we face not just a future threat, but the loss of their creativity, energy, vision and skill which is available to us now.

Society has changed so rapidly in the last thirty years that many of the factors which once provided an environment for growing faith are now no longer fruitful. We will need new technologies and a new culture if we are to survive. That culture will be defined by humility (a recognition that we don’t have all the answers), and by learning (the heart of Christian discipleship), and by sacrifice (a willingness to set aside our own needs and desires for the good of others). Jesus said that the children would be our teachers. It’s time we started to listen.

Martyn Snow, Bishop of Leicester

Letter from Orkney



Hello everyone, it’s been a bit of a difficult time lately. I had a new knee fitted in Glasgow, where I was treated unbelievably well by the team of Doctors and

Nurses dedicated to joint replacement in the Golden Jubilee Hospital. It was built for primarily Arab clients coming over here for specialist treatment. Fortunately for me it didn’t work out and they passed it on to the NHS complete with attached Hotel for a peppercorn fee. However, the flight back to Orkney four days later on my own, and the subsequent four weeks, have been very trying, as I’m sure fellow knee replacement club members will agree.

So with this in mind, along with the

Mac’s Seafood Noodles

(This is going to make me famous) Starter for 4 people

For a main course, just increase contents by 50% and add perhaps Asparagus or tender-stem broccoli as a vegetable.



Ingredients:

(All available at Uncle Tesco’s or for the well-heeled, Great Aunt Waitrose)
16 precooked or headless shelled large King Prawns (4 each)
8 large (if possible Hand-dived) Scallops including the Coral (orange bit)
1 Packet of Amoy Medium (Straight to Wok) Noodles
1 Medium sized onion, finely chopped
1 Green Capsicum (Pepper), finely chopped
1 Packet of Dill, finely chopped (pinch out large stems)
1 Jar of Hollandaise Sauce
1 Lemon (Hard Skin), zested
4 cloves of Garlic, finely chopped
Olive Oil, Salt and Pepper

rather exciting winter, which peaked at 100mph+ winds and the loss of the doors from my boat (someone has got a bargain: probably Norway), I felt in need of some comfort food. However, every hobble I take reminds me to stay ‘diet conscious’ so this following recipe is a compromise.

Remember it’s me (Mac) doing it, so it has to be – EASY!

Mac Dodge, St Mary’s, Stromness

Method

1. Put plates in low oven to pre-heat
2. Heat a tablespoon of olive oil in a frying pan and add finely chopped garlic, allowing to cook for a minute or two (but NOT brown) then add and mix in the finely chopped onion, stirring for three minutes, so as not to brown
3. Add the finely chopped pepper to the mix as well as half the chopped dill and the zested lemon, mixing into the onion thoroughly
4. Cook slowly over a moderate flame (to avoid burning) until the pepper is softish and add a good pinch of salt and pepper
5. Add two tablespoons of Hollandaise sauce and mix thoroughly
6. Add a packet of noodles, breaking them up so there are no clumps
7. Now stir the mix for a couple of minutes to allow everything to meld and heat through
8. Season to taste

Whilst doing this and using a second frying pan or saucepan:

1. Put a tablespoon of olive oil into the frying pan and when hot, cook the scallops for up to a minute, then remove and place in a bowl to one side
2. Add a tablespoon of olive oil into the same frying pan and cook the prawns for two minutes or reheat thoroughly if pre-cooked, then add to scallops
3. Mix some of the chopped dill into the scallops and prawns

To Serve

1. Place vegetable mix in the centre of each plate and sprinkle remaining dill around the food and plate
2. Carefully add two scallops and four prawns to each pile of vegetable noodles and serve with a small dollop of Hollandaise on the side

Eat your heart out Rick Stein.

Tweet of the month

Although I am currently in Cornwall on holiday (no, I don't spend all my time on holiday: I have annual leave to use up!), it occurred to me that while I mentioned Antpittas quite a bit last month when talking about the Green-and-black Fruiteater, I didn't actually discuss any of them in detail so it is time to rectify that.

As I mentioned last month, Antpittas are only found in the Neotropical region. This Neotropical region always includes Central America, the Caribbean and all of South America, often includes coastal areas of Mexico and some people include southern Florida and even more of southern USA but that's pushing it. Anyway, Antpittas have characteristically long legs and a very short tail and walk around on the ground with their body held almost vertically. Most of them live in forests and their habit of walking around on the ground makes them incredibly difficult to see in the dense undergrowth they typically prefer. Having said that Antpittas, like most large bird families found in the Neotropical Region, have representatives in most of the different altitudinal zones. This ranges

from lowland tropical Amazonian Basin up to the montane Paramo, which is typically above 2,800 metres or about 9,200 feet. Personally I have seen Tawny Antpitta at 3,500 metres or 11,500 feet and unlike most Antpittas this species will venture into the open to feed and is probably the easiest of all of them to see.

Most species of Antpitta could be considered to be fairly dull birds, certainly when compared to some of the outrageously colourful birds found in the Neotropical region. Tawny Antpitta is one of the duller Antpittas, but I thought it was attractive to look at. However, the Crescent-faced Antpitta is probably the most striking and best-looking Antpitta I have seen so far. For the avoidance of doubt, the crescent that it gets its name from is the white patch between the eye and bill, although arguably there is a more obvious crescent bordering the rear of the eye. It is the smallest Antpitta I have seen, about the same length as a Blue Tit, and it is right there in the cute category too. Its tail is so short that I never actually saw it. This is a high-



altitude species and I saw it at about 3,200 metres or 10,500 feet in montane forest. At this altitude sickness is a real possibility and walking uphill is quite an effort. Until recently this species was thought to be very rare because it was seldom seen, but this is changing now and like a lot of the other Antpittas, it can be seen relatively easily where they have become used to being fed.

It is never hard to see God in Creation and for me this bird encapsulates some aspects of God: hard to see, beautiful when seen, but definitely worth the effort.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

Housegroups, past and present



When coming into a new community, it's often a good idea to find a small group or activity to join – something that meets regularly and that allows you to get to know a few people quite well. Gradually your new friends will be the link into the wider fellowship of the school/workplace/parish, etc.

I have always found house groups very rewarding in this respect. We currently belong to two quite separate groups, one studying the Passion story, as told in Matthew's Gospel, the other looking at how Dorothy L Sayers adapted the story for radio in her sequence The Man born to be King. (For us personally this is a most useful preparation for going to Oberammergau in May to see the Passion Play which the villagers perform every tenth year).

In 1969 when we came to Tring we joined a house group that met in what was then the Vicarage – the C19 part of Sutton Court, behind St Peter & St Paul's Church. Later on the venue changed to our house, so that we did not need always to find a babysitter. I have two abiding memories of this group: first, the

friendliness of the participants, especially the churchwardens, Tom Grace and Chris Slemeck; and secondly, how the discussion reflected the turbulence of those years, the 60s and 70s: 'Honest to God', the New English Bible, new forms of liturgy – the times they were a-changin'.

Fast forward to 1986 – a new job meant relocating the family to Woodham in Surrey. One housegroup in the new parish met, very conveniently, a few doors down from our new house. I went along, was introduced to the other members and we began a laborious plod through the ancestry of Joseph, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 1.

A woman arrived late, sidled in and tried to be unobtrusive. When eventually she spoke up and joined in the discussion I was astounded. This had to be Helen, a close friend from my schooldays in Harrow, whom I had long since lost touch with. Quite apart from the sheer

pleasure of meeting again, Helen was a valuable fund of local knowledge and a parent-governor at the children's new school.

I'm not arguing that housegroups and church-based activities are an infallible way to trace old friends, but in my experience they do offer opportunities for some worthwhile relationships. 'Come to Tring' said a colleague in Berkhamsted many years ago. 'Tring's nice. The people are nice.' This has certainly been my experience; I hope and trust it may always be yours, too.

Carole Wells
St Peter & St Paul

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



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

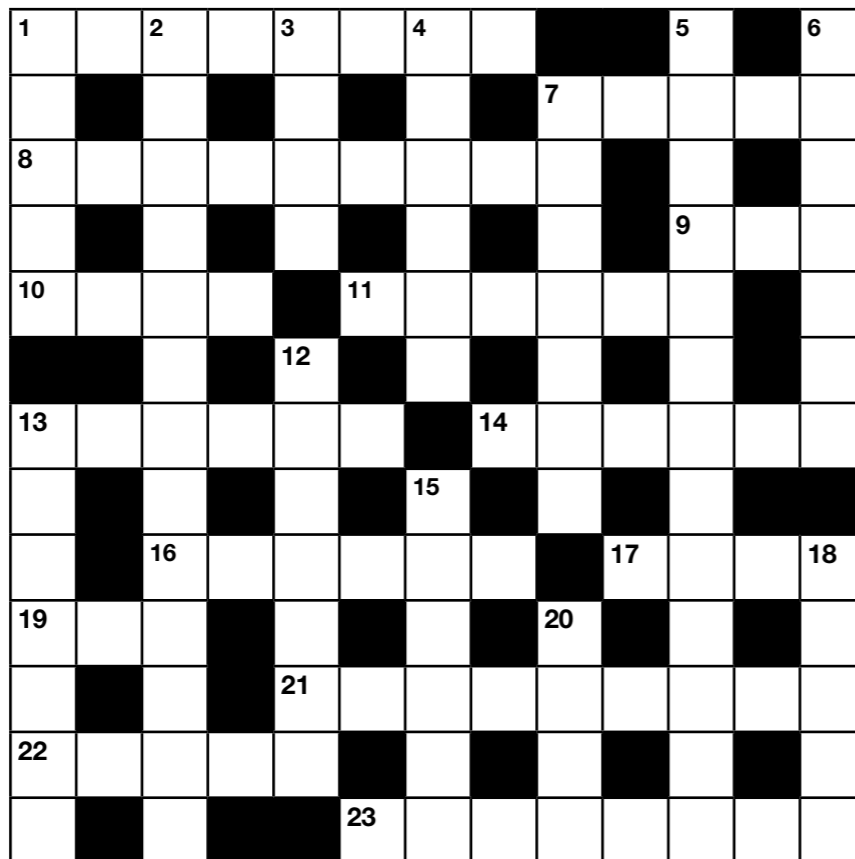
Crossword

ACROSS

1. Greek hero – vulnerable heel (8)
7. Relating to the sun (5)
8. Member of a Protestant sect (9)
9. Jug (3)
10. Mark of approval (4)
11. Jesus re-appears 'On the road to
13. Statement (6)
14. Close (6)
16. Happily combined (6)
17. A way up (4)
19. Move fast (3)
21. Brightness (9)
22. Twenty (5)
23. Formal objections (8)

DOWN

1. Racecourse (5)
2. Sacrament (4) (9)
3. Resting place (4)
4. A puzzle (6)
5. Pictures (13)
6. Harvest store (7)
7. Type of ship (7)
12. Wander with little purpose (7)
13. To set right, a wrong (7)
15. Underground room (7)
18. Unexpected benefits (5)
20. Entwined rope (4)



Answers on page 38

Parish Book Club

In February the Parish Book Group looked at 'From Judgement to Hope: A Study on the Prophets' by Walter Brueggemann (Westminster John Knox Press, 2019). Brueggemann is a United Churches of Christ minister (which has its roots in the Congregational and Reformed Christian traditions) and was, until retirement, Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in suburban Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Our session was led by Michelle Grace.

The book is a concise look at the prophetic books of the Old Testament. After a short preface by Brueggemann, the book has a quick overview of the prophets by Patricia Kull. Brueggemann then turns his attention to the three major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The book of Isaiah gets extensive discussion and, to my mind, this is the best part of the book.

This is followed by a general

introduction on the Twelve Minor prophets and a chapter on 'the three major Minor Prophets' – Hosea, Amos and Micah. Brueggemann then looks at three prophets from the Persian period, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The book concludes with a summary of every one of the prophetic books, a chronology of the prophets, a glossary and a list of well-known quotations from the book of Isaiah.

The book was enjoyed by most of those who read it and was thought to be a good introduction to the prophetic writings. The summaries and chronology were seen as very useful, but it was said that a map would have been a valued addition. While the book is brief, only 103 pages, it is quite densely packed with relevant information.

The one critic of the book thought it was a bit repetitive, but that may reflect the united basic theme of many of the prophets. While the message of

the prophets varied, they often warned that God was not fooled by superficial religiosity (the outward keeping of festivals, the offering of sacrifices, etc.) but God wanted justice in the land, for the widow, the orphan, the stranger and the refugee. The prophets warned of God's judgement coming but also gave a hope of redemption if the people amended their ways and established justice in the land.

Michelle asked us what a modern prophet would say to us in Tring in 2020. This led to a 'full and frank' discussion on a range of themes including free market economics, climate change and the refugee crisis. It was a very enjoyable session.

Our next session is from 6.30pm on Sunday 19 April, when we will be discussing 'The Bell by Iris Murdoch', under the guidance of Edmund Booth.

Jon Reynolds, Tring Team Parish

What life was like



The following paragraphs come from a little book by Robert Lacey and Danny Danziger called 'The Year 1000, what life was like at the turn of the first millennium'. This was published at the turn of the second millennium when we did a lot of looking back and wondering what life was like for our ancestors.

In those days it was not possible for ordinary people to partake of the bread and wine at weekly Eucharist services, as there would not have been enough to go round. So the services at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, when everyone was invited to partake, took on a special significance.

Aelfric was a Wessex schoolmaster who taught and wrote between 987 and 1002.

A homily written by Aelfric, a Wessex schoolmaster writing between 987 and

1002, concerning the bread and wine taken at the Eucharist:

'Dearly beloved, you have frequently been told about our Saviour's resurrection, how on this present day he rose up in strength from death after his Passion. Now, by the grace of God, we will explain to you about the Holy Eucharist to which you must now go... lest any doubt concerning the living food might harm you.

'Now certain men have often questioned and still frequently question how the bread which is prepared from grain and baked by the heat of the fire can be changed into Christ's body; or the wine, which is pressed out from many grapes, becomes changed, by any blessing, into the Lord's blood?

'Now we say to such men that some things are said about Christ figuratively... he is called "bread" and "lamb" and so forth figuratively. He is called "Bread" because he is our life, and the life of the angels; he is called "lamb" on account of his innocence; a "lion" on account of the strength with which he over comes the powerful Devil. But nevertheless

according to true nature, Christ is neither bread nor lamb, nor lion....

'If we consider the Holy Eucharist in a bodily sense, then we see that... it is corruptible bread and corruptible wine, and by the power of the divine word it is truly Christ's body and blood; not however, bodily, but spiritually.'

Aelfric's teaching on the Eucharist differed significantly from the later doctrine of transubstantiation as fixed by the Catholic Church. In stressing the symbolism of the bread and wine, the monk was almost Protestant in his teaching, and the treatise on which he based his homily was later condemned and ordered to be destroyed by the Roman church. But what strikes the modern reader is less the theology than the clarity and power of the monk's exposition of a complicated subject; composed and conveyed without condescension or over simplification.

**Margaret Whiting
St Peter & St Paul**

Aelfric, 'Sermon on the Sacrifice of Easter Day', in Swanton, Anglo-Saxon Prose, pp 149-152.

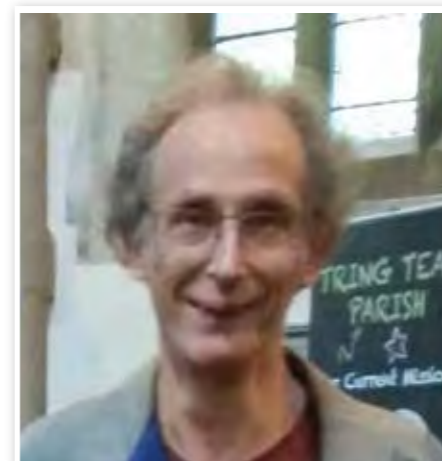
In memory of Leslie Barker

On 26 February St Peter & St Paul's had a marvellous turn out for the funeral of my brother, Leslie. Others have already written about Leslie's contribution to Tring so this is a little about Leslie's life before you knew him.

Leslie was born in Clapham, the village in Bedfordshire, in 1954 in his grandparents' house. Our parents Pat and Pam Barker bought and moved to 10 Allen Close, Queens Park in Bedford when Leslie was 6 months old. Our mum is still there over sixty-five years later.

Leslie used to go off (unbeknown to Mum) to watch the traffic on the A428 Bromham to Bedford Road about 500 yards from home; he was always back in the close when Mum looked out. At 15 he spent a lot of time cycling around Bedfordshire villages photographing Churches. Leslie passed the 11+ exam and went to a Bedford public boarding school as a dayboy. At his interview he told them he wanted to be an architect. Also there and later also to be an architect was Robert Thompson, probably better known to Tring as Bob, Leslie's employer.

Leslie graduated from Sheffield University where he had joined the Christian Union and made life-long friends. In his home town of Bedford he was involved in the national Young Life campaign. He went on to work as an architect and worked in public service for development corporations and local authorities. He was made redundant twice and knew the pain of unemployment. He spent part of that time doing a development course at Oxford



Brookes and spent two weeks in Jamaica on a project relating to that course.

Leslie travelled widely including to Romania to help orphans after the break up of eastern Europe. He also visited the Holy Land and the seven churches in Turkey. He travelled throughout most of England taking photos of Churches and may well have a complete collection among his slides. Leslie liked to make informed and correct decisions and researched things thoroughly, hence the huge number of books in his possession: religious, architectural and books on topical issues such as the Grenfell fire disaster about which he felt passionately.

Leslie didn't have a TV but got his news on current events from Radio 4. He enjoyed watching architecturally-linked programmes and Songs of Praise on his monthly visits to Mum.

I think my parents would have called their first child Leslie whichever sex they were because Leslie is named after Mum's older brother who died in a plane

crash towards the end of the second world war. He had been a tail gunner and died in a fire as the plane attempted to land back at base.

Leslie had many letters published in the Big Issue and I suspect he wrote many letters to David Gorke, his MP. Leslie was consistently involved in charities helping the homeless hence DENS is his charity for donation instead of flowers. Leslie gave a lot of money to various charities in life and in death a number of charities will benefit as well as the parishes of St John's and St Leonard in Bedford, St James in Alperton and St Peter & St Paul's in Tring.

Leslie's interests and writings appear to indicate he was creating a theory of Christian architecture. He was heavily involved in Christians in Architecture and planning and helped young architects and planners through writing published on his website www.architecture.org.uk.

Thank you to all who managed to visit Leslie in Stoke Mandeville or John Radcliffe in Oxford. Those visits were not always comfortable as Leslie's mental state varied and he wasn't always welcoming. Thankfully yours and our prayers were answered and when we said goodbye to him on Boxing Day, he was at peace. We still don't know the cause of his death, linked to a rare form of dementia, but the neuropathologists are still analysing Leslie's brain and other organ tissue taken and retained for research and teaching. So in death, as well as in life, Leslie is helping others.
David Barker, younger brother

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Tring Team Parish Men's Society



Founded in 1906, what we now know as The Tring Team Men's Society was affiliated to the Church of England until 1985, when it became an independent society. It was and still is committed to providing men with fellowship, friendship and an opportunity to share worries and concerns and to share ideas for coping with them better. The connection with the Tring Team Parish helps to improve links between the community and the five parish churches

and we welcome all men in the area to share our monthly get-togethers, whether you're a churchgoer or not.

Once winter is over and brighter days come round, we organise outings to local places of interest and last year it was to the Buckinghamshire Steam Centre at Quainton where we indulged ourselves in man-type activities like poking around the steam sheds and reminiscing about the wonderful days of grubby old steam! This year we're thinking of taking some coach trips further afield and suggestions around your particular interests are always welcome.

In the meantime, we meet at the Half Moon at Wilstone at 12.30pm once a

month to chat and put the world to rights (no shortage of opportunities there then) and food is available if you'd like to eat during the proceedings. Keep an eye open in the Village News, the church pewsheets, Comment and the Tring Team Parish website to get the dates for our meetings. There's nothing so formal as membership fees; just come along and join in. Our next meeting is on Thursday 9 April. The subject is 'Counting our blessings'.

If you'd like to discuss the group before coming, ring me on 07836 208752. See you there? Hope so!

Jeremy Buckman
St Mary's Puttenham

Notices from the Tring Churches

ST MARTHA'S METHODIST CHURCH



HOUSE GROUP

John and Jennifer's House Group meets again on Wednesday 1 April, continuing the Lent theme of following the journey to the cross.

FRIENDSHIP CLUB

This meets again on Tuesday afternoon 7 April, for a poetry afternoon on a Spring theme – please bring a poem to read.

JEAN'S CAFÉ

Jean continues to provide lunches at the Church every Tuesday from 12.00 to 1.30pm. Everyone is welcome to drop in for soup, lunch, tea or coffee, etc.

EASTER SERVICES

The service on Good Friday will be at St Martha's this year at 10.00 on April followed by the Walk of Witness at 11.00am. On Easter Sunday morning Revd Rachael Hawkins will lead Communion at the early starting time of 9.00am.

5 April 10.00am
Thanksgiving Service led by
Dr Roy Swanston

10 April 10.00am
Good Friday
Revd Rachael Hawkins

12 April 9.00am
Communion
Revd Rachael Hawkins

19 April 10.00am
Mike Lees & Wojciech Zalewski

26 April 10.00am
John Benson

NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH



BRIGHT HOUR

First Tuesday of every month
2.30pm

MILL CAFÉ

Thursdays 11.30am-1.30pm

5 April 10.30am
Morning Worship
Aubrey Dunfield

12 April 10.30am
Easter Day
To be confirmed

17 April 10.30am
Morning Worship
David Nash

26 April 10.30am
Morning Worship
Nick Harris

TRING COMMUNITY CHURCH



SERVICES

Every Sunday 10.30am
Nora Grace Hall

CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC CHURCH

SUNDAY MASS

Confession 5.15pm
& by appointment
Saturdays 6.00pm (Vigil)
Sundays 12.15pm with
Children's Liturgy
Coffee afterwards

WEEKDAY MASS

Mondays 10.00am
Thursdays 10.00am
Rosary Prayer group after
Mass

THURSDAYS

Christian Meditation Group
8.00pm in Sacristy

FRIDAYS

5.00-6.00pm Church Hall
SPOG (Small People of God)
Age 7 + onwards:
Tricia Apps

SATURDAYS

9.00-10.00am **Tricia Apps**
Sacramental Preparation
First Reconciliation and
Communion

SUNDAYS

2.00-3.00pm Power Hour
Group Years 7 – 9

JUSTICE AND PEACE GROUP

Michael Demidecki
michaeldemidecki@gmail.com

ROSARY PRAYER GROUP

Thursdays, after 10.00am
Mass

LADIES GROUP

Annabelle Halliday

CHILDREN'S LITURGY

Viv Bryan, Helen Bojarski

SAFEGUARDING

Caroline Burmaster
tringsg1@rcdow.org.uk
Mary Miles
tringsg2@rcdow.org.uk

MEDITATION

Thursdays 8.00pm

HIGH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH



SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

Service at 10.30am with
Junior Church and Crèche

SUNDAYS @ 7

First Sunday of the month at
7.00pm

ACTIVITY ROOM

Tuesdays 9.30-11.30am
Craft, stories, songs and
more! Suitable for 0 to 4yrs

COFFEE FOR A CAUSE

Tuesdays 10.30am – 12noon
Coffee in the foyer in aid of
BMS World Mission

TOTS

Wednesdays 9.30-11.30am
Baby play area, soft play,
trikes, scooters!
Suitable for 0 to 4yrs

GAMES AFTERNOON

Wednesdays 2.00-4.00pm
Traditional games, puzzles
and refreshments

PLAY CAFÉ

Thursdays 9.30-11.30am
Relax while the little ones play
Suitable for 0 to 3yrs

FRIDAY CAFÉ

Fraturdays 12.00-1.30pm
Freshly cooked lunches

WHO LET THE DADS OUT

First Saturday of the month at
8.30am to 10.00am

Tring Team Anglican Churches

The Tring Team consists of five churches: St Peter & St Paul in Tring; All Saints, Long Marston; St Cross, Wilstone; St Mary's, Puttenham; and St John the Baptist, Aldbury.

1ST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
8.00am Holy Communion BCP Aldbury
10.00am Worship for All Communion
Tring
10.00am Sunday Worship CW Long
Marston
10.00am Worship for All Aldbury
10.00am Holy Communion CW Wilstone
12.00 midday Baptisms Tring
12.00 midday Baptisms Aldbury
3.30pm Holy Communion Puttenham

2ND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

8.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Holy Communion BCP Aldbury
10.00am Holy Communion Long Marston
10.00am Sunday Worship Wilstone
10.00am Worship for All Tring
11.30am Holy Communion BCP Tring
3.30pm Service of Light Puttenham
6.00pm Evening Prayer Long Marston

3RD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Wilstone
10.00am Worship for All Long Marston
10.00am Holy Communion Aldbury
12.00 midday Baptisms Aldbury
3.00pm Stick Sunday Service with tea
3.30pm Taizé Puttenham

4TH SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Worship for All Wilstone
10.00am Holy Communion Aldbury
10.00am Holy Communion Long Marston
3.30pm Evensong Puttenham

5TH SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Holy Communion Long Marston
10.00am Holy Communion CW Wilstone
3.30pm Service of Light Puttenham

DACORUM FOODBANK

Weekdays 10.00am St P&P

BABY SONG TIME

Mondays in term time 11.00am St P&P

TODDLER WORSHIP

Second Tuesday of each month 11.00am
St P&P

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Mondays 9.00am Morning Prayer Tring
Tuesdays 8.30am Morning Prayer Tring
Tuesdays 9.15am Holy Communion CW
Tring
Wednesdays 8.30am Morning Prayer
Aldbury
Thursdays 10.00am Holy Communion
BCP Tring
Fridays 8.30am Morning Prayer Tring
Fourth Tuesday in the month 10.00am
Holy Communion Wilstone

YOUTH CAFÉ

Mondays in term time 3.30pm St P&P
Secondary School aged children meet for
toast, crisps, coke and chat.

MEDITATION

Thursdays 8.00pm Corpus Christi

COFFEE MORNINGS

Tuesdays 10.30am Aldbury
Tuesdays 10.30am Wilstone
Fridays 10.00am St P&P
Saturdays 10.00am St P&P

YOUNG ADULTS GROUP TAYA

First and third Thursdays 7.30pm St P&P
A discussion group for young adults

FIRST SATURDAY LUNCH

Saturday 4 April
From 1.00pm for those who have been
bereaved to meet and eat with others.
Contact Huw Bellis for information on
01442 822170.

BAPTISM PREPARATION

Second Sunday in the month 11.20am
St P&P Emmie Hobbs Room

AFTERNOON TEA

Fourth Tuesday in the month
2.00-3.30pm All Saints, Long Marston

BOOK GROUP

Sunday 19 April 6.30pm, St P&P

CRAFT AND A CUPPA

Tuesdays 2.00pm, St P&P

MEN'S SOCIETY

Thursday 9 April 12.30pm
Half Moon, Wilstone

ST ALBANS PILGRIMAGE

Monday 13 April 7.00am, St P&P

PIANO & MORE

Sunday 19 April 3.00pm St P&P



Useful contacts

TRING TEAM PARISH

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

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

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

Curate
Rev Sarah Marshall
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Tringford Road
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Mike Watkin
01442 890407

Parish Co-ordinators
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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
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Trish Dowden
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01442 824929
jjgoody@ntlworld.com
tringparishhall@hotmail.com

Hall Secretary
Barbara Anscombe
01442 828325
Bandb33@talktalk.net

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

ST MARTHA'S METHODIST CHURCH
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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
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joe@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
Ruth Egan 07521 513494
ruth@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

Assistant Minister
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Administration/facilities hire
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01442 824054


NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH
Minister
Vacancy

JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP
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michaeldemidecki@gmail.com
www.justiceandpeacetring.org

OUR CHURCHES ONLINE
www.tringteamparish.org.uk
www.tringchurchmusic.org.uk
www.stmarthas-tring.org.uk
www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
www.newmillbaptist.org.uk
www.akemanstreet.org.uk
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Please contact the Treasurer if you would like to take a subscription to Comment: £10.00 for 10 issues each year. Contact David Whiting if you would like it posted.

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 32

ACROSS

1. ACHILLES
7. SOLAR
8. CALVINIST
9. URN
10. TICK
11. EMMAUS
13. REMARK
14. NEARBY
16. UNITED
17. STEP
19. RUN
21. SPLENDOUR
22. SCORE
23. PROTESTS

DOWN

1. ASCOT
2. HOLY COMMUNION
3. LAIR
4. ENIGMA
5. ILLUSTRATIONS
6. GRANARY
7. STEAMER
12. TRAIPISE
13. REDRESS
15. CELLAR
18. PERKS
20. KNOT


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Joe Smith, a review

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