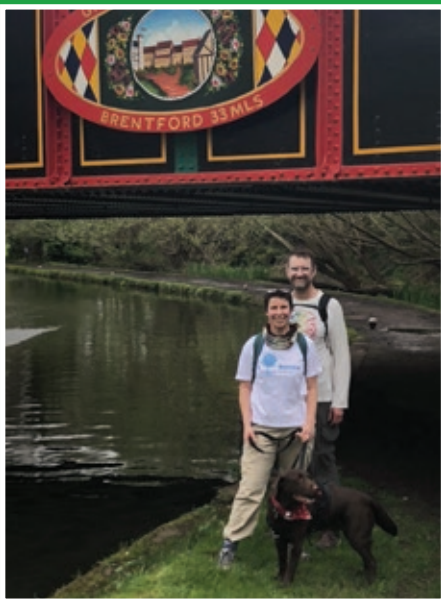


# COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



# What's on in June in Tring Church

## Services at Tring Church

### Sunday 2nd June

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

### Sunday 9th June

8am Holy Communion traditional language\*\*  
10am Worship for all

### Sunday 16th June

8am Holy Communion traditional language  
10am Communion with craft activity \*\*  
3pm Piano and More concert

### Sunday 23rd June

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

### Sunday 30th June

11am Team Communion for Tring Patronal Festival with craft activity \*\*  
Followed by lunch in the churchyard (or hall if wet)

\*\* Streamed service on our website and YouTube

## Mid-week Services in Tring

9.15am Tuesdays  
Holy Communion

10am Thursdays  
Holy Communion in traditional language

## Lots more going on



**Mondays 3.30pm - 5pm**  
Youth Café in term time - toast, chat etc for secondary school kids

### Food Bank

Monday to Friday  
10am - 12noon.  
Drop-off donations and collect food



### Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm Craft and a Cuppa

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

### Social Coffee

Fridays, Saturdays  
10am - 12 noon,  
and after Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday services



### Piano & more series



### Sunday June 9th

3pm for an hour's concert of music followed by refreshments.  
Free but collection for church and piano expenses

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

## Celebrating Peter & Paul



Seven hundred and nine years ago the town of Tring received its market charter on the feast day of St Peter & St Paul, 29 June 1315. The parish church was being extended in this century. It is, however, clear that with the market charter dating from the church's feast day, the church played a central part in the life of the whole church.

There is some scholarly debate about how much the medieval church functioned like a village hall versus how much they were protected for worship only. One interesting aspect of medieval parish life was the Church Ale or Parish Ale. These were social events held in the church to raise funds for building repairs. These developed into a wide range of fundraisers and social occasions. The word bridal comes from bride-ale when those invited to the wedding would raise money for the couple. Personally, I like the idea of reviving lamb-ales to be held at shearing time.

The church and the churchyard in the English parish church have a long history of being used for eating, drinking, plays, dances, markets and judicial functions. Church and town belong together in a deeply entwined way. It is wonderful to see that today we have the market stalls outside the church each Friday morning. Each week the fruit and veg stallholders come in for their tea. It is 709 years of remembering Peter and Paul each week,

even if folk miss the significance.

It is equally wonderful that the children from Bishop Wood School have on their school uniform the keys and the sword symbols of Peter and Paul. We tell them and all of the children of Tring, this is your church. Whilst we have strong views about what kind of spirituality and understanding of God we would like everyone to have, I equally like the

idea of a medieval church which is there for the whole town and for everyone to encounter their God, who is broader than we sometimes imagine.

This year as a parish we will be celebrating Peter and Paul a day late, on 30 June. There will be one service only at 11.00am and afterwards we will share a meal together. Everyone is welcome.

**Huw Bellis, Tring Team**



**LET'S CELEBRATE**

**Tring Summer Carnival**  
Saturday 29 June 2024  
12 Noon  
Pound Meadow, Tring

Face painting, games and competitions, plant sale

Justice & Peace Group, Tring

## Bee Friendly Tring



I've loved bees since I can't remember when. Aside from honeybees there are over 250 species of bees in the UK alone, from solitary bees such as the red mason bee to bumble bees living in small colonies. These different bees have different shaped mouth parts so will often feed on different flowers: bumble bees can reach into foxgloves, for example, to extract



nectar, whilst honeybees prefer flatter, more open flowers. On some flowers, however, you will see many different species of bee, such as on lavender. Sunflowers are another flower that offers so much to so many forms of wildlife. This was the inspiration for my panel.

Tring received a Bee Friendly Town award in 2022 and the Justice & Peace Group continues to promote pollinator-friendly spaces around the town and is now campaigning for a ban on pesticides.

**Polly Eaton**  
High Street Baptist Church

## Beacons of hope



Through our own prayer life and membership of a community that supports one another in faith and collaborates in mission, we are shaped by the

good news of Jesus Christ and have something genuine to offer to the world. Our calling is to be beacons of hope, and God gives us all we need to fulfil that calling.

The world does need hope. There is so much division, despair and

indifference; growing inequality – so much that damages our humanity. There is a temptation for Christians to get sucked into culture wars or to retreat into a holy huddle. Our own charism blends deep spirituality, an active apostolate and an embeddedness in the every day. We are uniquely gifted to be beacons of hope in the world.

Hope is trust in the God who brings life out of death. It is trust that God's dream for the world will come to fruition. It is confidence based on what God has done in the past and therefore will do in the future. It is the conviction that sin and suffering will not have the final

word, the conviction that God will be faithful and that good will triumph. Hope is what enables us to persevere through suffering and difficulty. It is what gives us the energy to live a life of dedication to God and to others despite the difficulties, setbacks and sorrows. It is what keeps us joyful. Hope is faith in future tense. In a TED talk in 2017, Pope Francis said that 'hope is able to see a tomorrow. Hope is the door that opens onto the future'.

**Dr Jessie Rogers**  
**Dean of the Faculty of Theology,**  
**Maynooth University, Ireland**  
*Supplied by Natalie Browne,*  
*Corpus Christi Church*

## A year of the DENS Foodbank

I am writing on behalf of DENS to thank you for your kind donations given in support of our Foodbank service over the last year April 2023 – March 2024. You donated 991kg (the equivalent of 991 large bags of rice or pasta or 2,359 large tins of baked beans). Your donation has enabled us to continue offering emergency food parcels to local people, supporting them through crisis.

The range of services DENS provides helps homeless people make

positive changes to their lives, learn new skills and to build their confidence and ultimately assist people to move on into independent living.

Weekly, the Foodbank provides food to the DENS Elms Hostel, which accommodates 44 residents, and to the Day Centre who have provided 4,484 meals throughout the year.

Last year we provided 9,853 people, of whom 3,968 were children, with emergency food parcels.

On Christmas Eve we delivered over 100 Christmas Hampers for 240 Adults and 145 children.

Your contribution enables DENS services to provide vital support to those most in need. If you would like to know more about our services, please visit [www.dens.org.uk](http://www.dens.org.uk). Thank you once again for your support.

**DENS Dacorun Foodbank**

## Crucifixion or electrocution – symbol of our faith?



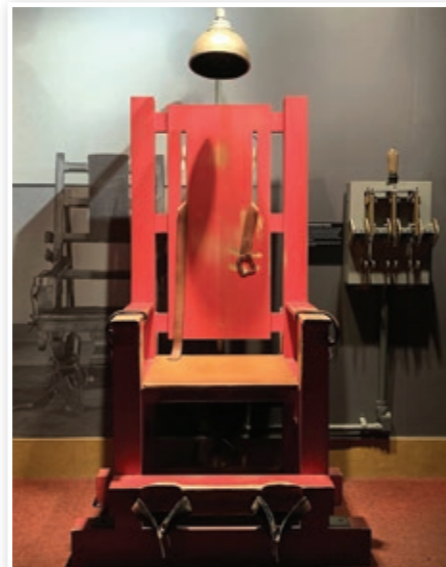
I have just started reading 'Dominion – The Making of the Western Mind', a lengthy work by Tom

Holland, a popular historian and broadcaster. I say 'just' but after several weeks have only reached the third chapter (out of twenty-one...), so I can't claim to be familiar with the whole book yet. I was, however, engaged by Holland's preface in which he talks at some length about crucifixion as an essential instrument of oppression for the Roman Empire. It was such a horrible means of killing that the Romans were reticent about claiming responsibility for introducing it. We now perhaps romanticise the cross; its familiarity blunts the horror. However, the striking point about Jesus' crucifixion is not that it happened – the horrific killing of a troublesome carpenter-turned-preacher

from the sticks would hardly have been remembered as anything unusual – but what happened next. Most victims were left on their crosses to decay for weeks, as an example to others. Jesus' body was taken down, placed in a tomb, and then, from the viewpoint of the authorities, effectively disappeared. Yet the stories and experiences were the origin of a movement that has shaped our attitudes and culture for two millennia (I think that's what Holland's book is about).

Wearing a cross is, in a way, a shocking symbol. To take a modern parallel, it's as if we commemorated the core of our beliefs, the foundation of our civilisation, with say, an electric chair, a powerful current symbol of cruelty and humiliation.

I've been carrying a little wooden cross in my pocket since Good Friday. They were handed out by Huw, with the instruction that we bring them back to burn at Easter sunrise. I didn't manage



Source: The Mob Museum in Las Vegas

to do that and I find the reminder quite useful, especially when I'm tempted to be impatient or intolerant (quite often then). It's a rough-cut symbol and the sharp edges are a jog to my palm. But I have to think that it would be more telling if I were really aware that I'm carrying the equivalent of an electric chair symbol in my pocket.

**John Whiteman, Tring Team**

## All in the family



My father, Howard Collings, had no immediate family connection to campanology to spark his interest; his great grandfather had been a ringer at

Wedmore, Somerset, but hadn't taught either his own son or grandson. Rather, Howard started ringing in 1948 at the age of 14, when all the boys in the village, aged between 12-16 (regardless of their religious persuasion) were taken to the tower at St Nicholas Old Church in Uphill, Somerset, and taught to ring in an effort to keep campanology alive in the village. Two of them achieved a level of competency and continued to ring once beyond their youth: one was my dad.

He developed his skills at university where he began to ring methods and tour with other like-minded undergraduates. Following graduation, he began working at Clarkes in Street, where he met Janet, whom he not only taught to drive but also to ring. Until they moved to Tring in 1962, they were both members of the Wells Cathedral Band. Janet allegedly already had a family connection to the Wells Cathedral Band, but again the skill was not passed down to her through the generations.

When Howard and Janet Collings moved to Tring in 1962, they were welcomed to the area by Walter Ayre, who invited Howard to join his peal band – a great honour for a 'newbie' to Hertfordshire. Howard joined the Hertfordshire County Association of Change Ringers (HCACR) and held the role of County Treasurer from 1965-1975. It was during this period that he taught his daughter Sally (me!) to ring, when the church choir was a male-only affair and, aged 9, she wasn't allowed to join her brothers. Sunday afternoons saw us ascend the tower steps, muffling the treble (the lightest bell) while I learned how to handle a bell, before then being allowed to join the practice band on Tuesday nights and then Sunday ringing for services.

I was soon accompanying my dad on ringing 'outings' to other towers, attending district meetings, and even ringing quarter peals – something I subsequently forgot how to do (although I had been assured it is like riding a bike and would all come flooding back if I

would just give it a try!). I continued to ring throughout my teenage years until leaving school but then continued as an 'emergency' ringer for weddings when asked to make up the numbers.

Dad continued to ring, mainly at St Peter & St Paul's until 1988 when he joined a tour to Australia and New Zealand for the bi-centennial, an event that required him to ask for extended leave from work (a rare thing at the time!). During this tour he heard about 'tower grabbing' and a new obsessional hobby began. He had always recorded the towers he visited, but now he started a detailed spreadsheet and spent time searching out towers he could visit. Holidays began to have an extra purpose – and Janet found herself pottering around shops for the hour or two that was needed for the 'grab'.

The obsession grew as the number of towers 'grabbed' increased – towers across the world were visited and 'grabbed' from Australia to Canada, USA to Kenya, South Africa to the Netherlands. Internationally there are now only three countries (India, Pakistan and Spain) where towers have not been visited and the total number now exceeds 6,000. A few people have done more, but when asked, Dad reportedly said that unless the opportunity presented itself, he wasn't searching for more.

In 2015, his grandson, Dan, began his Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award and needed to learn a new skill. Naturally, he chose bellringing and regularly attended Tuesday practice with his grandad, learning bell handling before graduating to rounds, call changes, and then methods. Whether it was his age or genetics, he took to it like a duck to water and soon joined the County Youth Band 'Young@Herts', travelling around

Hertfordshire meeting other young ringers under the age of 18 and representing Herts at the Ringing World National Youth Ringing Championships on three occasions. He also rang in Australia during his gap year there, and rang at a Cathedral in Sydney that his grandfather had visited before him.

In 2018, dad was voted County President of HCACR, having been made a life member (an honour given to those who have rung for fifty years) several years previously. He served for a year and ensured that he visited every district in Hertfordshire and rang at as many of the towers as he could. In addition to ringing at Tring and other towers in Hertfordshire, Dad is also a member of several other ringing societies including the 'Chiltern mid-week' and the 'Raving Ringers'. Retirement is definitely not a time to be slowing down when ringing is involved.

The final member of the family, so far, to start ringing, is Howard's son-in-law, my husband and Dan's father, Jonathan, who joined the band in 2021 when he learnt there weren't enough people available to ring in the New Year. He has risen to the challenge and has swiftly become an essential member of the Tring band. Within twelve months he was visiting other towers, ringing quarter peals as well as ringing to announce the death of the Queen and to celebrate the accession and coronation of King Charles!

2024 marks a landmark year for the family on several counts. It has already included a Quarter Peal in which Dad, his daughter, son-in-law and grandson all took part. And June 2024 marks Dad's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. We are all so proud of you, Dad!

**Sally Smith**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

### NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH

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at 10.30am

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the service

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or Facebook for up-to-date information:  
[www.facebook.com/newmillbaptist/](https://www.facebook.com/newmillbaptist/)

# A significant walk



When I heard about the Big Green Hike (6-7 April) as a way of fundraising for 'green stuff' I knew I wanted to be part of it. I love walking but previous 'significant'

walks for me have been hampered by poor map reading and blisters. To eliminate one of these potential problems I decided that a canal-based route would be the best course of action. Conveniently, the Grand Union Canal runs from Tring to Southall, West London where A Rocha UK's urban community nature reserve, Wolf Fields, is. I deemed thirty-five miles as 'significant': do-able in two days but certainly a challenge (and not without blisters as it turned out!). I managed to persuade husband Julian to join.

I love canals, and have often had the joy of living not far from them. These remnants of a short-lived industrial career are now spaces for recreation and alternative life-styles. As well as offering secret routes through urban environments, and access straight into fields and countryside, they can also be havens for wildlife. Spring was emerging; I saw bumblebee queens collecting early nectar from laurel bushes and seeking out nesting spots in the undergrowth. There were clusters of bluebells and even ducklings. Blackbird and robin songs were the accompanying playlist with an ebb and flow of M25 traffic. I also came across a magnificent swan on a huge nest a couple of meters from the path. She was incubating six eggs, leaving the mound only briefly to drink and eat.

I chatted to another passerby who said she had seen the swan nest on the same spot for the last seven years. Judging from the very recently built wharf style housing development opposite, the swan probably has a few stories to tell. Her nest contained plastic bottles and bags, old shoes and bits of metal. Nevertheless, she and her mate continued to nurture new life.

Whilst the purpose of the walk was to raise money for A Rocha UK, I gained enormously from the experience. A sponsored walk focuses the mind – much like crocheting a gift for a friend when I think about them with each stitch I make – I noticed and appreciated God's creation. The dedicated swan, sitting on her eggs, epitomizes the delicate balance between nature and the impact of humanity.

**Polly Eaton**  
High Street Baptist Church



# Fingerprints of the Holy Spirit



Scripture often connects hope to the Holy Spirit. In the creed we proclaim: 'We believe in the Holy Spirit the Lord the Giver of Life.'

The Holy Spirit is God's creative power and presence within creation. The Spirit gives form to the fabric of the cosmos, connecting and moving everything toward a common future. Theologian Jürgen Moltmann has described creation as 'the community of the Spirit' where the Spirit as the fountain of life is present in everything that exists and is alive. 'Nothing in the world exists, lives and moves of itself. Everything exists, lives and moves in others, in one another, with one another, for one another, in the cosmic interrelations of the divine Spirit.' The Holy Spirit connects the whole of creation to the divine life of the Trinity.

Creation is not closed, but open. In other words, the Holy Spirit does not simply sustain everything but brings about the genuinely new. The Spirit is at work not only to repair and restore, but also to draw everything toward the future which we can only intuit or guess at from the present, the future for which we long every time we pray 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

The Holy Spirit is present in the life of the individual believer and in the church. The Spirit at work in the church empowers her to be a catalyst, to act as the leaven of God's saving work in the world. In a way that is hard to put into words, we are the actualisation of Christ's body in particular times and places, called and equipped to be a channel of divine blessing to the world. Our fundamental vocation is to enter more deeply into the mystery of the divine life. We are to bear witness, through the transformation of our own lives and communities, to the power of God at work in the world to bring about the blessed future toward which the Spirit is drawing the whole of creation. Our experience of Christian community now should be a foretaste of salvation that fills us with hope for the future of the cosmos.

In our own lives the Holy Spirit is the transformative power that makes us more Christlike. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us (Romans 8:11). Surely that makes a

difference to our present possibilities and not only to our future hope. The Holy Spirit is at work in us as individuals, in the church and in creation. There is a coherence, a seamlessness to this work. We can identify the fingerprints of the Spirit wherever there is a deepening of life-giving connection, wherever community flourishes and communion is deepened.

When St Paul invites Christians to live out the freedom of faith in Christ, he pleads with us to 'walk in the Spirit' (Galatians 5:16). Paul illustrates what that means by beginning with its opposite: we are not to be turned in on ourselves, to be trapped by self-destructive behaviour patterns, or to act in ways that demean others, destroy relationships and shatter community. To walk in the Spirit is to experience joy and freedom, wholeness and connection. It is to be open to life. It is to radiate love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22).

St Paul says in Romans 5: 'Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.'

In just a few

lines, St Paul crams in so many hopeful, joyful words... peace, faith, grace, glory, love. St Paul tells us that 'hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.' The love of God is given to us, not grudgingly or in dribs and drabs – no, it is poured into our hearts until they are full to overflowing. God's love is our guarantee that the hope we have is not wishful thinking. Hope takes root in the midst of hardship, in the midst of suffering. It takes root and grows in precisely the places where we most need it.

God brings life out of death, the most radical of new beginnings out of the most devastating endings.

**Dr Jessie Rogers**  
Dean of the Faculty of Theology,  
Maynooth University, Ireland  
Supplied by Natalie Browne,  
Corpus Christi Church

## Bluebell Woods

*The Gods came silently during the night  
With great big buckets of paint  
And threw them  
Right across the woods;  
Cobalt, sapphire, ultramarine  
Azure, navy, indigo –  
In and out through brown and green  
Coloured music flowing round  
As bells now blue were all that could be seen.*

*The people came noisily during the day.  
Gasped at the sight,  
Cars were parked and cameras clicked.  
They wandered the paths in the dappled light  
Let the children play  
Leaping and laughing in the purple blue sea.*

*What will they take away?*

**Caroline Ellwood, St John the Baptist, Aldbury**



# 'I am the true vine'



We come to the last of Our Lord's great 'I am' sayings when in the Last Supper discourses, we read that Jesus tells his disciples 'I am the true vine and my father is the vine-grower'.

Interestingly, this statement at the beginning of John 15 is immediately preceded by the words at the end of John 14, 'Rise; let us be on our way'. But, apparently, no one goes anywhere! This is one reason which has led some scholars to wonder if the Last Supper discourses are not in their original order. Is it possible, then, that 'I am the true vine' could be more closely connected to the Last Supper? John does not include the institution of the Eucharist at that meal as do Paul, Mark, Matthew and Luke. Should there be a link between the words 'I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day....' (Mark 14, 25 and parallels)? But, perhaps, rather than forge links which were not intended between the vine and the Last Supper, it is better to remember that John gives us more Eucharistic teaching than the other Gospels without telling us what Jesus actually said at that meal.

Perhaps we should consider the background to this teaching about the true vine in the Old Testament. The vineyard is a familiar symbol for Israel, albeit in a negative sense – the unfruitful vineyard – such as the Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard in Isaiah 5 and the unproductive vineyard in Psalm 80:9: 'You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it'. However, the Psalmist continues by speaking of the wall of the vineyard being broken down. Ezekiel 17 propounds a riddle and speaks an allegory to the house of Israel which refer to planting a seed 'which becomes fruit and becomes a noble vine but which will be pulled up'. In Jeremiah 5:10 the vineyard of Judah is told 'Go through her rows of vines and destroy... strip away her branches, for they are not the Lord's'.

After such passages we can fully understand that we are now to consider the true vine, which is Jesus. Clearly in a land where vines, olive trees and fig trees are so important and familiar, we see why they feature in both Testaments. A vine is an obvious image to use for the people of God, albeit often in a negative sense.

Now we are no longer concerned with the people of Israel but with Jesus himself. He is not only the vine, he is the true vine, of which we must be a part, and, as such, produce fruit. This sort of imagery of belonging together and being productive may be compared with the way Paul talks of the Body of Christ. All the parts belong together and must fulfil their calling and be productive. One can also see that some of what is said about the Kingdom of God in the other Gospels is similar to what is said about the vine.

Yet the fourth Gospel's teaching has its different and distinctive features to help us understand who Jesus is and our relationship with him; indeed, the necessity of being part of him. With this goes the warning to be fruitful or be cut off. Jesus, then, is the real vine which produces fruit. This is in contradistinction to the unproductive vine of Judaism. There is a sombre note to this teaching in that we are being warned that branches which do not bear fruit will be cut off, and even fruit-bearing branches need pruning to produce more. Further, what is pruned is to be burnt. We are tempted to interpret 'bearing fruit' to mean producing good works, and following a virtuous way of living.

There is no hope for one who does not behave in a virtuous way. A branch which does not bear fruit is not simply unproductive, it is a dead branch and should be burnt. There is no hope for the useless branch. John's teaching is starker than most of us would like. There is, or seems not to be, any intermediate state or halfway house. There are only living branches which remain, while the dead branches are destroyed. St Augustine of Hippo reduced this state of affairs to four Latin words which may be translated as 'Either the vine, or the fire'. While we appreciate the strong terms in which this teaching is put, we still struggle with the all-or-nothing approach. For example, what about fruit-bearing branches which may be pruned to make the branches be more prolific?

One important lesson from this vine imagery is put in John 15:4-5, with the insistence it is all about the need to remain in Jesus for only so long as we can produce fruit. There is no question of going it alone. 'Apart from me you can do nothing.' Contrary to our instinct, we cannot save ourselves. Later on, in discussions about grace, these words became even more important. Some

Christians came to believe that humans have the power to do good by their own efforts, rather than by the grace of God, by being in Christ, by being part of the true vine. This idea became known as Pelagianism – a tempting heresy which holds we can do good by our own efforts, without the grace of God. In fact, in this secular age it is not recognised that we need God's grace to do good.

But, back to John 15: it gets difficult to work out the fate of pruned branches, when we remember that they were once united to Jesus, the true vine. Of course, later history could think in term of excommunication, of rigid and excessive church discipline; the burning of heretics by whichever group is a horrifying misunderstanding of some of the words of John 15.

Having read references to being thrown into the fire, we do well to move on to the positive words of 15:7, 'If you abide in me, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you'. The following verses about joy and love lead on to the rest of the chapter, where the image of the vine being pruned ceases and the emphasis is more positive with the great commandment, 'Love one another as I have loved you' and to the teaching about 'laying down one's life for one's friends'. There is more positive teaching – we are to go and bear fruit. Having finished with vine imagery, this chapter goes on to teach, not only about love, but also that the followers of Jesus have been chosen out of the world. Here we remember that in this Gospel 'world' means those who do not know God.

Having been alerted to the significance of 'I am' in these sayings in John's Gospel and the relationship of these five words to the distinct nature of Jesus, we become more aware of deeper meanings to be found in John 18. When the soldiers arrest Jesus and are asked, 'For whom are you looking?' Jesus answered, 'I am'. A natural answer – but its power is shown in that the soldiers step back and fall to the ground. It also is to be contrasted a few verses later with Peter's answer to the charge that he is a disciple, 'I am not'. Finally, before Pilate, Jesus admits to the charge of being a king. 'I am a king.' So, he is crucified on a cross that proclaims he is a king.

**Martin Banister**  
**St Alban's Cathedral**

Stephen Hearn  
**Tring Market Auctions**  
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# Anne & Malcolm's Golden Wedding Anniversary



What were you doing fifty years ago? Well, on 20 April 1974, we were married, and many of our photographs were

taken with a backdrop of cherry blossom. Each year, the blossom has tended to coincide with our anniversary, reminding us of A E Housman's 'Loveliest of trees, the cherry now...'

So, to celebrate our Golden Wedding, we spent the day at Kew Gardens where, this year, the cherries had almost finished blossoming. (But magnolias and camellias were having a second flush and apples were beginning, along with azaleas and even lilacs!) It was a glorious day, if a bit chilly – not unlike our wedding day.

We thank God for bringing us together (and keeping us together, through thick and thin) and it was a joy to extend the celebration with our church family (and cake) the next day. And it was fascinating



to see the photo that Beth Scraggs brought along, of her parents' wedding day – on the same date, but fifty years before us!

**Anne Nobbs  
St Peter & St Paul**

*And since, to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.*

**A E Housman**



Edward Stephen Clemens & Florence Payne  
Beth Scraggs' parents, married 20 April 1924

## D-DAY 80

TRING HONOURS AND REMEMBERS ALL  
THOSE INVOLVED IN THE D-DAY LANDINGS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A COMMEMORATION SERVICE  
**AT 11AM ON THURSDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE**  
IN ST PETER AND ST PAUL CHURCH, TRING, HP23 5AB.

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED AFTER THE SERVICE WHEN THERE  
WILL BE TIME TO SHARE FAMILY STORIES OF WW2 AND TO LOOK  
AT DISPLAYS OF D-DAY 80 THEMED ART WORK.

ALL ARE WELCOME. NO NEED TO RSVP.

## THE GREAT BIG GREEN WEEK

A celebration of community action to  
tackle climate change and protect nature

8-16 June

Scan the QR code to get details about all  
the great events happening in Tring

www.sustainabletring.org.uk

## The Hospice of St Francis

When people hear what I do they often say something along the lines of, 'That must be so depressing!'. In reality being the Head of Spiritual Care at the Hospice for the last ten years has been the most life-affirming job I've ever done, and I love it.

This year we've been able to obtain extra funding and now employ my wonderful colleague, Revd. Miranda Seldon. We also have a fantastic volunteer, Ann Kempster. Miranda does the bulk of the work on the Inpatient Unit, which releases me to be out and about visiting patients and families in the community.

We are there for everybody, whatever their religion or background. Our philosophy of spiritual care can be summed up as 'presence'. Sometimes we are chatting to a patient or their family about general things. At other

times we might be getting into deep conversations. Quite a lot of the time we are simply there, perhaps in silence, holding the space.

For the past year my wife Claudia and I have run the Sunday Gathering once a month in our Spring Centre. It's a chance for patients, bereaved or Hospice volunteers to share some quiet, reflective time together. We meet for coffee before focusing our thoughts around a simple liturgy.

In my role at the hospice, no two days are the same. I might spend some time with a patient or family member. There are the usual meetings to attend like in any organisation. I could be using one of the Hospice vehicles to take a patient to an appointment or to visit their home. I might be running a memorial event. One of my favourite memories is the time I was able to take a husband and wife to visit Whipsnade Zoo.



There is a lot more to what we do than just end-of-life care. However, I do feel that I have a responsibility to help normalise dying. In our culture people are very happy to talk about birth, but death is still something a lot of folk find difficult



to contemplate. I would say that can be true of the church. We might have a theology about what happens after we die, but the process of dying itself is sometimes overlooked.

Carl Jung had a phrase from Erasmus inscribed over the doorway of his house – 'Bidden or unbidden, God is Present.' This has been my experience working for the Hospice. There can be a grace around the process of dying. Patients' rooms or homes often feel to me to be 'thin places', where the veil between heaven and earth is wafer thin.

Thank you for all the support you give to us. Our CEO, Kate Phipps-Wiltshire, has a phrase – a Hospice is a gift a community gives to itself. We are your Hospice.

If you'd like to know more about what I do, please do get in touch.

**Ray Ashley-Brown  
The Hospice of St Francis**

## Poem of the month



Many poems have been written about the weather, but this is one of the more impressive ones. Originally untitled, it has acquired the title of 'Cloudburst' and describes, in precise images, how the landscape comes alive after a sudden burst of rain. (Readers of *Comment* will have seen plenty of this in the past months! Ed.) A huge panorama emerges, concise, detailed and almost playful; the rhythm is clear and gathers speed until the last two lines when the rain is dissipated in a cloud.

Emily Dickinson was born in 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts, the middle child of a lawyer. She enjoyed her schooling

and was particularly interested in poetry and science, especially botany. As was typical of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, she had little further education and was expected to be at home receiving guests and helping to run the household. She was unhappy with this life and with the family's evangelical leanings – she never made a formal declaration of her faith and gave up going to services, devoting herself to poetry and writing letters. She never married. For the last twenty years of her life she is said to have become something of a recluse. Her poetry was little known during her lifetime and only ten poems were published before her death. However, after she died, her sister discovered most of her poems in a locked box and they were published for the first time in 1890. She has since become one of America's most important

### Untitled... (Cloudburst)

*Like rain it sounded, till it curved  
And then I saw 'twas wind;  
It walked as wet as any wave  
And swept as dry as sand.  
When it had pushed itself away  
To some remotest plain  
A coming as of hosts was heard –  
That was indeed the rain!  
It filled the wells, it pleased the pools,  
It warbled in the road,  
It pulled the spigot from the hills  
And let the floods abroad;  
It loosened acres, lifted seas,  
The sites of centres stirred,  
Then like Elijah rode away  
Upon a wheel of cloud.*

**Emily Dickinson, 1830-1886**

poets with an extensive following. Her subjects include nature, death, love and the self.

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

# What is it to be church?



All too often we confuse 'church' with buildings and forget it means the people of God engaged in God's mission. And what is God's mission? Simply put,

God is both creative and redemptive. I like the simplicity of that. Our mission is to rejoice in that which is good, and to change that which is bad. Of course, Anglicans don't like simplicity and they expand the mission of the church into something which is

fivefold. The Anglican Communion tells us the five marks of mission are:

1. To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

On Megastick Sunday on 21 May, I (along with a group of others from the Tring Team) was actively being church by living the marks of mission: trying to respond to human need and trying to transform unjust structures of society. Those who walked and ran, cooked or cleared up after the barbecue or gave money as they were able, were supporting Christian Aid: as fundamental to being church as is our worship (and also all the other marks of mission).

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

# Running the London Marathon for Christian Aid



I had expected running in the London Marathon would be a great experience and it didn't disappoint. The crowds, in particular, were fantastic and a major morale booster, especially in the final tough few miles. I received excellent advice to put my name on to my running top as it gives people something extra with which to cheer you on. Hayley even managed to squeeze 'Tring Team' on to my Christian Aid running vest. Of course, family and friends supporting me on the day made a massive difference. Hayley, Daniel, Nick and Archie were brilliant supporters. I think there were another eight or so Christian Aid runners

on the day, and the Christian Aid team connected us on WhatsApp. My friend Andy, like me, was running his first marathon, so we were able to compare notes before and after, and we were both fuelled on the day, as well as in training, by Hayley's homemade flapjacks.

The route takes in some cracking London landmarks on familiar routes which I really enjoyed running, especially with no traffic in the way, of course! As I came round the bend in front of Buckingham Palace onto the Mall, I was really pleased to have achieved my goal of running the whole thing without any pause, and even more pleased to have raised a decent wedge for Christian Aid – thanks so much to everyone who sponsored me. After a full fat Irn Bru, Scotland's specialist sports recovery

drink, in Trafalgar Square, it was back to Tring for a burger and a beer in the churchyard with the other Tring Team Christian Aid walkers and runners.

**Richard Abel**  
**St Peter & St Paul**



# Walking my first half marathon



My husband said, 'You'll never do it!' I love it when someone challenges me. So I emailed St Peter & St Paul saying I would do the Megastick walk, supporting Annette

Reynolds with her sponsored walk for Christian Aid.

On Sunday 21 April I was up early: it was a lovely spring day. I left the house eventually after two changes of clothing! Will I be too hot or too cold? Anyhow, I eventually opted for two top layers – and just in case of rain, I packed my pakamac in my bag.

After a breakfast of fresh coffee, croissant and homemade Christingle marmalade, I felt suitably fortified for my epic walk of visiting five churches (and a tower!) in the Tring parish.

Jane Banister was on call with a car should we need her in case of emergencies.



Huw Bellis (with Mungus, Huw's labrador), Janet Goodyer, Annette Reynolds and I left St Peter & St Paul's Church at 9.30am after the 8.00 Communion Service and breakfast that followed, gathering a few more sponsors along the way. The weather looked promising, with sunshine and some blue sky. We trudged through fields, over canal bridges, passed Wilstone reservoir and arrived at St Cross, Wilstone, at 10.30am so that I thought to myself that we should complete the whole walk in good time...The church was very quiet and calming and we rested for



several minutes and took the obligatory photographs.



We started to make our way to St Mary's, Puttenham which wasn't too far away. I had already visited this church some months earlier, and loved the location and quaintness of this ancient place of worship. Our next walk took us to All Saints, Long Marston – via the tower which is 100 yards from the church itself – at which point the weather started to change. It was getting cloudier, colder and there was a hint of rain... I dug out my raincoat only to be greeted with my waterproof trousers! We all had a little laugh on how I might use these as a coat... Thankfully the rain cloud passed. At Long Marston we had our elevenses, which was a piece of Anne and Malcolm Nobbs' Golden anniversary cake (congratulations to them both!): it was a most welcome hit of carbs and sugar.



The next church on our walk was St John the Baptist in Aldbury, which was miles away. We linked up with the Grand Union Canal, where we met the Munroes from St John's, travelling the same route but in the opposite direction. Time for more evidence of our walk in the form of a selfie. We were well over half way. Huw decided to make his exit, giving the excuse that he was worried that the barbeque would not be hot enough to cook the meat unless he got there in good time – basically his way of saying we were going too slowly for him! We stopped for lunch, watching several barges go through the locks.

The penultimate stretch of our walk involved going along Marshcroft Lane. We had our first hills to contend with and



my legs were beginning to tingle. Then we had a dilemma: which path to take? We opted for the one on the right which led us to Aldbury Golf Course and in the distance – our first sighting of the church. Nearly there! Once in the church, we each took a pew and stretched out, wishing we had completed the walk. We still had the final two miles from Aldbury to Tring. Could we make it without having to call Jane?



The last part of the walk felt like the most challenging. Once through the field, we had to follow the main road from Tring Station to St Peter & St Paul's. Annette wondered naughtily if any buses were running that we could take the rest of the way! Thankfully it was a Sunday and no buses were running. Gallantly we soldiered on. Once I saw the street lamps, I knew I was nearly at the church. By this time conversation had pretty much dried up...

We were all so pleased to see the gates to the church, where we were greeted by Huw, Jane and the rest of the walkers to a round of applause. I had made it: 14.9 miles! More importantly, I had supported Annette who was being sponsored for Christian Aid raising £7,902 (and counting). Yes, I did complete the challenge; and yes – I am willing to do it again in 2025!

**Joyce Parker, St Peter & St Paul**



## Love and dinosaurs



Mothering Sunday is often called Mothers' Day now but it seems important to me that we hold on to what it started out as in this country: that it is about the church from which we came, the community that cared for us and looked after us. It is still a day to give thanks to God for our mums, but we also need to be aware how difficult the day is for lots of people: not all relationships are where we want them to be; some people's mothers have died; and there are those who long to be mothers who are not.

What also struck me this year in our Worship for All service in St Peter & St Paul, was how few people there would be with their mothers that day, not least because a large part of the congregation were students from Tring Park School. When I asked that question, about ten to fifteen people put their hands up out of the hundred or so in church.

But when I asked how many were with their church community, their church family on this day, everyone

(after a little encouraging) put their hands up. It is vital that we remember the links between us all, from different generations, from different communities, those here with us, those who could not be with us, and those who are with God in the great company of saints.

Our confession was preceded by a time of thinking, when we acknowledged that living in a family and in a community is not always easy. There are the people who irritate us, those who always know best, those who don't listen to us. Sometimes what we have to do is to try hard to create a new start, to leave behind complaints and anger.

Lots of cards are sent on Mothering Sunday and many, many of them have flowers on. I do like flowers, and they are a big part of this day and of how churches celebrate it, both in the past and currently with the giving of posies, but I sometimes wish that those making the cards would show a bit more imagination. My sister got a card from her sons with a picture of one of the Easter Island heads on it. It looks quite fierce as well as beautiful, but what it shows is that her children know that she thinks those carvings are beautiful.



I have always said how much I love handmade cards, and so this is one that I was sent by my children a couple of years ago – hand drawn by a teenager. It is a Tyrannosaurus Rex – which does make me worry about my parenting style – but also shows me that my children knew this is what I would like.

Our children know what we would like, and understand us, as I hope we know and understand them. That is what mothering is in relationships and what we celebrate on Mothering Sunday. That is what our church family needs to be like, knowing and understanding; and Christ knows us already.

So the words from Colossians 3:12-17 were threaded through that whole service – compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. This is not a power trip – this is love.

**Jane Banister, Tring Team**

## God loves you – Puttenham Quiet Day



For our latest Quiet Day, we were in Puttenham with Rev Deborah Snowball. She had, rather provocatively, entitled her day with us 'G'day mate' (which of course prompted questions as to whether she was Australian). The theme of the day was an exploration of the post resurrection appearances of Jesus. Underlying the whole day was the statement that 'God loves you. God is in love with you. God is desperately in love with you.'

Session 1 explored Mary's meeting with Jesus in the garden – where Jesus calls Mary by name, just as he calls us by name.

Session 2 explored the meeting and supper at Emmaus – where Jesus was recognised in the breaking of the bread. The shared meal has become an important part of the Quiet Days, and you

are always welcome to attend just the shared meal part of the Quiet Day where you may meet Jesus in that sharing of food together.

Session 3 explored the barbecue on the beach at the end of John's Gospel; another meeting with Jesus in the context of sharing food and friendship. It is from this third meeting that Deborah took her inspiration for the title for the day and posed the questions: 'What would we say to Jesus at a barbecue? How do we respond to this love that God has for us?'

Deborah gave us an enormous amount to think about ('food for thought' – pun intended). We hope to be able to welcome her back in the future to lead another of our Quiet Days.

Our next Quiet Day is on Saturday 17 August which will be our second monastic prayer day. The day will be punctuated with the monastic offices – from Mattins at 8.00am to Compline at 9.00pm with reflections on how we talk about God and a session led by Margaret Saunders, a reader from Berkhamsted.



There will be three opportunities to share food together – breakfast, lunch and dinner. You will be able to book in for any or all of these meals and stay for as much or as little of the day as you wish; and you are very welcome just to attend the meals if you would appreciate the company of others. It's an opportunity to test whether Quiet Days are for you in using part of the day as a 'taster session'.

**Tim James  
St Peter & St Paul**

## Genuine Christianity



What is your favourite Gospel and what is your favourite epistle? For me the answer is Luke's Gospel and Paul's letter to the church in Rome.

My favourite letter not attributed to Paul is probably the first letter of John.

Here is what John Wesley, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Anglican priest and one of the founders of what we now call Methodism, said about this letter in his diary: 'How plain, how full and how deep a compendium of genuine Christianity!'

Martin Luther wrote: 'This is an outstanding epistle. It can buoy up afflicted hearts. Furthermore, it has John's style and manner of expression, so beautifully and gently does it picture Christ to us.' It contains some verses familiar to Anglicans, and no doubt others, used week after week in the Anglican Communion: 'If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves'.

This may seem obvious to most of us, but in the history of the church there have been those who claimed to be sinless. This seems to be one of the issues addressed by the writer of 1 John in his time. Down the ages, the idea that Christians can obtain sinless perfection has popped up occasionally and it resurfaced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the so-called Holiness Movement. It emerged within 19<sup>th</sup> century Methodism but did not take it over. To a lesser extent, it also influenced other traditions such as Quakerism.

When I was a teenager on the boundary between London and Kent, we had a young man from this tradition come and speak to us at our parish youth group. We were a mixed bunch and seldom agreed on anything, but we all thought this was nonsense. In this we agreed with the great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon of London, an occasional visitor to the Baptist churches in Tring. He met someone who believed in this idea at a residential conference for ministers somewhere in the countryside. The man put forward this view in an evening talk. The following morning, Spurgeon chanced to stand next to him in the queue for breakfast. Spurgeon picked up a large jug of milk and tipped this over the minister's head!

Understandably, the man went into a furious rage and Spurgeon said: 'Sir, I find your doctrine wanting.'

I cannot see the Bishop of St Albans, the Archbishop of Canterbury or the President of the Baptist Union using this approach to discuss theological differences, which is probably a good thing. Nevertheless, Spurgeon made his point well.

The Holiness Movement believed and still believes in the doctrine of the second blessing or second work of grace, generally called 'entire sanctification' or 'Christian perfection'. I have not met a second person in the last fifty years who said that he or she believed in Christian perfection but there are over 100 million Christians in America, Africa and Korea who hold this view.

When I was a teenager, my vicar served his second curacy in an Anglo-Catholic parish where anyone who wanted to get married had to go to formal confession on a Friday night. One bride-to-be told him that she had never done anything wrong in her life. You do not have to be a believer in Christian perfection to believe that you are perfect and everyone else is at fault.

'But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.'

The author of 1 John believes that none of us are perfect, none of us are as we should be. This passage translated that 'he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins' has had lots of discussion down the years. The KJV translates it as propitiation, the RSV says expiation. J B Phillips says, 'before the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous, the one who made personal atonement for our sins'.

Now I am not a good enough New Testament Greek scholar to really comment on this. I passed my New Testament Greek examination when training to be an

RE teacher by remembering the text in English and locking in on a few key Greek words and then regurgitating the old RSV translation. The fact that I passed would have much surprised my O Level French teacher. I later found out that a now-retired diocesan bishop had done the same trick to pass his examination, so perhaps I was in good (or bad) company. I will stick with the one used in the NRSV – that 'Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins' which goes on to say 'not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world'. Jesus' death was not just for us, not just for Christians – but for the sins of the whole world. St Paul says in 1 Timothy, 'This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth'.

Jesus died for everyone.

There is a story told about St John the Apostle in old age. Whether or not it is true, we do not know. He was too old to talk much or to walk very far. In an age before wheelchairs, two strong young men used to carry him to the front of the church and sit him in the preacher's chair and every time he gave the same very short sermon, which was this: 'Little children, love one another.' That is probably a better sermon than I have ever preached, and it is definitely more concise and completely unambiguous.

**Jon Reynolds  
Tring Team**

## Parish registers

### Baptisms

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

**Sienna Rose Slade  
Connie Eden Spencer-Paine**

### Weddings

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

**Harry James Daniel Sambrook & Georgia Lauren Garlick**

### Funerals

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

**Jill Allen  
Andrew Mark Drinkeld**



# Tring's Justice & Peace Group: celebrating 20 years!



**[Polly]** When I moved to Tring seven years ago, I came across a dedicated group of people with a heart for international justice and responsible for gaining Fairtrade Town status for our town. The monthly meetings were held in various church halls, with each member contributing £1 to the (Fairtrade) tea and coffee kitty. It was a gentle and dedicated group and I was keen to be involved. Over the years the membership has morphed and the campaigns evolved. This little grassroots group has been going for twenty years and Michael, one of the founding members, is still a leading light in the group. Together, we thought we'd chronicle the group activity since it began and share some of the voices of the group membership today.

*'Although we are small collection of people, each with our own interests and pressures, we come together and somehow we seem to do some good. I am constantly inspired and compelled to take action by this dedicated group of gentle folk.'* **Polly**

## How it all began

**[Michael]** The very first meeting of the Justice & Peace Group was held in Corpus Christi Parish Hall on 16 June 2004 and, from the minutes of that meeting, I can see that twelve parishioners attended. At the meeting we deliberated, among other things, about trade justice and Fairtrade. We had strong aspirations and thought that our church could aim to become a Fairtrade Church and that we could even try to make Tring a Fairtrade Town!

Later in 2004 I spoke at a committee meeting of Churches Together in Tring about trade justice and Fairtrade, and the church representatives seemed interested in joining with us where appropriate in any event that we might plan in the

future. Subsequently (in 2006) our group became affiliated to Churches Together in Tring. On 25 May 2005, at our eleventh meeting, we were pleased to welcome two members of the parish of St Peter & St Paul, and from then onwards our group became ecumenical, and meetings began to be held in our different churches or church halls in Tring. The group soon had membership representing all the churches of Tring; one of the aims, to become ecumenical, had now been achieved!

**[Polly]** We are now a group of all churches and none. Our monthly meetings always start and end with a short reflection or prayer. The meeting feels inclusive and united by a desire to see justice and peace locally and internationally. We most recently held our 218<sup>th</sup> meeting!

*We believe in justice and peace for the world, and for every individual within it.*

*We champion respect for the environment, human rights for the afflicted and assistance for the needy.*

## Human rights

**[Michael]** On 1 July 2005, having gained permission from the Town Council, we organised an event in Church Square, Tring, to mark International White Band Day. We stretched out and held for all to see a giant 'white band' some 40 metres long which we had borrowed from CAFOD and to which we had pinned a large 'Make Poverty History' banner. People sounded their car horns in acknowledgement as they drove by and there was a report and even a full-colour photograph later on the front page of the Gazette! By the end of 2005, 31 million people from 84 national coalitions around the world had united in a Global Call to Action against Poverty. We were glad to have been a part of that call.

During the early years we prioritised our Fairtrade campaign, aiming to achieve Fairtrade Town status for Tring. We targeted Tring Town Council, local retailers and churches to use and stock Fairtrade products. We promoted Fairtrade at events and stalls. We also established the 'Margaret Demidecka



Fairtrade Award' for young people (an annual UK-wide competition for primary and secondary schools managed in conjunction with the Fairtrade Foundation) which ran from 2009 to 2014. We produced our first Fairtrade 'Where You Can Buy' guide in 2007 and this later became the guide to 'Fairtrade and Locally Produced Food and Drink in Tring and District'.

*'The Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr said, "There can be no justice without peace, and there can be no peace without justice." We strive here in Tring to do our best on both counts.'* **Michael**

**[Polly]** This guide continues to be produced and is available on our website. We were ready to leap into action when Covid-19 hit by adapting the guide to be a listing of local businesses who were able to deliver goods during lockdown. This was widely downloaded and shared during the pandemic.

*'I'm part of the J&P Group as we all have to look out for each other. If my family was fleeing from war or was being oppressed because of their skin colour, I would hope that other people would help them and care for them. Keeping a voluntary group going for 20 years is a great achievement in itself – and gaining recognition for Tring as a Fairtrade Town and a Bee Friendly Town have been very successful campaigns.'* **Peter**

**[Michael]** Eventually we achieved all the goals we needed to become a Fairtrade Town and we were very proud when the then Mayor of Tring, Councillor Nick Hollinghurst, was presented with a Fairtrade Town Certificate for Tring by Hannah Reed of the Fairtrade Foundation on 27 October 2007.

*'I give my time to J&P because it is working on projects that seem very important to me. What's more, the other members have great ideas about pushing these agendas that I care about forwards in ways that never occur to me.'* **Nick**

## Assistance for the needy

**[Michael]** Fundraising has been a part of our activities from the early days. In 2007 the late Father Geoffrey Eneh, a Catholic priest who had served Corpus Christi Church as an interim priest, had reported that in January 2007 in his own village in Enugu State, Nigeria, many had died as a result of an outbreak of an epidemic disease causing sickness and diarrhoea. The problem was contaminated water, which was all that many of the local people had to drink, and poor sanitation. Our Group held two successful fundraising events here in Tring and members of St Matthew's RC Church, Northwood (where Father Geoffrey also served) raised funds too. All this resulted in enough money to provide for a borehole to be sunk and fresh water and sanitation to be provided for the village.

*'I am one of the founding members of the Group formed 20 years ago. I am still a member today because I believe it is very important to help your fellow man whenever and however you can. It is putting my faith into action. I am most proud of the Fairtrade Town status we gained for Tring 18 years ago and that we still maintain it today.'* **Margaret**

The Justice & Peace Group has also raised funds for worthwhile projects at its Christmas Community Concerts, held each year from 2011 to 2017 in the Victoria Hall. For very many years these concerts were organised by the Salvation Army, but when their citadel closed, the Justice & Peace Group stepped in to maintain this Christmas tradition

in our town. Funds were raised at our first three concerts for, respectively, a housing project in southern India (the money raised being sufficient for building two houses), the St Francis Hospice in Berkhamsted and a primary school in Uganda (the money raised for this project in 2013 enabling solar panels to be purchased to supply electricity to the school).

With the concerts and other fundraising events, since 2011 we have raised nearly £11,000 for worthwhile causes.

*'J&P provides a spiritual dimension to concerns regarding the environment and wider society. It also attracts a wider range of interested people from different backgrounds and interests. A highlight for me was Scything Tring Churchyard!'* **Martin**

## Respect for the environment

**[Polly]** The Justice & Peace Group began the 'Make Tring a Bee Town' campaign in 2020 and what started out as a few lone voices has turned into a huge community effort with many different initiatives to make more pollinator-friendly spaces in our town and the surrounding villages. We held stalls at regular Tring events where we gave out wildflower seeds, promoted No Mow May, built bug hotels and provided leaflets with planting ideas for the garden. Through collective community action, the status of Bee Friendly Town was granted by the Bee Friendly Trust in May 2022, Tring being one of six towns to receive the accolade nationally. Our current Bee Friendly Town activity now focuses on our Say NO to

## News from Tring bell tower

A few of the Tring Tower ringers made their way over to Holy Cross Church in Slapton, Buckinghamshire, on a sunny Saturday Bank Holiday afternoon where the bells had not been functional for decades. Now, under the guidance and persistent encouragement of our own tower captain, Philip Dobson, the five original bells have been made up to a ring of six and so a celebratory quarter peal was rung there that afternoon. How lovely for the villagers to hear their bells in a loud triumphant voice of praise once again!

The next exciting event was the Tring Family Fun Day on 11 May, managed by the Friends organisation, a happy, cheerful occasion in warm

sunshine, welcoming young and old to the church with many and varied interests, including a chance for anyone to 'have a go' at ringing a bell in the bell tower – all under careful supervision, of course, and with close attention to health and safety rules! Our banner was: 'Happy 400<sup>th</sup> birthday 2024. Please help us keep your bells ringing'.

Our long-term aim was to catch the interest of our next younger generation



Pesticides campaign as well as holding developers to account and fighting for changes in cutting regimes to encourage verges to be left wild for wildlife.

*'I really liked the idea of a group of people from across all the denominations working together, and when I joined the Justice & Peace Group, they didn't have anyone from a Baptist church. It was really rewarding to be involved in fundraising events that brought together local schools' musicians and the community for concerts that raised money for good causes, both locally and overseas. More recently, the campaigns to promote Tring as a Bee Town, to support Fairtrade and to limit the use of harmful chemicals on our verges and green spaces have engaged the local community and seen the group collaborating with councils and other voluntary groups in a really positive way.'* **Nicky**

## Celebrating 20 years

We have chosen to celebrate 20 years of Tring's Justice & Peace Group at the Tring Summer Carnival on Saturday 29 June from 12.00 noon. We do hope you will join us by coming along and saying hello – have your face painted or buy a raffle ticket! And of course, we're always happy to welcome new members, so if you'd like to lend a hand, please don't hesitate to contact us. Our website address is: <https://www.justiceandpeacetring.org>.

**Polly Eaton**  
**High Street Baptist Church**  
& **Michael Demidecki**  
**Corpus Christi Church**

of bell ringers, as bell ringing is something most quickly taught to young minds and bodies!  
**Johanna Morgan, Tring bell tower**

## The gift of the living



Every week the back pages of the Church Times carry advertisements for clergy posts in the Church of England, sometimes overseas. It can be fascinating

to look through these and to get a glimpse of the character of the different parishes that have placed them. This week one parish in the diocese of Bath & Wells wants 'someone who will be a spiritual beacon'; another parish in the diocese of Coventry wants a pastor who enjoys spending time 'down the pub'. If you want to apply for any of these posts, you are usually referred in the first instance to the local Archdeacon.

When it comes to actually making the appointment, the situation can be just as fascinating. The 'gift of the living' may be in the hands of the bishop, or it may be, for historical reasons, in the hands of someone else entirely. When the Rev Sabine Baring-Gould – who wrote several very well-known hymns, including 'Onward Christian Soldiers' – inherited the family estates in Devon, he also inherited the patronage of that parish and was therefore entitled

to appoint himself as its vicar, which he did. In the case of St Peter & St Paul here in Tring, for example, the patron has been variously Queen Eleanor, Kings Edward I, II and III, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Christ Church College, Oxford. (The first appointment made by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1336 was the wonderfully named Walter de Wetwang.) As recently as 1966, Donald Howells was appointed vicar here by Lt Col VDS Williams, the owner of Pendley Manor. By the time John Payne-Cook succeeded him in 1985, the patronage had passed to the Bishop of St Albans.

Dorian Williams, son of the above-mentioned Lt Col Williams, was a well-known TV show-jumping commentator and a generous benefactor here in Tring, both to the town and to the parish church. When he died in 1985, his funeral was held in St Peter & St Paul and a choir for the service was provided by the pupils of Tring Park School. No sooner had these girls set off down Mansion Drive than a telephone call was received saying that a bomb had been planted in the school. The building was evacuated immediately, of course, as for a fire drill. When everybody had been checked against a register, the teachers were asked (on the advice of the

police?) to go back into their classroom and look carefully to see if anything had been disturbed or was out of place. Nothing was found – it was a hoax. But it delayed the start of afternoon lessons, which was presumably exactly what the perpetrators wanted!

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

*I was married in the church of All Saints, Laleham in 1980, where I had worshipped since I was 16. The Earls of Lucan purchased the Manor of Laleham in 1803 and in 1883 acquired the patronage of the living. There are many memorials in the churchyard to well-known people, such as Matthew Arnold, the poet and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Lucan who reluctantly passed the order for the disastrous charge of the Light Brigade in 1854. Many of the Earls of Lucan are buried in Laleham's churchyard and their tombstones are visible in some of our wedding photos! One burial is missing and that is of the infamous John Bingham, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Lucan, who disappeared, after the murder of his children's nanny in 1974. This caused a number of problems when Desmond Guinness, the vicar for twenty-five years, retired in 1977, and no new vicar could be appointed! Ed.*

## Will you commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day?



On Thursday 6 June Tring will be commemorating 80 years since D-Day, the start of Operation Overlord in WWII. By the time you read this, I am sure that the

whole country will have swung into action and there will be wall-to-wall TV coverage and remembrance, and in Tring there is a chance to come together to honour and remember those involved, as well as to share family WWII stories.

The 11.00am service, inside St Peter & St Paul's Church, will be led by Rev Huw Bellis and will feature the Town Crier's proclamation written especially for the day. After the service, please

stay for refreshments and to look at the D-Day displays in church created by local junior schools. There is no need to RSVP, just come on the day and enjoy the experience.

On Friday 7 June, Tring Cinema are running a private screening of 'The Great Escaper' (Michael Caine and Glenda Jackson), a film set at the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day which mixes the sacrifices made by ordinary people in 1944 with some flash-backs of historical content. It's very good! Free tickets are available to anyone living in Tring that was involved in WWII (or anyone born before 6 June 1944). If you want to know more, email [steffi@tringtogether.org.uk](mailto:steffi@tringtogether.org.uk).

**Vivianne Child**  
**Tring Team Parish Coordinator**  
**& Tring Together**

**D-DAY 80**  
TRING REMEMBERS THOSE INVOLVED IN THE D-DAY LANDINGS IN JUNE 1944, 80 YEARS AGO

## Ini Kopuria, 6 June



I love a Gospel procession; and there is one against which I measure all others. During the opening Eucharist of the 2008 Lambeth Conference at

Canterbury, a group of Melanesian Brothers danced the Gospel Book through the cathedral in a model of a small boat. The Melanesian Islands stretch from Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands in the west to Fiji in the east. The ecclesiastical Province of Melanesia includes the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Much of the area is ocean and the boat represented the way the Gospel spread around the South Pacific.

Ini Kopuria was born on the island of Guadalcanal sometime around 1900. He was educated at an Anglican school and, instead of taking up a career in education as his teachers had expected, he joined the native constabulary. During a serious illness in 1924, he had an intense religious experience which led to him seeking permission from the bishop to form a missionary brotherhood – to proclaim Christianity to the non-Christian villages of the islands that he had grown to know so well as a policeman. His view was that he and his companions could spread the gospel to their own people in a way that no European could



do. The bishop encouraged Ini's vision, and in 1925 Ini gave his family land to the Order to serve as their headquarters. With seven others, he took simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Their Rule requires that they serve in pairs and stay in one place for no longer than three months.

The Order is unusual in not requiring life vows. Initially Brothers renewed their vows each year on the feast day of Saint Simon and Saint Jude (28 October) and they can leave at the time of vow renewal in any year. Ini himself remained a Brother until 1940 when he left the Order to marry. He remained a Deacon in his village, until his death five years later. Now it is more usual for a Melanesian Brother or Sister to take a vow for a set period of between two and five years.

If there was one thing at Lambeth 2008 that I found more moving than the Gospel Boat Procession, it was seeing the Brothers carrying the names Robin Lindsay, Francis Tofi, Tony Sirihi, Patteson Gatu, Alfred Hill, Ini Paratabatu and Nathaniel Sado into Canterbury's Chapel of Saints and Martyrs of Our Own Time.



These seven Melanesian Brothers were tortured and killed in 2003, as they tried to negotiate the release of hostages taken during ethnic conflict in the Solomon Islands. They are commemorated by the Church of England on 24 April each year. The Order was awarded the UN Pacific Peace Prize in 2004.

**Linzi James**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

**Plastic is not allowed!**

Plastic is not allowed in the ocean because it is hurting the fish and sea creatures.

We must help them!

**Lydia Rogers, aged 7**  
**High Street Baptist Church**

# Just a tiny seed



One of my favourite quotes of all time are these words from the Encyclical, The Joy of the Gospel: 'Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the kingdom of God is already

present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree, like the measure of leaven that makes the dough rise, and like the good seed that grows amidst the weeds and can always pleasantly surprise us. The kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. Christ's resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain.' (Evangelii Gaudium 278).

The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us. That does not only mean that we look forward to resurrection. It gives us hope for now. The Spirit that weaves everything in the cosmos together can be experienced in the stubborn, swelling life in the seed that pushes forth, that expands and explodes

into new life, that breaks through, that puts down roots, that sends its spindly little shoot upwards in search of the light that draws it, unseen. If you are a gardener, you will know what I mean. There is something very insistent about new life. It is small and vulnerable, but in that smallness and vulnerability, the power of God is at work.

Jesus loved to use the image of the seed. It is a powerful image of hope. It is there in the creation story, when God saw that the plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind 'was good' (Genesis 1:11-12). The living God has given to the cosmos the ability to co-create with God. Life begets life. The universe is bursting with potential. The littlest, most insignificant of God's creatures has this strong drive toward life and toward the future. But, paradoxically, the life of the seed does not come through power. It is precisely in its vulnerability that it is able to birth the future. Jesus tells us: 'Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit' (John 12:24).

As beacons of hope, we bear witness to the resurrection woven into the cosmos. But we also work alongside God in God's life-giving work. We co-operate

with God. There is an enigmatic parable found only in Mark's Gospel which gives us a picture of how we can co-operate with mystery.

The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come' (Mark 4:26-29).

There is working and there is waiting. We scatter seed, but we do not make the seed grow. The earth does that in a way which looks miraculous. And then, when the earth has done its work, comes the time for the harvest. If hope were only possible because of what we are able on our own to accomplish, then we could have very little hope! But hope is possible because God is calling us to work alongside God, to do our little bit and allow God to do the rest.

**Dr Jessie Rogers**  
**Dean of the Faculty of Theology,**  
**Maynooth University, Ireland**  
*Supplied by Natalie Browne,*  
*Corpus Christi Church*

# Say NO to harmful pesticides

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

This year the Justice & Peace Group are focusing their efforts on calling for an end to the use of harmful chemicals in public spaces. 'Pesticides' is an inclusive term for chemicals designed to kill plants, insects, fungi etc, but 'herbicide' (or weedkiller) is often used for the types of pesticide that kill plants. Acting on our behalf, Hertfordshire County Council spray weedkiller routinely in our community. They treat common weeds on roads and pavements in urban settlements approximately twice a year, in late spring and early September, depending on the weather. They use an authorised weedkiller.



Did you know that in America the makers of the same weedkiller have paid out over \$10 million to settle out-of-court claims for damages due to exposure to that chemical? If we were still following EU rules that weedkiller should not be sprayed in public places. Pesticides are designed to kill living creatures. There is a good reason that contractors using pesticides put out warning triangles!

## The problem with glyphosate

Fifteen types of 'Roundup' glyphosate herbicide are licensed for use in the UK. This is despite severe concerns about their use and damage to human health. Being smaller and developing faster, children are most at risk from these chemicals that are designed to interfere with processes

inside living things. As well as the impact on human health, a large percentage of pesticides reach a destination other than their target. They contaminate the air, soil and water when they run off from fields and pavements. They have been linked to the decline in the number of pollinators as well as birds, mammals, aquatic animals and non-target plants.



## Alternatives to glyphosate

Within the EU, glyphosate was relicensed with the condition that Member States 'minimise the use in public spaces, such as parks, public playgrounds and gardens'. This has unfortunately been ignored by the UK Government and many local councils. More alert and proactive councils have introduced alternatives. One methodology stood out



above all the others as effective, safe and relatively cost effective: Foamstream. Foamstream applies a small amount of naturally derived plant oils and sugars to boiling water to create a foam. The results are excellent and weeds are eradicated. Residents are delighted with the results and its eco credentials, as are the local businesses and councillors. A great thing about Foamstream is that it can be used anywhere, in all weathers, requires no personal protective equipment and gives the results required. In the UK, more than sixty-five councils, ranging from parish to district and county level, are already taking action to stop or significantly reduce their use of herbicides.

We invite you to sign our petition (link below or follow the QR code) to stop the use of pesticides around Tring and throughout Hertfordshire and we hope you will read



our reasons for calling for it to stop. To sign our petition please go to: [www.change.org/p/say-no-to-pesticides](http://www.change.org/p/say-no-to-pesticides).

Read more about the campaign on the Tring Justice & Peace Group website: [www.justiceandpeacetring.org](http://www.justiceandpeacetring.org). Read more about pesticides, including alternatives to glyphosate, on the Pesticide Action Network UK website: [www.pan-uk.org](http://www.pan-uk.org).

**Tring Justice & Peace group**



Piano and Voices  
 St Martha's Methodist Church  
 TRING HP23 6BP



David Berdinner (Piano)

and

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Aim for 500 or 1000 words and please send a head and shoulders colour photo or jpg and any other photos in high resolution.

Contact us at: [comment.magazine@gmail.com](mailto:comment.magazine@gmail.com)



# Waiting – a personal story



Waiting is an interesting concept. I would say that for many of us it is not a positive or even a neutral idea. We associate it with not being in control of what

is happening – if you think of when you wait, I imagine you think of public transport or doctors' surgeries. If we want to look at it in a positive way, then we don't use that word – we would say a time of contemplation. And while we may talk about the current generation expecting everything at once, I don't think any of those of us who are older have an idea of waiting as positive.

Over the Lent period many of us reflected on the theme of waiting, of resting with God, but for my family it had a more pertinent meaning. Waiting was about the tension created by everyday life continuing alongside the diagnosis of cancer.

4 March 2023, waiting in the mobile screening unit: not too long, and I had a book. I had done this before. Then waiting for the results to arrive, but to be honest, not thinking about it at all. The last one was fine. The envelope arrived – and it has several pieces of paper in it (not the single sheet that says all is OK, come back in three years). We would like to call you back... blah, blah, 'Most women who are called back do not have breast cancer.' I attempt not to panic. I don't panic – but for some reason both Huw and I think that it will not stop there.

20 March 2023, the moment when it all changes. 'Do you have a mole or birthmark there?' Looking back, her tone of voice is 'Let's just check although I know that is not the case'. They take a biopsy, and there is a breast cancer care nurse present who takes me through possible future options. It is a warning that this will be the future.

On that day, I come home to the end of a different sort of waiting – Huw has heard that Bishop Wood will be having their Ofsted. I haven't even had time to tell him about what happened, before my phone goes and Long Marston School are having their Ofsted (I am chair of governors so must be there.) While I have cried a lot through this process, that is the only point where I remember screaming. Bishop Wood has two days of Ofsted, Long Marston has one. It takes

your mind off the waiting, I suppose.

Wednesday 22 March. I have been told – by the breast clinic, not Ofsted, it is all getting rather confusing with the different results for which we are waiting – that they will ring between 2.00pm and 5.00pm. I am dreading that waiting. Short-term waiting is worse than long. But they ring soon after 2.00pm. 'The cells are cancerous,' is how the nurse phrases it, the same nurse that I saw on the Monday. I take that in, but they obviously know there is no point in saying much more, only that they will be in touch soon about treatment.

At 6.30 that evening, the governors meet to debrief on the Ofsted at Long Marston – all good, and everyone is relieved. It is the end of that waiting for another two or three years. I end the meeting by saying that I will be handing the chair's role on as I have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Maybe it's a bit early to tell people, but we already know that we are not going to keep this quiet. It doesn't work for us, whatever the future holds. There is at least one appointment with someone every week from then on – my personal best was seven appointments in one week.

Now the waiting becomes a routine.

Waiting rooms – some even with TVs (which don't always work well). I try to ignore them but just as I am distracted by them, the programme gets cut off half way through. Holly Willoughby, Phillip Schofield – 'Are you all right?' Other people sit, some in silence, a few having half-hearted conversations. The best one was one chap in radiotherapy at lunchtime. He got out his lunch out but was embarrassed to eat it as it was cheese and pickle. We all told him to eat!

Huw is with me for consultant appointments, but not for treatment – the hospital is still in post Covid-19 rules so is limiting people. It would have taken a huge amount of time out of his working week but I seem to find it easier to be on my own; and I discover what I need with me:

- book – at least one. I start using the library's books online – not my preferred way of reading but it adds a lot to the choice. I can always browse.
- water bottle
- food – bring in healthy stuff to make me look good (unless Martha has made biscuits, of course)
- phone – for messaging. Do not take lots of photos to post...

- crossword/puzzle book to keep my mind occupied when I can't concentrate on a book
- we have splashed out on a new tablet – my inherited one has given up – and it is loaded with streaming services and library app
- ear phones – to make sure no one can hear what I have on, and to shut out other noises such as the two gentlemen with stomach cancer getting competitive about bowel movements

I brought my knitting once, but it started getting tangled up with the drip in my arm and my earphones, so I kept that for home. And what I discover, is that I get into 'the zone'. Looking back, the waiting for results and running through possible scenarios is the worst bit. The treatment is not – something is happening, and I am fortunate and don't react badly, so have time when I can legitimately do nothing or sleep or read. The waiting is not emotional – but the conversations with consultants are, even though they are all quite short; and we go through a few weeks when each piece of news makes it worse... It bottoms out after the operation, when we find out it has not spread and it is not genetic. Then the long-term waiting – as a background for everyday life.

The wording around cancer has always made me uncomfortable. I am not being brave – I am enduring what has to be endured, and it is not as bad as it is for other people; and it is not a battle. It is plodding along on a path I was not expecting to be on. My feelings see-saw between numb and very emotional, laughing when I tell people because I don't actually believe it, emotional because the waiting is never over – I will be monitored for five years, and survival rates are measured in periods of ten years, so this is something to be lived with, not left behind.

I really do feel loved and held and supported in prayer – my dad comments I must hold the record for being on more prayer lists than anyone else! It has not changed my prayer life, as I still value the routine of prayer. I went to the Maundy Thursday service last year but I could not take part emotionally; this year I had treatment on Maundy Thursday afternoon so was asleep and missed it because of the medication.

I am a proud third-generation member

of the Mothers Union. Every year, the MU has a service on or near Lady Day – 25 March, the Annunciation. It is always moved if it falls during Holy Week which means this year it was officially 8 April. Each year when we put this service together, I find all these prayers and meditations on Mary's obedience and they make her seem somewhat passive. I can't bear them; because every year I think, was the Annunciation actually about Mary saying 'Yes' – or did she not really have a choice? She found herself on a road she was not expecting to be on and she just had to carry on. Maybe it is about the changes in society and language, but this is not meek and mild acceptance. This is a deep sigh and rolling up your sleeves. This is going away to scream somewhere and then coming back to carry on. This is a Mothers Union Mary.

John's Gospel has no birth narrative. At the wedding in Cana, we have Jesus demonstrating who he is to the servants and his disciples with the first miracle. Mary has confidence in her son, loving him and supporting him and annoying him, which is what love is. This is what the path Mary is on has led to. We have Jesus on the cross, entrusting John the disciple and Mary to each other, calm

and contemplative despite what is happening to him, recognising that people need to be loved and cared for.

So much waiting and wondering, a backdrop, an undercurrent, and everything else does not stop because it cannot. Mary is not in control which is how life is for many; and at the centre of it all is love – loving others and being loved.

I am not sure I know quite where I am theologically and spiritually after my diagnosis of cancer. I am plodding on, because life does not stop, and the waiting goes on alongside the rest of life.

**Jane Banister,**  
**Tring Team**

## Piano & more series

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*For further details see:*

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



# Tring Park news



Designed to challenge and inspire, the UK Chemistry Olympiad (UKChO) is a unique opportunity for students to push themselves

further and excel in the chemistry field. Budding chemists will develop critical problem-solving skills, learn to think more creatively and get a chance to test their knowledge in new, real-world situations. Well done and congratulations to our Tring Park Sixth Form Chemistry students for winning one Gold, three Silver and three Bronze certificates in the Royal Society of Chemistry UK Chemistry Olympiad 2024!



We pride ourselves on being able to offer 'an exceptional opportunity to young people who show an outstanding talent for the performing arts, while recognising the benefits of a fine academic education'. Pictured is Dr Mahesh and her students.

We are delighted to hear that Paris has been nominated for TWO National Dance Awards – Best Male Dancer and Outstanding Male Dancer (Modern) for his performance of Romeo with Matthew Bourne's iconic production @mbnewadventures. It was a proud teacher moment for so many of us.



Like many in my staffroom, I had another very proud teacher moment seeing Harley Bird as Amy's good friend in the recent Amy Winehouse biopic.



Behind the scenes with our Technical Theatre students on the recent production of Guys and Dolls, there is a lot going on at school in this area which is one of those critical – yet not so obvious sides – of the performing arts world.



We are interested in Daisy Ridley's new film 'Young Woman and the Sea' – a true story of determination. While she will be returning to the Star Wars franchise as



Rey, in this film written by Peaky Blinders' creator Stephen Knight, first Daisy will portray Trudy Ederle, who swam the English Channel in the 1920s – making her the first woman to do so.

For some time now the actress formerly known as Thandie Newton has taken back her original name, Thandiwe. She informed the public of the spelling of her name during an interview with British Vogue. It is a Zimbabwean spelling with Thandie being an anglicised version of the name.

Disney has shared the first trailer for 'Mufasa: The Lion King', its upcoming 'Lion King' prequel film from director Barry Jenkins ('Moonlight'). Thandiwe is one of the voice cast. We will see this at the end of the year. Hopefully another choice for our Tring Cinema?

**Sarah Bell, Tring Park**

## Death through the lens of faith



Death – a word that stirs fear, sorrow and uncertainty in the hearts of many. In a world where the inevitability of death casts a looming shadow, it's natural to grapple with

questions about life's meaning, the essence of existence and what awaits us beyond mortality's veil. This became acutely apparent in the summer of 2020 as daily death counts confronted us, serving as stark reminders of our mortality.

Yet, as Christians, we are beckoned to perceive death through the lens of faith – not as life's conclusion but as a transition to a new and everlasting reality. While death may signify the culmination of our earthly journey, it also serves as the portal to a glorious and eternal existence in the divine presence of God. For many, this truth resonates profoundly as we recite the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm or sing 'The Lord Is My Shepherd'. For we see that King David's words in Psalm 23 echo through the

ages, reassuring us that even in the darkest valleys, God accompanies us, providing comfort with his rod and staff. David reveals that through these valleys, the shepherd leads his flock homeward from green pastures and still waters to dangerous desert valleys, culminating in a heavenly banquet hall celebration!

Despite the promise of eternal life offering solace and reassurance, the reality of death can evoke profound grief and loss. It's natural to mourn the departure of loved ones, grapple with separation's pain, and yearn for a time when death shall cease. But amidst grief's tears, we discover solace in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As the apostle Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 'Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.' Paul reminds us that for believers there is hope beyond the grave, for there is an empty tomb in Jerusalem.

Furthermore, as Christians, our outlook on death is shaped by the conviction that it marks not an end but a new beginning – where faith transitions into sight. While the joy of reuniting with loved ones elates us, the ultimate hope lies in dwelling eternally with Christ, as articulated by the apostle John in Revelation 21:4: 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'

Thus, even amidst death's tears and separation, may we discover comfort in the promise of resurrection, fortitude within the community of faith, and hope in God's eternal love. May we embrace each day with the assurance that death has been conquered, and through Christ, we are bestowed with the gift of eternal life.

*And I will trust in You alone,  
For Your endless mercy follows me,  
Your goodness will lead me home.*  
**Stuart Townend**

**Tom Copperwheat  
Akeman Street Baptist Church**

## Bleeding hearts and racists



The 'Isle' of Portland dangles below Weymouth like a skin-tag on the chin of an old lady. It has long been a receptacle for the unwanted.

Planning permission has been granted for a 18.5MW palm oil power station there, and a proposed waste incinerator is being debated. When we retired to Weymouth eight years ago, it was home to three prisons, the largest of which is now dedicated to sex offenders. Other people live there, too – 635,000 of them.

And then the Bibby Stockholm suddenly arrived last summer to house migrants awaiting an asylum decision. The deal was that Dorset Council would receive £3,500 per migrant accommodated. (By mid-December the total cost of the project had reached £22m.) Local feelings ran high. Campaigning under the same banner were: humanitarians (including several local faith leaders), incensed at the cramped living conditions on the BS; and

those who see migrants as a threat.

Media attention has been plentiful. In June 2023, the Archbishop of Canterbury visited Portland: 'This is about human dignity, and not just that of the refugees. It's the human dignity of those communities in which they are going to be.' Faith leaders have received hate-mail. In December a despairing resident killed himself. And then there was the baptism affair. Many of the BS sojourners are Iranian Christians, who would therefore be at risk should they return to their Muslim-ruled homeland. They have been attending local churches since their arrival here. Some have been baptised, calling forth media accusations of manipulating the system. (Of course some will try, but leaders and worshippers at the churches concerned are not daft.)

The number of BS residents fluctuates, but this Easter there were over 340. Local churches collected that number of Easter eggs for the men. A previous church initiative – to welcome each initial resident with a sponge bag and living essentials – was met with a demonstration by those residents who object to the barge. But Leviticus



19:33-34 surely has a bearing? 'When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not ill-treat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.' NIV

The Government's own Home Affairs Select Committee paid a visit in January 2024, along with representatives of faiths and the community. Afterwards, they wrote to Michael Tominson MP (Minister for Illegal Migration and a regular churchgoer): 'Is the Home Office confident that living conditions... do not violate the human rights of individuals living there?'

The Government has now confirmed that there will be no more barges.

**Jane Gibbs  
St Aldhelm's, Weymouth**

### TRING CHARITIES

(Registered Charity No 207805)

## ALMSHOUSES IN TRING

From time to time, one and two-bedroom bungalows become available to let, for people who currently live in Aldbury, Long Marston, Marsworth, Pitstone, Puttenham, Tring, Wigginton or Wilstone.

Applicants, one of whom must be aged 55 or over, must not own their own home or have significant savings.

Applicants will be asked to supply personal financial information to prove their beneficial status.

The average weekly maintenance contribution (equivalent to "rent" for housing benefit purposes) is £107 for a one bedroom property and £126 for a two bedroom property.

If you would like to be considered for the Waiting List, please telephone Elaine Winter, Secretary to the Trustees, on 01442 827913 (weekday office hours only), for an application form or email [info@tringcharities.co.uk](mailto:info@tringcharities.co.uk)

# Tweet of the month



In April I went to Cornwall for a week's holiday, to a cottage near Land's End that I first stayed in back in 2004.

On this holiday it is fair to say the weather was

variable: the first part of the week was windy and felt autumnal at times. On Monday it was north-westerly winds over 40mph pretty much all day so I went sea watching at Pendeen, looking at the sea for seabirds going past. For the most part you look at a sea devoid of birds, thus the name! On this occasion, it was actually seabird watching, with thousands of Manx Shearwaters flying past close inshore in a continuous stream – spectacular!

As the week progressed, the wind dropped and the sun put in a welcome appearance and so birds other than seabirds could be looked for. This included Chough, which is Cornwall's county bird which appears on the county's coat of arms and other Cornish symbols. However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Chough declined in England and was lost to Cornwall (and England)

as a breeding bird in 1952.

Remarkably in 2001, four Chough from Ireland turned up in Cornwall of their own accord and in 2002 one pair bred on The Lizard, amid secrecy and surveillance to try to ensure their success. By 2005 numbers had increased slightly and I saw them on The Lizard. The knowledge that these coastal corvids (crows) need short-grazed habitat meant that relatively simple steps taken by people have seen their numbers increase to more than 200 birds; and 112 young birds were fledged in 2023. These days I now see them most days at Land's End and on nearby headlands and have seen them fly over the cottage more than once.

Chough is a small glossy-black crow with bright red legs and slightly down-curved bill. It is about the same size as a Jackdaw, which is commonly found around the Cornish coastline, but Chough is often quite acrobatic and compared to Jackdaw has broader wings and the wing-tip feathers (primaries) are usually held splayed apart and look like fingers. Curiously the name Chough was originally an onomatopoeic alternative name for the Jackdaw and the Chough was called Cornish Chough and then became just Chough. What is also



strange is that Chough is pronounced 'Chuff', whereas the calls of both Jackdaw, and more so Chough, are better described as 'Chow'.

This year I was fortunate and finally got photos of this charismatic bird that I was pleased with. Note the bird in the photo has colour rings to identify which individual it is so the population can be monitored as it hopefully continues to go from strength to strength.

When I saw Chough's rings, I was reminded of Matthew 10:29-31: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.' Words to take heart from indeed.

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

# Musalaha visit to Tring, 13 September 2024



Two women from Musalaha will visit Tring and Luton as part of a short UK tour, to tell us of their current experience in Israel and Palestine. One

of them, Hiba Allati, lives in the West Bank near to the Bethlehem fields where the angels appeared to the shepherds when Jesus was born. Hiba leads Musalaha's Muslim-Christian Women's Group. The article below uses Hiba's words taken from the Musalaha website.

## Introducing Hiba to Tring

Israeli military raids were a part of the reality I grew up in as a little girl in the West Bank during the Second Intifada. Today, these life-interrupting events continue to traumatize families and seem to be getting worse. At the end of January, during one of the weekly raids, the Israeli army entered in the middle of the night the house of a Christian family in my hometown of Beit Sahour. They told the family, 'You Christians have to leave because it is not safe for you to stay here'. Often, Palestinian Christians are told by Westerners that we should be fearful of our Muslim neighbours as they are the root cause of violence and the reason for our oppression. I always wondered why people are trying to blame

the 'other' Palestinian religious side rather than the occupation.

The ambiguity of the soldiers' comment leaves me with a great deal of uncertainty – what does the future hold for me here in Palestine? Internal and external obstacles effectively separate Palestinian Christians and Muslims. But if we disengage from one another and refrain from building friendships, we construct walls of separation between ourselves and leave room for religious racism to flourish as the State of Israel continues its oppression and exploitation of Palestinian lives. The majority of internally displaced refugees in West Bank refugee camps are Muslims, while Christians continue to migrate for a better life.

We can prevent this if we believe in the liberative work of reconciliation. In the words of Danté Stewart, 'If liberation means anything, it will mean this: I am liberated to fight against injustice, to be fully human, to give God my uncertainty, and to remain open to the question of our existence together'. Within the various challenges we face in the West Bank, I continue to believe that everyone, even my enemy without exception, is a human being, deserving of a good, dignified life, no matter our differences, misunderstandings, or conflicts. As Palestinian Christians and Muslims, we work for this liberation as equal human beings with the right to live in dignity.

When I first joined Musalaha as a



participant in the Young Adults Muslim/Christian project, I was curious to learn how we can address our common struggles as well as these internal challenges and stereotypes. There aren't many programs and platforms that allow for this authentic Palestinian internal discourse to take place. Our shared identity encourages us to step out of our comfort zones to make a positive difference within our community. This is why Muslim/Christian reconciliation at Musalaha is so important. At least this is what I have witnessed, experienced and believe. It is this power of women that Musalaha believes can initiate needed change within society – when women bravely embrace their influential roles as leader, sister, wife or mother.

**Hiba Allati, Musalaha's Muslim-Christian Women's Group**  
Supplied by Colin Briant  
High Street Baptist Church  
<https://musalaha.org>  
<https://www.musalaha.uk>

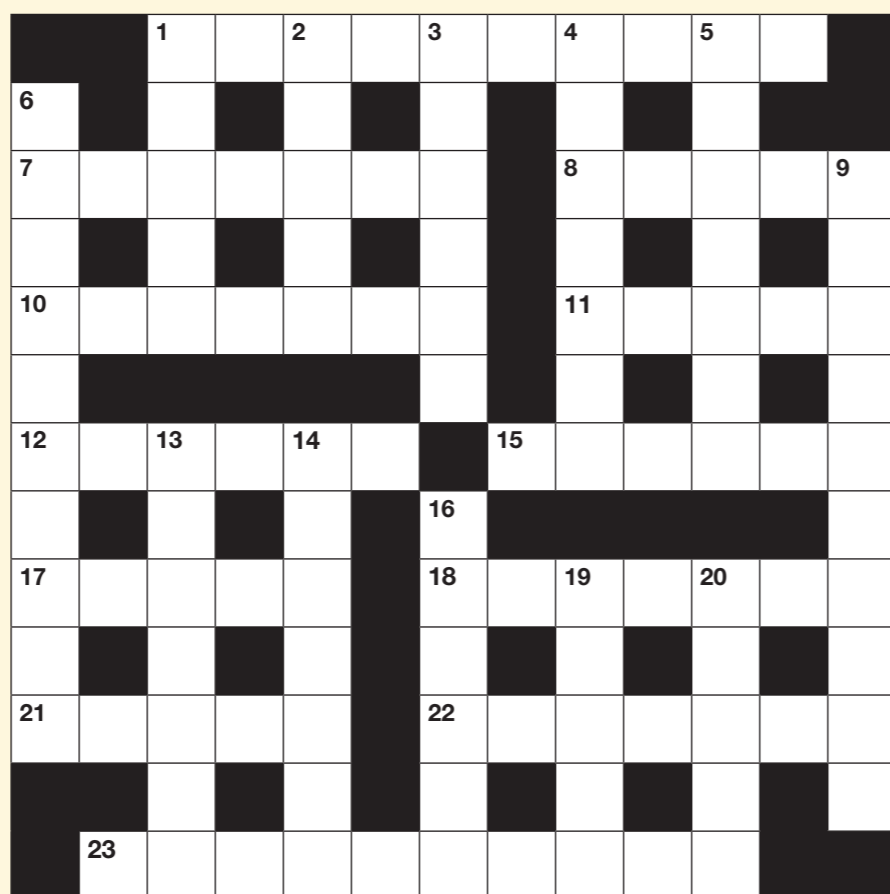
# Crossword

## ACROSS

1. Relating to the end of the world (10)
7. Popular Christian sect (7)
8. Grab (5)
10. Prime name of Prime Minister (7)
11. From now to then (5)
12. Most pleasant (6)
15. Lay assistant to clergy (6)
17. Bottom of the pile (5)
18. e.g. Pulpit (7)
21. Live for life (5)
22. Professional care (7)
23. Easter garden (10)

## DOWN

1. Fruit of Eden (5)
2. Fruit of Israel (5)
3. Religious ceremony (6)
4. e.g. Portrait (7)
5. Modified (7)
6. No alcohol! (10)
9. Journey to a sacred site (10)
13. Mild narcotic (7)
14. A particular length (7)
16. At the edge (6)
19. Neighbour of Israel (5)
20. Lift up (5)



Answers page 30

# Churches 'Count on Nature', 8–16 June



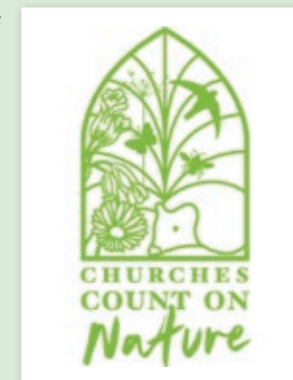
Churchyards are important habitats, largely unspoilt, never having been ploughed or artificially fertilised, and with a wide diversity of plants, fungi, lichens and wildlife. The soil is mature, and trees are often large which means that churchyards store greater amounts of carbon than other areas of grassland. 97% of British wildflower meadows have been lost since 1947 and 1 in 7 of UK's wildlife species is at risk of extinction. (Information provided from Biodiversity section of the Church of England website.)

- During Great Big Green Week, all 5 churches in our team will be taking part in the nationwide 'Count on Nature' survey. The plan is to encourage as many people as possible to set aside time during that week when they can identify plant life (and wildlife) in our churchyards.
- Common species are just as important for biodiversity as rare ones, so you will not need to be an expert! We will have information available in each church to help you identify some of the species you could find.
- You may have heard of the 'Caring for God's Acre' charity. Results will be recorded on their online 'Beautiful Burial Ground' map which shows

all sites where surveys have taken place, and the number of different species found there. Data will also be fed into the National Biodiversity Network records.

- Look out for more information in churches and on posters nearer the time.

**Anne Nobbs**  
**Eco-Church Group**



## Rock-solid hope



Hope is one of the fruits of the Spirit. These do not exist on their own, but they grow together. Hope is closely linked to joy, to perseverance, to patience.

Paul speaks of suffering producing perseverance, and perseverance producing character, and character producing hope. Peter writes something similar: 'For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with excellence, and excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (1 Peter 1:5-8) Spiritual disciplines are not ways in which we earn God's favour – we have that already, unconditionally – but they are ways in which we allow the fruit of the Spirit to take root and grow in our own lives. When we are working to be more holy for its own sake, we can fall into the temptations of the Pharisees. We can become self-righteous and self-satisfied, cut off from the struggles of others, and blind. But when we strive to become more Christlike for the sake of being beacons of hope, then our lives will become deeply attractive to others.

We need to be able to find little pockets of hope in our present reality. An essential part of being hopeful is developing a spirituality of paying attention. God is found in the real, in what actually is. When we know that God is somehow already present, then we will keep our eyes and ears open. And when we notice the divine fingerprints even in the darkest of places, we will be surprised by joy. A spirituality of paying attention grows out of and is supported by a willingness to live in the present moment. When we are stuck in nostalgia, we miss the shoots of the future already present. When we are kept back by guilt or shame, we are forgetting that God is the

one who can make things new. Hope is realistic because it is anchored in God.

One of the things that God says most often in Scripture is 'do not be afraid'. Fear closes our hearts, it constricts our chests. It makes us react instead of being open and curious. Scripture also tells us that perfect love casts out fear. I would say also that it opens our hearts to hope. What can we do with our fear? Like our grief or our joy, we take it to God. The first step is always taken from where we really are. If we are in despair, we need to cry out. If we are afraid, we need to acknowledge that.

Prayer is essential for cultivating hope. As we spend time in Christ's presence, individually and communally, we open ourselves up to being transformed. In prayer we receive the healing that comes from the loving gaze of God. We are forgiven, made whole. We discover again that we are loved. We rest in God's presence. Our anxious hearts learn to trust.

Paradoxically, it is also through embracing the suffering of the world that our hope is strengthened. When we close our eyes to suffering, then we do not become more hopeful. Instead, we retreat from the very reality in which God is found. To be beacons of hope means that we need to be willing to move toward others. Remember, hope is not wishful thinking. It does not come from denial. When we enter the messiness of life, we discover that God really is there. If we know that God is somehow already at work, we will have the courage to enter the hard and the dark places because they will not overwhelm us. Hope becomes real when we take on the troubles of a suffering world. When we bring hope to others, we feed our own hope.

How can we transform our society? We can see divine beauty in the most surprising places, we can be willing to expend ourselves for the other. Hope keeps us attentive and energised. Encountering others keeps us open to what God is doing. Fortitude keeps us going, and joy keeps us creative. Hope needs a community. We are hopeful together. We support each other, we laugh and cry together and find strength together. The work of the Spirit in the

cosmos is to weave all things together, to create community, to bring a greater unity out of diversity. Often we do not have the strength we need on our own because the strength we need is that of interconnectedness. A rope of three strands is not easily broken. Hope comes from connection.

Why then are we hopeful? We are hopeful because we know that the future of the world is the one which God is creating. We believe that, in the end, God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. That hope is not pie-in-the-sky-when-we-die, because we know that, in Christ, that future has already broken into the present. The kingdom is already present and growing. We already have the gift of the Holy Spirit. God is at work. And, above all, we trust in a God who is faithful. We trust in the resurrection power and the utter goodness of God. The power of God at work in the seed, is at work in the world and at work in our own lives. Hope rests on what God is doing and on who God is.

Hope is an eminently human virtue. It is that push toward survival and flourishing that has been woven into our DNA. To rekindle hope is to find our humanity. At the same time, hope does not disappoint us because we belong fully to God. We strive to be fully committed to God, yes, but that is possible because God is fully committed to us. God is the one who seeks us, who walks alongside us. God has committed Godself in solidarity to God's people for the sake of the world. Our hope is rock-solid because it is built on God's commitment and that is unshakeable.

**Dr Jessie Rogers**  
**Dean of the Faculty of Theology,**  
**Maynooth University, Ireland**  
*Supplied by Natalie Browne*  
*Corpus Christi Church*

## In memory of Phyllis Mary Proctor

On Monday 15 April, a morning when we had rain, wind and sunshine all within an hour, family and friends gathered at All Saints Church, Long Marston, for the funeral of Phyllis Proctor, aged 90, a long-time village resident and a complete original.

Neil Gurney played 'Jerusalem' and 'One more step', and the panto theme tune as the final piece.

Phyllis' father was a draper until he was bought out by M&S and then he ran the Old Swan at Cheddington. They lived in Astrope Lane, and during the bad winter of 1947, remembered the RAF dropping supplies. During the war she remembered the US air men giving out chocolate and gum, and there was also the story of the German spy who turned up at the pub – expecting it to be open when it wasn't, thereby revealing himself.

Phyllis was very musical as we all know from her playing in church and at the carols around the tree in the village, and she was very bright, attending the Grammar School in Aylesbury. In later life she usually managed three crosswords a day, including the cryptic one.



She met Stanley Proctor at the Long Marston football club where she fell for his blue eyes and blonde hair and they were married at All Saints Church. They had Ian and Ann and moved to Bromley in Long Marston in the 1960s where they stayed.

She worked at the Cow and Gate laboratories for a while, and at Deans, but many will remember her for her work at Long Marston School, where she was the lollipop lady, and woe betide any car who did not stop for her! She was capable of wielding the lollipop like a weapon! She was a dinner lady, and did crafts with Year 5.

They went to Devon for their holidays and she liked going out on the rowing boat. She was good friends with Phil and Eileen Jeffrey, and Mrs Macintyre and Daphne Reeves, and missed them greatly when they were gone. She enjoyed knitting and sewing, making jumpers and also a Watford scarf for Ian. Phyllis was also a good cook – a fantastic spread at Christmas and then made the leftovers go a very long way. She enjoyed gardening, particularly growing flowers, and had both a dog and cats – although the one she inherited from the vicarage kept running away.

The photos in church were all of her smiling – we associate her with laughter. She often got her own way and 'strong' is another word that comes to mind. When you came to the house, her usual greeting was 'What are you doing here?' even when expected. One of her most amazing skills was her ability to cycle very slowly and yet not fall off.

Pam Megaw, a former teacher at Long Marston School, read from the Letter to the Romans, which included the words 'Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer'.

Pam Edmonds spoke of Phyllis' membership of the WI, where she liked to win the competitions – and often did – so that it was not worth others taking part. While a regular attender, she was not so good at learning words for performances, and instead made everyone else laugh.

Alan Munt spoke of what Phyllis brought to the pantomimes, saying each year that she didn't think she would take part, but always did, and always brought the house down. Once again, she was not good at learning her lines, but knew how to work an audience!

Phyllis' faith was not dependent on the vicar, but on God. She was a very faithful attender at All Saints Church, and communion was brought to her at home when she became housebound. Her religion was part of her everyday life, just as it should be. We remember her for her honesty – she never pretended to be anything other than God has made her –



which takes a certain strength. To be who you are. She was a hard worker and was committed to her parish church, to the community and to her family. She was funny and fierce and we are the richer for having known her, and the poorer that she has gone. We return her to God and give thanks.

The WI provided the most wonderful refreshments at the funeral, and there were photos on display of Phyllis throughout her life. There will be a new decoration on the village Christmas tree dedicated to her.

Our love and prayers go to her family, Ian, Steve and Ann, Christopher and Robert, and to Glenys, her goddaughter.  
**Jane Banister, Tring Team**



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Please contact Barbara Anscombe if you would like to take a subscription to *Comment*: £20.00 for 10 issues each year. The magazine can be posted to you with an additional cost for postage at current rates.

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

## COMMENT DEADLINES

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August

# High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



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

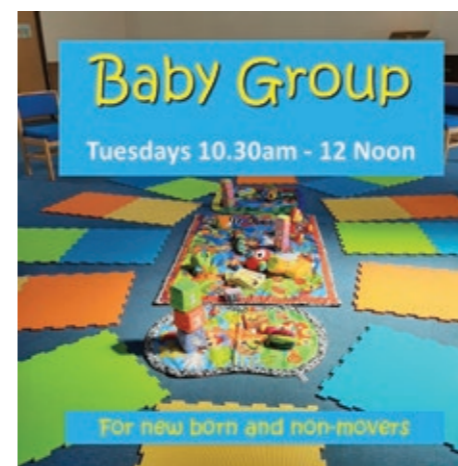


Morning worship

Sundays 10.30am

Join us in-person or online with Junior church

Growing in the message and challenge of God.



**Church office**

**Revd Joe Egan**

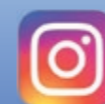
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High Street Baptist Church



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