

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



What's on in September in Tring Church

Services at Tring Church

Sunday 1st September

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

Sunday 8th September

8am Holy Communion traditional language**
10am Worship for all
3pm Piano and More concert

Sunday 15th September

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

Sunday 22nd September

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

Sunday 29th September

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

** 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 September 8th
3pm for an hour's concert of music followed by refreshments.
Free but collection for church and piano expenses

The creator and sustainer of all life



September is marked in some churches as the season of creation, an opportunity to think about God as creator and sustainer of all life, an opportunity to think about the importance of the world and how we care for it. Many churches hold their Harvest services in September or October, another opportunity to give thanks for the gifts that God gives us.

In recent years we have gradually become much more aware of the importance of caring for the world. It is easy for us to be detached from nature. We enjoy our gardens and times in the countryside, but few of us rely on our gardens for food. Supermarkets, etc make it easy for us to have whatever we want without thinking about the effect on the ground in which it grows or the place where it is made. It can be easy to be consumers of the earth rather than carers of it. The increased concerns about climate change, however, have meant that we have all had to stop and think. The wet springs and hot spells of summer have meant that we cannot ignore the change that is happening. If we were living in other parts of the world, that change would be even more pronounced, with rising sea levels threatening some low-lying countries, sea water making valuable farming land unusable and forest fires and droughts becoming a regular feature of life in some areas.

The growth of Eco Church has

helped many churches think about their relationship with creation and celebrate what we are doing, as well as challenging us to think about other ways we can care for the world. Many services will mention creation within them, intercessions will include prayers for the environment; we think about using LED light bulbs and leaving parts of our grounds as wild areas. They are all a reminder to take time to reflect on how we can be good stewards of God's creation, working with God to care for the world that he has given to us.

But more than that, I think they can be a reminder of how we are all part of creation, of how creation can point us to God and perhaps we may even think of ourselves as joining with creation as we bring our praise to God. There are numerous references to nature within our Bibles, particularly in the Old Testament. The story of creation begins our Bibles. At the end of the book of Job, as God asks his questions of Job, the wonder of who God is can often be seen through pictures from nature, 'Who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?' 'Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or have you seen the storehouses of the hail?' In Isaiah the people are told that the mountains and hills shall burst into song and the trees of the field shall clap their hands as the people go out in joy and are led back in peace. Psalm 148 gives a whole list of things from creation that are to praise God – the sun and moon, fire and hail, snow and frost, wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds to name some of them.

I have always found that being in creation helps me to bring my worship to God – from the wonder of a mountaintop view to the intricacies of some of the smallest flowers and plants, some of which we consider to be weeds. I was once asked how my faith differed from pantheism. Not knowing at the time what pantheism was, I was a bit flummoxed by the question. Someone did give me a definition: I think they described it as 'worship of creation', but I can't remember how I then responded. I know what my response would be today, that creation directs me to God, that I sometimes feel as though I am joining with creation as I worship, that creation helps me to reflect on the wonder of who God is.

Perhaps this September, creation season is an opportunity for all of us to think about what it means to us that God is the creator and sustainer of all life and the wonderful gift that we are given in the world in which we live. What do you particularly value about the world around us?

Rachael Hawkins
St Martha's Methodist Church

'Faith is the ability to live with delay without losing trust in the promise; to experience disappointment without losing hope, to know that the road between the real and the ideal is long and yet be willing to undertake the journey.'

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
Covenant and Conversation
Toby Press, 2019

All things bright and beautiful

*All things bright and beautiful
All creatures great and small
All things wise and wonderful
The Lord God made them all.*

Please don't let pollution take them away.

Sue Douthwaite



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

The bridge between heaven and earth



I wonder how many *Comment* readers saw the Euros in the summer. Whatever the scoreline, I'm always fascinated by the crowd, the great mass of people swaying and chanting and singing, the passionate support, the physical presence and togetherness. I sometimes find it quite moving.

A crowd often has a single purpose: people gathered together for one

reason. Imagine you're in the crowd that's chasing after Jesus. You've legged it around Lake Galilee, kept up with everyone else and then you make your way to the front, just to know the power of touch. Caring touch can connect one person to another. It's a sign of shared humanity. The touch of a lover, the cuddle of a baby, the hug of friend, these all act as a bridge between two people. The touch of Jesus is the bridge between two worlds, heaven and earth.

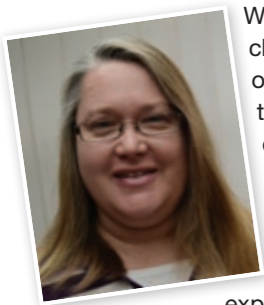
Humanity has an odd relationship with body. Our bodies can divide us.

Bodies with different coloured skin are treated differently; some of us carry the truth in our bodies that we are overweight, while others starve. We fight with our bodies when they fail or break or cause us pain.

All this is true about being embodied creatures. We live an embodied existence that Jesus chose to share, so that the walls of hostility may be broken down between us. We respect one another's bodies as if they were sacred – because they are.

Michelle Grace
Tring Team

Liturgical colours



Why do we keep changing the colour of the altar cloth in the hall?' asked one of the children at school.

'It's to do with the church seasons,' I explained. 'Each season has a different colour, matched to the seasons. We call the church seasons "liturgical" so we say the colours are the liturgical colours.'

As one of my first duties in the church, aged 6, was to go round with 'The Bag' for collection, I grew up noticing that the colours of the church's soft furnishings changed. 'The Bag' was usually green, but every now and then it became a vibrant red, a lovely violet or a splendid white with gold edging. The altar frontal, the pulpit fall, the chalice burse and veil, and my dad's chasuble and stole all changed to match. They were all kept in an ancient chest of drawers in the vestry and it was my responsibility to make sure I knew which bag I needed for that particular day.

'Are they the same for everyone?' someone asked.

Throughout the Church of England, they are the same, and also in the Catholic church, with a few variations, although the C of E rules state that use of liturgical colours is not mandatory. I imagine this is much like the rule for drivers to carry a spare wheel – you don't have to have one, but if you do, it has to be in good condition. If you choose to use liturgical colours, you have to use the correct colour.

So, what are the correct colours?

White is the colour for festivals and is used from Christmas Day until the Presentation of Christ (2 February), then again from Easter Day until the day before Pentecost (seven weeks later). Some churches have two sets of white vestments and keep one for 'best' for greater festivals (Christmas Day and Easter Day) where gold may be used. White can also be used for weddings, festivals of saints who were not martyred, All Saints' Day, thanksgivings and days of celebration. White can also be used at funerals.

Red is used during Holy Week (except for Maundy Thursday communion) and for Pentecost. It is used for any service with a focus on the Holy Spirit. Red is used to observe the feast days of martyred saints.

Purple is worn from Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent) until the start of Holy Week and also for Advent. Blue can be used as an alternative. In the Catholic Church, blue is used for celebrations honouring the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Green is used for Ordinary Time, from 3 February until Shrove Tuesday, and then after Pentecost until Advent. I was always delighted when it was time for 'The Bag' to change at last to violet after Ordinary Time as I was ready for a change, although, if All Saints' Day fell on a Sunday, I would have the joy of the red bag a few weeks earlier.

How were the colours chosen?

White (or gold) represents purity and is a festive, joyous colour. It also represents the resurrection.

Red represents the Passion of Christ and the blood spilled by martyrs. It



also symbolises the fire and flames of Pentecost.

Purple symbolises repentance, waiting and mourning. Violet flowers are a symbol of humility. Purple (according to the C of E rules) can vary from 'Roman Purple' to violet. Roman Purple is also known as Tyrian Purple, and was made from Murex snail shells, to produce a reddish-purple natural dye. In ancient times, extracting this dye involved tens of thousands of snails and substantial labour, and as a result, the dye was highly valued, being worth its weight in silver. Lydia from Thyatira, an early Christian, made her living from the dye trade and was able to support St Paul in his missionary work (Acts 16:14-15).

Green is the sign of life in Nature and represents growth, life and hope. It symbolises the graces that draw people into the life of God and is the colour that is worn most often.

To answer the child's question, I would say the use of liturgical colours help us to focus on the key points for each season and aid our worship. They are visual reminders of the important parts of our faith.

Gill Kinsey
St Peter & St Paul

Congratulations to the Prescotts!

It was wonderful to have baby Annabel Rose in St Peter & St Paul's Church in July for her thanksgiving service! Congratulations to Tom and Fran Prescott and 6-year-old big sister, Evelyn.

Annabel was born on Monday 17 June 2024 weighing 8lbs (I love the way we still understand a baby's weight in imperial measurements even though we went decimal in February 1971!). Fran

and her sister Charlotte are regulars at the parish church, so cousins Evelyn and Phoebe are too. Now baby Annabel will be joining them, the youngest member of the congregation. (The oldest is 99-year-old Beth Scraggs, so we cater for people from 0-100!) Grandad Tony Mackinder is also a regular and one of our Welcomers.

Both Charlotte and Fran were baptised in St Peter & St Paul's in 1986

and 1987 and were members of the parish church choir in their teens when Jane Nash was organist and in charge of the choir. Phoebe was baptised in 2021.

Wishing the Prescotts much love and hoping for lots of cuddles in weeks to come.

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul



Season of Creation, 2024



The Season of Creation is a time when Christians around the world are encouraged to focus on creation care. It begins on 1 September – recognised as the Feast of Creation by a number of denominations – and ends on 4 October, the feast day of St Francis of Assisi, known for his love of nature and whom many regard as the patron saint of ecology.

The theme for the 2024 season is 'To hope and act with Creation' and the organisers have taken the decision that 'Creation' should be capitalised (the usual style would be capital for Creator but lower case for creation). They explain that this 'emphasizes that Creation is not an object that has been created for human use, but rather a subject that we are called to relate to and collaborate with as fellow creatures'.

This year, the Season of Creation is also seeking to link Christian voices in support of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT), which calls for a halt to all new fossil fuel projects. In this way, the church-based celebration is drawing attention to one of the major causes of damage to Creation: climate change being driven by the burning of fossil fuels. Saturday 21 September will be a day of action to endorse the FFNPT and this falls during the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. It is against that background that the global family of Christians are asked to raise their voices to show how faith communities can act powerfully in the cause of justice and hope around the world. The guide for the 2024 Season includes a section on advocacy, with information about participating in campaigns to reduce fossil fuel use.

I particularly like the symbol chosen for this year. Called 'the first fruits of hope' it has been based on Romans 8:19-25 and I see it as depicting



hands of all different sizes and colours, reaching together towards both peace (a dove) and flourishing nature (a tree). I wonder what others might see in this symbol? The guide to the 2024 Season of Creation contains a wealth of material: a service outline suggested for use in special services on 1 September and 4 October but that includes Bible readings, prayers and reflections that could be incorporated into Sunday services by any denomination; prayers; promotional material; and activity ideas. This guide can be accessed via the website <https://seasonofcreation.org/>.

Nicky Bull
High Street Baptist Church

Be the change!



Tring has been a Fairtrade Community (formerly known as Fairtrade Town) since 2007; you can read more on Tring's Justice & Peace website.

This year Fairtrade is celebrating its 30th Anniversary from 9-22 September and we hope Tring will be marking the occasion too! The theme for Fairtrade Fortnight 2024 is 'Be the change'. There are loads of resources, videos and materials to help you mark this milestone.

We are faced with challenges of a greater complexity than ever before. The climate crisis is putting in jeopardy the future of farming and we are facing multi-faceted problems in our global supply chains. We must push forward on fair prices and equitable power structures and increase the pace of change. Fairtrade supporters, businesses and legislators all have a part to play. If we want to increase the pace of change, then we must ensure we take every opportunity to do the right thing and make the future fair.

Tring's Justice & Peace Group have already been highlighting the importance of opting for Fairtrade at Tring's Summer



Carnival – local shops donated Fairtrade goods to create two amazing hampers which we raffled, raising £57.03 for the Fairtrade Foundation.

Polly Eaton, Tring Justice & Peace Group

Poem of the month



Here is a short, descriptive poem in which views of ordinary scenes along the Thames are united by the motif of the colour yellow. In it nothing happens

to disturb the slow and tranquil mood and the concrete images of a man-made bus, bridge, barge, and wharf are contrasted with the natural, short-lived elements of a butterfly, hay, shadows, fog and leaves. The whole comes across as a painting with interwoven layers and textures.

Oscar (Fingal O'Flaherty Wills) Wilde, the well-known Irish poet and playwright, was born in Dublin in 1854 and educated at home by a French nurse and a German governess until he

was 9. He studied Classics, with distinction, at Dublin and then at Oxford. Here he entertained lavishly, wrote poetry and epigrams and became interested in the Aesthetic movement. He later set up home in Chelsea where he became famous for his flamboyant style and celebrity status. As a writer he made his name with poetry, one novel and plays, most famously social comedies such as 'The Importance of Being Ernest'. In 1895 he was convicted of committing homosexual acts and imprisoned. Two years of hard labour in prison seriously affected his health, and, on release, he moved to France where he died, penniless, in 1900. He was baptised an Anglican and remained so for most of his life, though the Roman Catholic

Symphony in Yellow

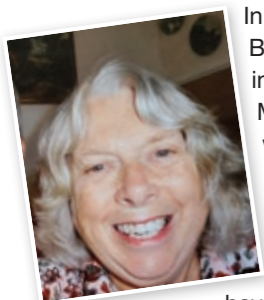
*An omnibus across the bridge
Crawls like a yellow butterfly,
and, here and there, a passer-by
Shows like a little restless midge.
Big barges full of yellow hay
Are moored against the shadowy wharf,
And, like a yellow silken scarf,
The thick fog hangs along the quay.
The yellow leaves begin to fade
And flutter from the Temple elms,
And at my feet the pale green Thames
Lies like a rod of rippled jade.*

Oscar Wilde, 1889

liturgy always attracted him. He was received into the Roman Catholic church on his deathbed. He was given a pauper's burial in Paris and, some twelve years later, a sculpture by Jacob Epstein was added to his grave by public subscription.

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

Feedback



In reply to Jane Banister's article in praise of the Mother's Union, I would like to say what a good article it was. Here at St Andrew's in Biggleswade, we

have fifteen diocesan members of the MU and I plan to read the article to them at our next meeting. Thank you, Jane!

I also found the article about Colin Stevens very interesting though my memory

differs a little in some of the details...

I joined the parish church choir in 1965 with five other 14-year-old girls to swell the numbers of trebles and sopranos – and then we had some altos join too. My brother Andrew Hardy and my future husband Ian Drakes were already in the choir. I was courting Richard Cook at the time who was also in the choir. I don't ever recall there being thirty-six boys and ten men – and there was no mention of us girls!

After choir practice we used to go to the 'Vitasette' Club held in a room in the gateway of the Vicarage. We

both remember the football and cricket matches because my brother and Ian were in them.

We were in the Choral Society before Colin took over from his father. The women wore teal blue dresses and pearl necklaces for light concerts and grey skirts and white blouses for sacred concerts. I was also a member of the Vale Gilbert & Sullivan Society so I have known Colin and Jane for a good few years. Jane and I sometimes walked into Ashlyns together!

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

Running the race



As I write this, it is the first week of the Olympics, and I've managed to see a few quick glimpses each day. Like many others, I just love to see all that hard work pay off

for our British sports women and men after years of training and overcoming endless obstacles within these last years of their lives. Their stories are often very motivating and can help others to not give up, knowing that no one's life is always easy. We all at some time in our lives need wisdom to know when the right time is to keep pushing at a challenge or when that obstacle is actually the means to make us change course, and hopefully find a new, but different focus.

At 'my' church in New Mill, we are going through the letter that James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote to scattered Jewish believers of Jesus. Certainly, their lives were no summer picnic. They were despised by so many people and life was tough, but James doesn't pander to their challenges, he writes in a way that keeps them focused on what is most important. He sets the bar appropriately high and encourages them to make sure their faith is lived out, in words and actions in every area of their lives. He writes near the beginning of the letter that when they realise they need wisdom to know how to handle something challenging, they only

have to ask God for it and it will be given. How often, I wonder, do I miss out on receiving that wisdom because I fail to ask? Maybe you do too?

Just a little later in the letter, he then tells the readers that there are different types of wisdom, some that are 'earthly', which won't reap a good outcome, compared to the Godly wisdom that clearly will lead to good. That set me thinking about what in our culture is said to be good, that we may call 'earthly wisdom', and yet won't reap the rewards we might hope for.

Here are five things 'the world' says that Jesus never did.

1. **'Follow your heart.'** That implies that our hearts are wise, but in Jeremiah 17:9 it says, 'The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives.' That's very challenging, isn't it!
2. **'Be true to yourself.'** That sounds nice, but Jesus said these words recorded in Matthew 16:24, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'
3. **'Believe in yourself!'** Again, on the surface this sounds positive, but Jesus spoke more challenging words about following him when he said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life' as he called people not to trust in themselves but in him.

4. **'Live your Truth.'** This challenges the very important question of what is truth in our society? Is it reality that everyone's experience is equal and can be called truth? Jesus, when confronted by Pontius Pilate, tells him, 'The reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.' Jesus' words indicate that we can't make up our own truth and expect it to be equal to his.
5. **'As long as you are happy, that's all that matters.'** In my experience happiness is an elusive, butterfly-type feeling. It can come and go depending on many things. Jesus doesn't want us to have an unhappy life, that's for sure, but what brings peace and contentment is not found where our culture may suggest. Jesus' challenging words in Matthew 16:26 are, 'What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul'.

Our 'race' may be long and hard at times. I believe it's so very important to follow the markers Jesus gives to live this life, because we can then be content and know where the race leads. The most wonderful reality is that we don't run it alone, as his other commitment to us in Matthew 28:20 is recorded as, 'I am with you always to the end of the age.'

**Jackie Buie
New Mill Baptist Church**

NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH

Invites you to join us for a Cream Tea followed by Songs of Praise

**Sunday 20th October
3.30 to 5.30pm**



All donations received will go towards our Church Renovations

Healing to a heresy



On the anniversary of my ordination, I preached referencing the theology of Canon Timothy Goode. I came across Tim at the clergy conference

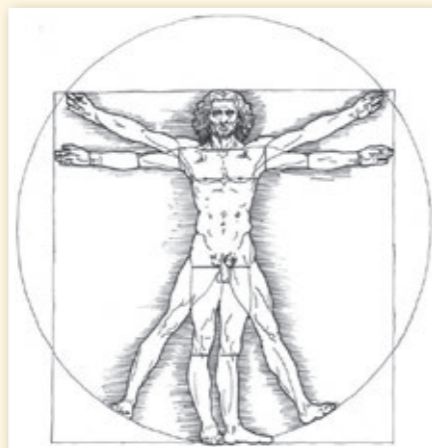
earlier this year. Tim is a Canon at York minster and a member of the general synod. He is also very obviously physically disabled. He has multiple exostosis which means he has bone spurs growing which have required many painful operations throughout his life. They also became cancerous and he nearly died from this. He also has hidden disabilities: panic attacks and PTSD. To add to this, he experiences frequent discrimination from both clergy and laity. Walking home on the day of his ordination as deacon, he heard someone call out, 'Oi, Vicar, heal yourself!' and the crowd joined in the laughter. A year later after his ordination to the priesthood, a clergy colleague told him that whilst he supported Tim's ordination to the diaconate, he could not support him as a priest and quoted to him Leviticus 21:21 (you can look it up).

For some there remains a clear connection between disability and sin. Whilst this might be a small group of people with a particular way of interpreting the Bible, all too often we project our own biases into healing prayers. He suggests we need stories of heroic Paralympians or people fighting and surviving cancer to give ourselves hope if we were to find ourselves in similar situations; or we see healing as fixing the problem. Behind many of the biblical healing stories is the belief that illness is the thing which excludes



us from community. The healing of the hemorrhaging woman brings her into full relationship with God and the community.

Tim also suggests that all too often Christians hold on to an anthropology inherited from Greco-Roman culture. He refers to this as the 'idealized other'. It finds its form most clearly in Da Vinci's famous painting of the Vitruvian Man. The idealized other is the athletic, successful archetype. It is the source of all our Instagram selfies, cosmetic surgery, perfect bodies. Subconsciously, our desire for healing is to this false reality.



Tim instead references how he has learned to pray Psalm 139 on a daily basis. At times it is difficult, but he comes to the understanding that even with his disabilities he is wonderfully and fearfully made. He then refers to an icon the Dance of the Resurrection. It points us to a truth about the resurrected Christ. He very definitely isn't the idealized other. We might project on to the resurrected Christ our own biases and hopes; we might see some superhuman, six-packed figure bursting from the tomb: but the biblical account reminds us that it is the wounded Christ. In this icon Christ grasps the hand of the doubting, flawed Thomas, and Christ forces Thomas to place his hand into his wounds.



Tim asks us to reject the idealized other. He asks us not to heal to a heresy and hope for some alternative reality for ourselves or those we care about. Instead, he wants us to know that we are wonderfully and fearfully made and that our salvation is found in the wounded, resurrected body of Christ.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

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

Hatching, matching and dispatching



This year, we, as a nation with others, celebrated the anniversary of the D-Day Landings eighty years ago – they were of great significance which affected

all of us directly or indirectly.

All of us, from time to time, celebrate our own personal anniversaries. For me, this is a year of two sixtieth anniversaries, of being made Deacon in Peterborough Cathedral and then of being married in August. On learning of the former, your editor suggested I should write about my sixty years in Holy Orders and how the church has changed in that period.

Of course, there is always change in so many aspects of life, but I realise that in my sixty years there have been very significant changes in the life of the church in general and of the Church of England in particular. There are the changes affecting Christianity in this country, not least an increase in secularisation, the increase of those who have no religion and those many others who have other faiths. We may still have an Established Church with a monarch who is Supreme Governor and which is apparent in a ceremony like the Coronation, but, in practice, this means little in religious terms to many.

Further, there have been changes in the law about Sunday observance which have made Sunday a day for shopping, sport, or going out in the car and so on. All these have brought a great change in attitude to Sabbath observance, as it used to be called. Another obvious change is the way in which 'hatching, matching and dispatching' no longer, in most cases, involve the clergy as they did in times past when most babies were baptised, most couples were married in church and most people had a Christian funeral service.

Recently I found two photographs of the members of Chichester Theological College, where I was trained in 1962-1964. Like a number of such colleges, it no longer exists. Then, those photographs showed fifty or so ordinands with five priests on the staff. Nearly all ordinands were trained at a full-time residential college for two or three years. We were of different sorts of educational

and other backgrounds and of varying ages. Most of the married men were apart from their families in term time. Now there are fewer residential colleges and a number of part-time training courses. Of course, the most significant change is that nowadays a considerable number of ordinands are women. With these changes in training there have come changes in the way ministers are deployed, employed and paid. We all expected to be stipendiary curates for probably two curacies, followed by an incumbency or chaplaincy.

About the time of my first curacy, the Church of England (and the Church of Rome!) introduced long overdue changes in worship. The Book of Common Prayer of 1662 still held sway (as it is still supposed to do), even if there were variations (to put it mildly). Some readers will know that the C of E had tried to revise the Prayer Book (which it certainly needed in many ways) in the 1920s. Parliament, however, rejected the 1928 Prayer Book. In practice, some of the revisions were accepted and used, particularly in the services of marriage and funerals. Eventually there appeared the Alternative Service Book, followed by the now familiar Common Worship (2000). In the early years of these experiments, I remember in my first parish celebrating the new form of the Eucharist behind closed doors as a private service, because it was not yet fully authorised. But as well as new forms there has been a great enrichment and variety in what we do and say and hear in modern Anglican worship, not all of which I have kept up with. Some years ago, I had to ask the Team Vicar of Tring what was involved in 'Messy Church'! Any further changes in the form of the Eucharist I would like to reserve for another article.

Instead, a few words about baptisms, weddings and funerals from a personal experience in my active ministry. When I started, baptisms usually took place on a Sunday afternoon – sometimes up to four families at a time with just a few relations and friends in attendance. The excuse for a family party afterwards has meant an increase in numbers. The idea of baptism as part of Sunday morning worship, as perhaps it should be, had not caught on. When, as a Deacon, I first had to baptise a baby, with no experience of holding a baby, I chose to visit a young family and

asked if I might hold their baby to give me some practice! Things soon changed – four children and ten grandchildren have accustomed me to holding babies! One significant change in baptism and other sacraments is the adoption of anointing. I have never, myself, been anointed. Holy Oil was only used in the last rites – extreme unction. But nowadays anointing is common in baptism, confirmation, ordination, institutions and so on, as well as for healing. One issue for some clergy was the baptism of babies 'born out of wedlock' to use an out-of-date and unfamiliar phrase. It has never bothered me, but it brings us on to the great topic of matrimony.

Here we have seen great changes, thanks to the changes in the state's marriage laws. No longer is the Registry Office the only alternative to the church. So, we have all sorts of venues which have nothing to do with where the couple live and which are highly convenient as ceremony and reception can take place in the same location.

So much for 'hatching' and 'matching'. Huge changes have also taken place in the practice and understanding of 'dispatching' – what is a funeral all about? Instead of the emphasis of commending the departed to God's mercy, there is rather an emphasis on the memories left behind by the deceased. Both are actually necessary, but I was once thanked after a funeral for mentioning the resurrection. There is a need for both elements, but where there is no faith, it has become logical to have a secular minister and no prayers. I have to admit that what some people choose to read, listen to, be it music or poetry or whatever, is not always to my personal taste. But for many, nowadays, marriages and funerals have nothing to say about God and the priest has no part in them. In some ways this is more honest but...

So many changes in the ways a priest was concerned in the key moments of life. But what about daily life and Sunday Worship? How has our Lord's command 'Do this in memory of me' been obeyed through the years and in the present day? It has been the centre of my Christian life for so long – sixty years!

Martin Banister
St Albans Cathedral



Harvest Celebrations in Tring Team Parish

St Cross Wilstone

Tuesday 17th September 11am Patronal Harvest service followed by a finger buffet lunch at 12noon in the Church

Everyone welcome, for the buffet, please book with Alison-824394, or Olga-822894, £5 each

St Mary's Puttenham

Sunday 22nd September 1.30pm for 1.45pm - Harvest Lunch in Cecilia Hall

Tickets £10 from Christine via 07514 548289 or email christine.rutter2@gmail.com

followed by 3.30pm. "A Celebration of Harvest" in St Mary's Church

St John the Baptist Aldbury

Sunday 6th October, 11am Harvest Festival starting at the Allotments,

followed by a bring & share harvest lunch in the churchyard or church if wet, everyone welcome

St Peter and St Paul Tring

Sunday 13th October Harvest Worship for All at 10am

(collecting gifts for DENS from high-needs list) followed by

Harvest Lunch at 12.30pm

please book on the website, events page.

Also All Saints Long Marston and Beer & Hymns events to be confirmed

Raising money for The Bishop of St Albans' Harvest Appeal

Thrive: Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture in Sri Lanka

in partnership with The Leprosy Mission.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

Corpus Christi Craft Sale



The Corpus Christi Craft Community (CCCC) had a stall at the Tring Carnival at the end of June. On offer were stunning bags and stylish sun hats. Proceeds were to support the work on the Wynaud Trust, a charity set up by

Northchurch Baptist Church to support a poor rural community in northern Zaire.

This is the second time the CCCC has raised funds for the Trust and we hope to continue to support its work in the future.

The CCCC will meet again in September after a short summer break. Craft sessions are run at Corpus Christi Church Hall, Langdon Street and are open and free to all whether you are a beginner or an experienced crafter.

General Craft Sessions including knitting, sewing, crochet, embroidery, etc are held at 2.00pm on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month and the second and fourth Saturdays of the month.

Come along to learn new skills and meet other crafters. All are welcome!

Margaret Donnelly
Corpus Christi Church



Fibs



Fibs, lies – words which seem 'horrible' but sometimes are appropriate. I do remember when I heard a fib and it shocked me. I was 9 years old with my mother and sister who was 4 and a half years old. That half mattered to me. We were in the queue to enter the Dome of Discovery at the 1951 Festival of Britain. (If this means nothing to you, it

will be worth looking it up.)

My mum (how could she?) took my sister and me to the side of the queue, and said, 'Don't say you are only 4 and a half.' We were only allowed into the Dome if we were over 5 years old.

I squirmed as I stood guiltily in the queue, getting closer and closer to the entrance. The fee was put on the desk and in we went. I don't think I pushed in front of my mother (you just didn't) but I was glad I was now in. My sister followed, probably not knowing what awful thing we had done. The only thing I can remember is that we were greeted

by a huge bear in the dark. I am not sure I enjoyed the experience.

To this day, as you can see, that memory has stayed with me. It did remind me that it was a bit like Jesus staying in the Temple when Mary and Joseph were looking for him. He had disobeyed them and not kept close by. Yes, they should have realised he had stayed in the Temple, listening and asking questions – but what a worry! Was that the only time Jesus had done that?

Pam Russell
St Peter & St Paul

From Evangelicalism to Christian Universalism – my journey



I was born in Wigginton in 1955 and at 3 months was christened at St Bartholomew's Church. My first introduction to Christianity was when I attended Sunday School. My parents were steeped in Anglican culture and we attended church regularly, learning about God through Bible stories and singing traditional hymns. I was confirmed into the Christian faith at 12 and became a Server for a few years, which I enjoyed.

It was as a young adult at the age of 21 that I heard the Evangelical version of the gospel: that God loved me personally and had sent Jesus to die for my sins on the cross and would come to live within me if I asked him in. I immediately believed this was the truth and I knelt down in my room and asked the living Jesus into my life to be my Saviour and Lord. Three things followed from this: (1) I knew God was real; (2) I knew I was born again; (3) I knew the Bible was the word of God.

In those days I was given a copy of the Bible by those who were mentoring me, and this was a 'Good News Bible'. I began reading it, but really didn't understand it, and quickly realised that most Christians I knew didn't understand it either. Yes, there were certain verses and passages that they would quote and maybe even preach on, but also whole swathes of scripture ignored by most Christians. However, I persevered with it and began attending Evangelical meetings and house groups and listening to as much teaching as I could.

I attended several different churches and studied many Christian books, listened to endless sermons and Bible studies and soon realised, that within Evangelicalism there were many versions of the gospel: Calvinism, Arminianism, Charismatic, Reformed, Pentecostal and so on. There were different baptisms. Some believed in the gifts of the spirit, others believed the gifts ended with the Apostles, but one thing they all had in common was that not everyone would be saved and most people would end up in the eternal conscious torment of Hell.

I began thinking 'How could this be a gospel at all?' after all, the word gospel

means 'Good news' and it seemed really bad news that most people would be lost and end up in Hell. I thought this must be right as the preachers and elders who taught this seemed to know what they were talking about and the reality of my born-again experience seemed to imply this was the truth.

As time went on, I started doing my own research. Firstly, I began researching the word 'hell' and quickly realised that it didn't mean what traditionalists had said it meant. I also discovered from the Bible that hell was not eternal. I also found out that not only was the 'fall of man' universal but that every person had become a sinner, not by their own choice but by being physically descended from Adam. I then realised that, just as the work of Adam was universal, affecting all mankind, so the work of Christ was universal: Jesus died, not just for Christians but for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2) and St Paul, in his letters, seemed to compare the two, showing that the work of Christ undoes the work of Adam. 'Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.' (Romans 5:18, NIV)

I then realised that the word 'things' in scripture is used of people or 'beings' both human and angelic and not just of inanimate objects, and that ultimately 'all things' would be reconciled to God through the work of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. 'In the dispensation of the fullness of time he would gather together in one all things in Christ. Whether it be things in heaven or things on earth even in him.' (Eph 1:10)

I then began to realise that for the first 400 years of church history, the church preached universalism, until the time of Constantine and also the writings of St Augustine, when many false doctrines entered the church, particularly the beliefs that (1) Jesus was not the saviour of the world; (2) Jesus did not die for the sins of the whole world; (3) that God would send people to hell for ever. I read many books on this subject from the writings of the church father Origen (who taught universal salvation) to more recent books, particularly 'The Saviour of the World' by J Preston Eby, 'Hope beyond hell' by Gary Beauchemin and 'The Evangelical Universalist' by Gregory MacDonald, which I would thoroughly

recommend.

After much research myself, I decided to write my own book on this subject called 'The Gospel of the Restoration of All Things'. The title comes from a passage in the book of Acts: 'Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the time of the restoration of all things, which God has spoken by all his holy prophets since the world began' (Acts 3:19-21).

In my book I cover subjects such as the fall of man, the two natures of man, that 'things' means beings, human and angelic, the Forever/Until principle, hell/deliverance from hell, the universal atonement of Christ, the unforgivable sin, all people will become believers.

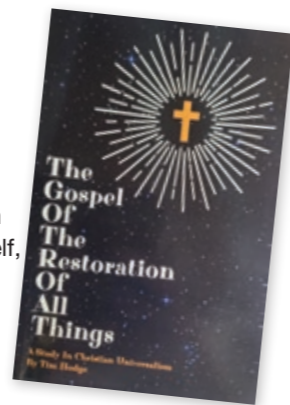
I have used many Bible quotations because I want the scriptures to speak for themselves on these issues.

My aim in writing this book is to persuade Evangelical Christians, who are firm Bible believers, that the Bible doesn't teach everything they have been taught about the destiny of unbelievers and to see that the work of Christ is much more universal than they've realised; and to encourage them to question traditional orthodox teaching.

I also want to appeal to liberal Christians, many of whom have rejected much of the Bible because of the Orthodox teachings on hell and judgement, and non-Christians to show them that the Bible reveals a God who loves the world so much that he sent his only begotten Son to be the saviour of the entire world and that God's judgement and his love work together in a beautiful harmony.

If anyone is interested in reading the book, or would like to discuss this subject with me, feel free to contact me directly on 0777 983 9512 or by email timhodge100@gmail.com or at my home address: 81 Highfield Rd, Tring, HP23 4DS. My book is available from Amazon, some book shops or from me directly.

Tim Hodge
Tring resident



Tweet of the month

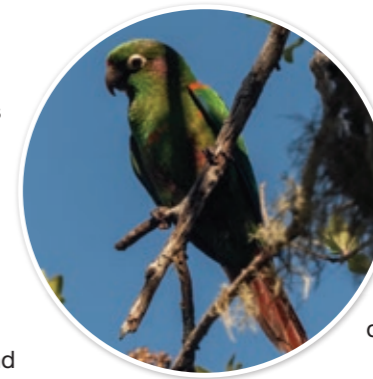


Anyone getting bored with Colombia will be pleased to hear that I will soon be off to Papua – think Sir David Attenborough and Birds of Paradise. In the meantime, Colombia still has more than 800 species of bird that I have seen there and not mentioned yet... In 2020 I visited the Western Cordillera and this year most of the trip was spent on the Central and Eastern Cordillera. However, the first part of my visit was to the La Guajira and Magdalena departments in the north-east of Colombia; while both departments have coastline on the Caribbean Sea, it was the Santa Marta mountains that were the main focus of the trip.

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is an isolated mountain range that is not part of the Andes at all. It is close to the Caribbean coast and is surrounded by lowlands. As I have said previously, mountain ranges are frequently good areas for endemics and isolated mountain ranges in the tropics especially so. The

Santa Marta mountains are very good and currently boast over twenty endemic bird species exclusive to this mountain range. However, there are still new species being identified in the area and any subspecies local to the area could be found to be a new species in the future. Indeed, just before I went to Colombia a possible new species of Antpitta was described and is found near a lodge I stayed in: no, we didn't see it.

We spent three nights in the El Dorado Lodge high up, 6,600 feet above sea level, in the Santa Marta mountains. This is 50% higher than Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis. From the lodge we ascended to over 9,000 feet on our first morning and walked along the San Lorenzo Ridge. Realistically I don't expect to see all the birds it is possible to see in a location but obviously there are some I should see and others I would really like to see. Members of the Parrot family are always a treat to see and some are high-altitude specialists. The San Lorenzo Ridge plays host to one such



specialist – the Santa Marta Parakeet is only found above 6,600 feet altitude. So, this is a local endemic and a smart Parakeet. So, if I missed it, I couldn't say it was a dull bird!

We arrived early at the ridge

as this species can be difficult to locate, particularly around midday. So, we walked out along the ridge as far as we could go and saw Santa Marta Warbler and Santa Marta Mountain Tanager and other new birds, but no Santa Marta Parakeets. However, while we were having lunch, six Santa Marta Parakeets landed in a tree above us and we had brilliant views of them! Clearly, they hadn't read the same book I had. So, while the bird book was helpful, it wasn't always right and didn't have everything about them written in it. I think the Bible can be like this. Yes, it is worth reading to learn about God, but it can't say everything: we should also look around us and talk to other people to learn more about him.

Roy Hargreaves
St Peter & St Paul

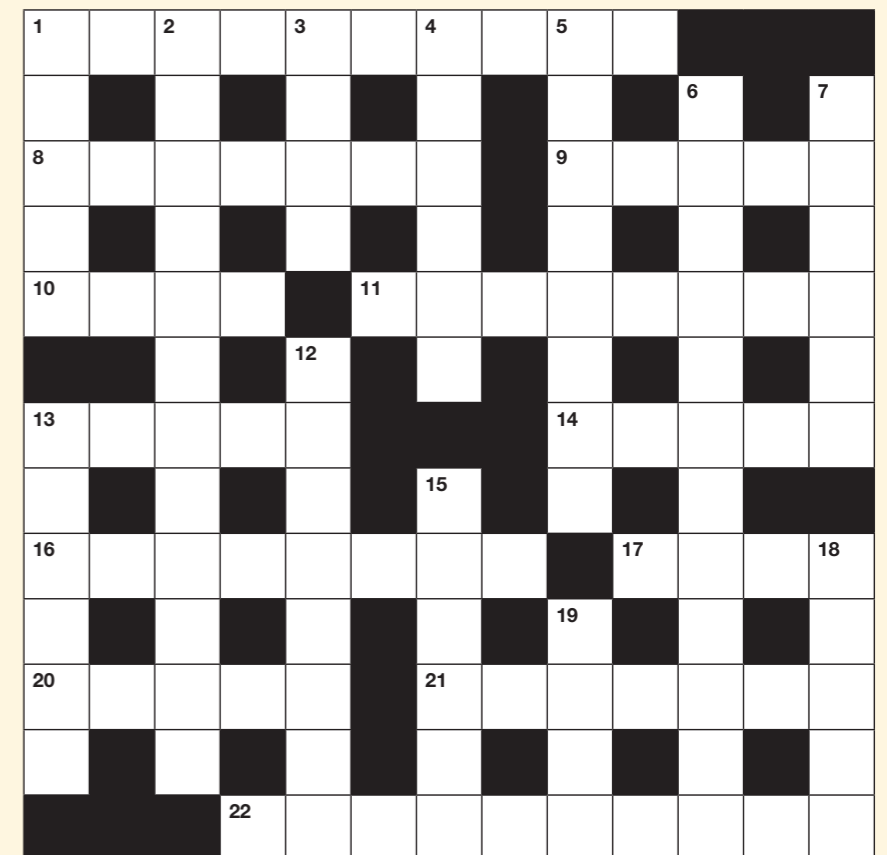
Crossword

ACROSS

- Cathedral official (10)
- Musical compositions (7)
- Sounds from the church bells (5)
- Morally bad (4)
- Eternal (8)
- Designated (5)
- Lake of the desert (5)
- Religion of Rome (8)
- Serene (4)
- Lovely smell (5)
- e.g. Praise and thanksgiving (7)
- Canticle (10)

DOWN

- Passageway in church (5)
- Ceremony of belief (12)
- Obligation (4)
- Distinct idea (6)
- Greek church (8)
- Early half of the Bible (3) (9)
- Lyrics in 6 above (6)
- Speaker in favour of (8)
- Sweet drink (6)
- Easy (6)
- Led the Israelites out of Egypt (5)
- Wise men (4)



The goose on the guitar strap



Having read in *Comment* John Whiteman's article on Iona, it brought to mind one of my constant companions... The following is a re-edited version of an article I wrote for my then-church magazine:

We set out on Thursday 10 August 2006, to fly from Gatwick to Glasgow, always remembered in the family as 'The day-we-flew-to-Glasgow-by-train'... the troubles on Friday 19 July this year were nothing compared to the mayhem that day! We did finally arrive in Glasgow, and on to Iona without too much trouble.

'Let the World in Concert Sing' was the title of the week that Gillian and I attended at the Iona Community. It was really rather special, and organised to involve both of the Community's residential centres on the island of Iona – the Abbey and the MacLeod Centre, in joint sessions on music and other arts of various forms in worship. The week proved very popular, and with no surprise – the leaders were noted authorities, particularly John Bell and the now sadly-missed Graham Maule who worked with the Community full-time through the Wild Goose Resource Group.

Why the Wild Goose? It is said that Saint Columba, who founded the monastery at Iona, when asked where the dove of the Holy Spirit was on the island, pointed at the rather more forthright and unpredictable wild geese and said 'There is your Spirit'. The Celtic Christians have used the wild goose as the symbol of the Holy Spirit for a long time.

A week with the Iona Community is not a retreat, it is not a set of lectures – it is life in community – we shared worship, work, food and fellowship, and along the way learnt a great deal. The work was not too onerous, as there were many hands to share it; worship was centred on two services each day, open to all, and with themes that reflected the purpose and commitment of the Iona Community (which is not just on the island – the Community is spread over the world).

Forthright and unpredictable? That could very well sum up our week together with the Community on Iona – about a hundred visitors from a wide variety of backgrounds, together with the resident staff, sharing knowledge and experience, learning new lessons and methods. The sessions did take us in unexpected directions, and the content is still sinking in even now (yes, even now in 2024)... Even the weather was not what we had expected – only one morning of moderate rain, and the rest of the time bright and

sunny! We all had different things we were seeking from the week, and we found these and more on that remote island.

So, who is the constant companion? I sought a lasting memento of that week, and found in the Community Shop a pewter brooch of the Wild Goose, who took an immediate home on my guitar strap. Eighteen years on, the goose is still there, a constant reminder (as if I needed it) of a wonderful experience and that I should share the benefits.

James Smith
High Street Baptist Church



Spring cleaning in July



The land around Wilstone, Long Marston and Puttenham is low lying and very prone to flooding. Depending on where you are in the area, the soil can be very good and grow wonderful crops and flowers, although my mum always believed this was partly due to the 'night soil' which was often thrown on the gardens before mains drainage came to the villages. Other parts of the rural parish are on clay, and the expansion and contraction of this soil results in the instability of the ground, leaving gravestones at all sorts of interesting angles. St Cross in Wilstone does not have any graves in the church grounds because the water table is too high, hence the cemetery on 'Wilstone Hill', the road leading from the village to Little Tring. The church was consecrated in 1877 and the cemetery opened in 1898. The ground for the church was given to the village by Joseph Grout Williams of Pendley Manor; the ground for the cemetery by Lord Rothschild. Only half of the cemetery is consecrated; the other part was left, at the request of the non-conformist congregations who formed a large part of the village communities. Both parts are still used today.

One of the results of a high water table is that the damp ground is a favourite site for Ground Dwelling Cluster Flies, which at certain times of the year then head indoors and seek the highest place available, usually the loft in a house. Unfortunately, they also like the roof space in the church, where they breed and then die, and there have been times when the window sills in St Cross

are black with dead flies.

However, this summer we had another problem – moths in the altar carpet!

They appeared to be just around the edges of the carpeted area, so treatment was targeted. But after a follow-up treatment, the problem was still very obvious and had spread to the kneelers on the altar steps. Google recommended shampooing the carpet after treatment and, as this annual wash was due, the moths were subjected to a noisy session with the Vax machine. How can a carpet get so dirty? Ever hopeful that we had sorted the problem, someone then suggested that maybe the moths were originating from the area underneath the altar.

The altar at St Cross was presented by the first incumbent, Revd W.C. Masters and a Mrs Bowen of Tunbridge Wells. It was made in the village wheelwright's shop, adjacent to what is now Meads Farm Shop. It has a carved front and plain sides, but no back, hence it is ideal for storage and, for many years has housed the large collection of 'silk' flowers which are used in the pedestals on either side of the altar. The flowers had all been gifted to St Cross by a generous and talented lady who for many years was the local 'go to' person for any type of flower arrangement or floral tribute. But there were now rather more than we needed and I had been longing to sort them out and reduce the holding. Now the moths had given me a reason. All the flowers and greenery were taken out from under the altar and spread across the



church floor and sorted. Those to be kept were put into florists' buckets, ready to go back into storage while the surplus have found homes in other churches.

The altar rests clear of the floor, on pedestal feet, and it is possible to move it – but it has not been moved since the carpet was laid in the 1980s. Now I could actually get underneath and inside it and found the carpet to be remarkably clean with no sign of moths. So, it was vacuumed, shampooed (by hand) and then treated as a precaution. Once it was dry, the flowers went back.

To prevent re-infestation, we have invested in some cedarwood discs and blocks because moths are reputed to dislike the smell. If the flies also dislike the smell of cedarwood, we are on a double winner. Another part of the church is now really clean – the vestry was blitzed earlier in the year – but there is still more to do. All this takes time, but the Village Shop does excellent bacon rolls and it is quite often necessary to cross the road and obtain some sustenance.

Alison Cockerill
St Cross, Wilstone



Time to join in?



On Saturday 14 September churches up and down and across the country will be open. It is the national historic churches Bike 'n Hike day. Our

local is Beds & Herts Historic Churches and last year they (or we) raised £99,666 to help maintain churches. All historic churches of any denomination can apply to them for grants. We in the Tring Team will be looking to them for support with the vestry repairs in Tring and we received a generous grant from them towards the decking in Wilstone.

If you have never got involved with Bike 'n Hike previously, maybe you could get involved this year to help push the amount raised to over

Sponsored Bike 'n Hike
BEDS AND HERTS HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Bike 'n Hike
Saturday 14 September 2024
9am to 5pm

For more information please make contact:
J Huw Bellis
01492 514425
04912 01

- ▶ Have fun visiting over 600 churches and chapels
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- ▶ Help save other churches in Beds and Herts

BEDS & HERTS
Historic Churches Trust

Bike 'n Hike in association with the national Ride & Stride and with acknowledgements to THE WIXAMTREE TRUST
www.bedsandherts.org.uk BHSCT Registered Charity No. 1197228

£100,000. There are a variety of ways you can get involved.

You can plan your own walking or cycling route and visit as many churches as you would like and be sponsored for it. Remember it is a national event, so whilst we support Beds & Herts, Buckinghamshire churches are open too and are just as close.

You can do a less ambitious sponsored walk, either just visiting all the churches in Tring town, or maybe drive to Puttenham and enjoy a gentle stroll around Puttenham, Wilstone and Long Marston.

You can sponsor others to do either of the above.

You can volunteer to welcome Bikers and Hikers into St Peter & St Paul's or any other participating church.
Huw Bellis, Tring Team

Jane Ducklin
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Patronal Festival at St Peter & St Paul



Being rooted and grounded in love



What is it to preach the gospel? What is it to know the love of Christ which passes all understanding? Does a bit of recycling count, or a pleasant

garden party? Maybe it's piles of school uniform stacked on the back pews of the parish church? In fact, I would like to argue that all three of these things are about us being 'rooted and grounded in love' as it says in Ephesians 3:17.

The garden party was, of course, Grahame and Prue Senior's annual fantastic fundraiser for the Children's Society (see pages 18-19). In a survey of 2,000 parents, the Children's Society found that two out of three secondary parents find that providing school uniforms for their children is too expensive for their budgets. For a large proportion of families in Tring, it is not an issue, but for some in our community it is a very real problem. The parish offers

a real service by ensuring that second-hand, pre-loved uniforms are available. Another important service that our chaplains provide is sensible advice to parents about what they actually need to buy (and what is not necessary). However, affordability isn't the only issue. Teenagers being teenagers, they tend to grow very quickly and much of the uniform they own is grown out of rather than worn out. I was always taught that

to re-use is better than to re-cycle. As an eco-church, the school uniform sales are preventing tonnes of uniform from ending up in landfill sites.

The marks of mission include challenging unjust structures. Standing alongside the poorest in society and supporting the work of the Children's Society

is vital. Caring for our environment is a non-negotiable. I like to think that garden parties and piles of uniform in the pews represent 'him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine' and, if nothing else, I like it when seemingly unconnected activities in our churches find a common purpose.

Huw Bellis
Tring Team

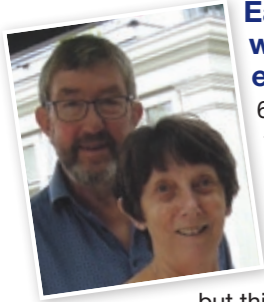
Prayer for spiritual strength

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19, English Standard Version



Enjoying doing good together



Early morning worries soon evaporated!

6.00am Saturday
13 July brought the usual chill of anxiety as we surveyed the light morning mist;

but this 'Garden Day' did not disappoint by turning gloomy and damp. Instead, Mr Weather decided to smile on us and whilst the sun did not exactly 'have his hat on' he decided to be warm and friendly and sent all our spirits soaring.



This was to be our 29th Greenways Garden Day and we had taken plenty of precautions with weather protection: we have learned the hard way that planning outdoor events in England in July can be a nail-biting affair and sometimes frankly freezing! Not so this year. By the time we opened for our first guests at 11.00am, it was positively balmy and worried faces soon turned into smiley ones!



Happy smiling people

That was very much the theme of the day. As one of our guests remarked: 'Look around – everywhere you look people are smiling!'; and the mood was indeed warm and welcoming as people greeted friends old and new and caught up on all the latest news over a relaxed cup of

coffee and some tempting cakes. Quite a few ex-residents from the Tring diaspora returned and enjoyed greeting each other, as well as newer locals.

Tring has long been blessed with very loyal support for the Children's Society and this year was no exception. As well as the long-term veterans, we were also delighted to have a number of new neighbours coming along and joining in and meeting up with the locals. We have lived in Grove Road for forty-seven years and there have been very few changes of neighbours, but this year quite a few houses have, in fact, changed hands. It was very good to meet the new young families that are moving in and bringing with them a younger vibe.

As coffee and cakes morphed into lunch and wine, the whole garden filled up and did indeed seem filled with smiling happy people.



An official endorsement

We were privileged to have as our special guest Hannah Radcliffe who is the regional co-ordinator for supporters of the Children's Society for the Eastern region. She gave us a charming talk and an update on their latest initiative which is to open drop-in centres for young people. These are designed to allow vulnerable youngsters who might be worried or estranged or alienated, etc to come in and have an informal chat with someone who understands their situation and can offer advice and guidance and friendly support without having to make appointments or seek referral. 'There when you need us' is the motto which helps remove any barriers and enables sometimes nervous young people to approach without hesitation. Easy access is the key.

Hannah was warmly applauded and I know she left feeling that her visit had been worthwhile and that Tring continues to be an enthusiastic supporter of the Society's work.



Raising funds and enabling support

Prue and I have been involved with the Children's Society for more than forty years, having started out as area collectors in the once Tring-wide house-to-house envelope distribution and collection scheme – which was quite a big annual event. As so many charitable fund-raisers have experienced, times have changed greatly and door-to-door collections are no longer effective or even welcomed. When we first arrived, the area organisers were Derek and Diane Sandy who lived in Dundale Road and our collecting patch was Longfield Road and Gardens and Grove Road. Over the years we made friends with many of the regular donors and enjoyed the annual doorstep catch-up.

When doorstep collecting fell out of favour, we took on the organisation of the 'House-box' holders resource; these were people who had a collecting box in their home which they used to fill up with loose change. Once a year we had an event where we gathered together all the boxes and had a team of eager counters who became dab-hands at counting and sorting all the coinage. This event became something of a social affair and developed into an annual 'Garden Day'



where we would lay on coffee and cakes followed by wine and canapes and lunch; there was usually a plant stall and a Bring & Buy stall and a good prize raffle. Occasionally we even had entertainment – and a very jolly time was had by all!

Of course, being summer in England, the weather was always a source of great anxiety and there were years when we had to move everything indoors. I well remember an event one year when we converted all the bedrooms into extra dining rooms and had people dining at tables and chairs in every room in the house as it poured down outside. In those days, the redoubtable Nora Grace was Queen of the Raffle and she took up station on the landing to ensure that no one escaped without a ticket!

Times change – but there's always a way forward!

In recent years cash and coins have become less and less used and High Street banks have become but a distant memory. Paying in several thousand pounds in cash was difficult enough when we had four or five banks in Tring High Street. Now there are none and even post offices can no longer help with cash in volume so the task became very difficult indeed. In any event people didn't have the loose change in cash anymore so now 'box-holding' has also largely become a thing of the past.

However, there is still a real appetite for supporting the Children's Society and we do still have the supporter list of all those who used to be box-holders. There is also still a strong appetite for 'having a good time in a good cause'; some people still have a sentimental attachment to their familiar box and like to retain it for nostalgic reasons. (Some even have the original 'Waifs & Strays' or 'Sunshine Guild' boxes which are definitely collectors' items!)

Thus it is that despite the house-to-house collections and box-holding becoming ancient history, we still seem to enjoy getting together in the garden (whatever the weather) and doing our bit to support what is one of the C of E's oldest charities. After twenty-five years we announced that that year's event was

to be the final one. That was four years ago... and we still don't seem to have managed to quite give it up!



Tring has a very warm heart

The reasons are pretty simple. Firstly, the £2500 donated is of great value to the Society's work; and secondly, the warmth of the community fellowship we experience at these events is a great way to spend a summer's day: enjoying doing good together in an English garden.

Thank you to all our friends and neighbours who have been so very generous over so many years. Tring is a community with a very warm heart and the Children's Society passes on that warmth and support to so many lost, lonely and vulnerable youngsters – just when they need it.

**Prue & Grahame Senior
Tring Area Organisers
The Children's Society**

Summer 2024



Many of us who have gardens may have enjoyed a display of colours this summer – the reward of a lot of hard work during previous months.

All those who tend gardens should always make the opportunity of sitting and just looking at it all. Of course, we always notice things that should be done but it is good sometimes to just sit and think – and be thankful! Here are some verses I wrote three years ago.

**John Young
Akeman Street Baptist**

Our garden

*I sit in the garden and rest from the chores of tending the earth;
To quietly admire all the best of the beds, containers and turf.*

*I sit in the garden and think of what's done and what is to do.
The summer has gone like a blink; of real sunshine days just a few.
I sit in the garden and muse of the wonder of life from some seeds –
to a plant, to a flower is good news; just water, sun, food were their needs.*

*I sit in the garden and wonder how our God could such beauty create.
But does it make everyone ponder that the power of God is so great?*

*In the Garden of Eden, he put man to eat of the fruit and enjoy
all the fullness of life which was God's plan for man, woman, girl and for boy.*

*I sit in the garden and cry as I think of all those in despair;
the millions who suffer and die while the world, as a whole, does not care.*

*I sit in the garden and pray that all men will know of God's love –
Great Creator, Redeemer whose way brings forgiveness from heaven above.*

*I sit in the garden and sing. Jesus taught from God's Word that he cares
for the lilies and birds on the wing, and hears every one of our prayers.*

*I sit in the garden and praise our God of all mercy and grace
and thank him for all of our days till we see him one day face to face.*

Wherever you are...



On our holiday in the lake District this summer, which featured a huge amount of rain and some stunning scenery, we had a few church encounters.

After all, it's impossible not to be interested in what Christians are doing in other places when away from home – isn't it?

Pooley Bridge is a village in the Eden District in Cumbria and is at the northern end of Ullswater. Outside St Paul's Church was the poster shown here which I thought was worth sharing with *Comment* readers.



We also visited Cartmel Priory which was founded in 1190 for a community of the Augustinian Canons regular but which now serves as the parish church of Cartmel near Grange over Sands. It survived the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 and has a door in the south west corner of the Priory known as Cromwell's door as it is still marked with bullet holes from the indignant villagers who opened fire on Oliver Cromwell's Roundhead troops when they stabled their horses in the nave. The National Trust now care for the Gatehouse which is a small museum.

There are many interesting features in the Priory but what I loved most was the sculptures by Josefina de Vasconcellos, who lived with her adopted sons and husband in Little Langdale for many years. She died aged 100 in 2005. The sculpture of the Madonna and child is very moving and brings so much tenderness and emotion to the cradling of the infant Jesus by his mother.



We were actually staying in a converted C of E school in a tiny village called Crosby Ravensworth. From the kitchen window we could see the impressive building of St Lawrence's Church and passed it almost every time we went out. The church was open daily for private prayer and, although no bells were rung to call us to worship, we graced its doors on Sunday morning, surprised that there was a service every week, yet fully expecting to find ourselves among a very tiny number there. In fact, there were nearly twenty of us, and from the sound generated from the hymn singing, you would think there was triple the number.

All the hymns were familiar to us and they didn't surprise us with tunes we didn't know so we felt quite at home. The organist was excellent and although there was no choir or music group, there was a soloist who sang during Communion. Taking the service was the retired Bishop of Ripon and we had an excellent expository sermon and he 'joined' each part of the service together in a relaxed and helpful way. Communion was a little different (for us) as the bishop intincted the bread in the wine before giving it to us. What made everything feel

so natural, however, was the fact that we were greeted as we came in to the church and someone stayed to talk to us before the service; people came to shake our hands during the sharing of 'the Peace'; and at the end – though there was no tea, coffee or biscuits, several people, including the bishop, entered into conversation with us. To show what a small world it is, one lady had family in Wendover and other local places while a man behind us shared a house while a student with the parents of the newly elected Labour MP for our constituency. Not only did they seem interested in us – and were discussing with us the practical IT difficulties of complying with all the new safeguarding regulations – they were interested in and clearly cared about each other: we could 'see how much these Christians love each other'. It was heartwarming.

As always, I hoped that people visiting all the churches in Tring have a similarly positive experience of worshipping away from home; and it made me think that heaven was perhaps a little like that, that feeling of 'home', that we belong and are accepted and loved.

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

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Are you hoping to go to University or College in 2025, but are concerned that financial resources might not match up to the requirements?

Are you under the age of 22? Have you lived in Aldbury, Long Marston, Marsworth, Pitstone, Puttenham, Tring, Wigginton or Wilstone for at least three years?

To see if you would be eligible for a grant, apply to Tring Charities' Millennium Education Foundation for information and an application form.

Website details: www.tringcharities.co.uk/education

Telephone: Elaine Winter, Secretary to the Trustees
01442 827913 Email: info@tringcharities.co.uk

Please note that the closing date is 15 November 2024 to lodge a completed application for grants payable from Autumn 2025.

Poetry, faith and R.S. Thomas



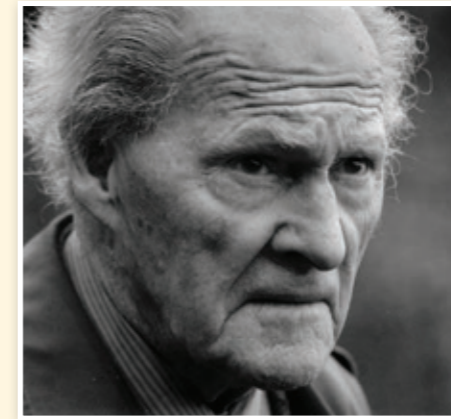
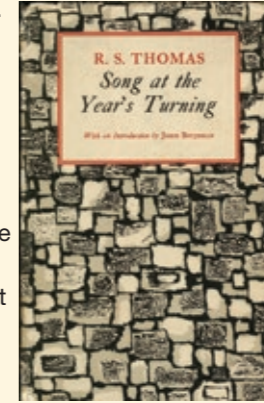
A lifelong fascination with etymology has fuelled my love of words and, in particular, the way in which they are assembled in relationship to each other. I have come to regard poetry as the art of imaginative and unexpected syntax, an art practised so skilfully by Dylan Thomas. In his 'Prologue' he describes his boathouse home in Laugharne as, 'My sea shaken house on a breakneck of rocks.' To me that nine-word description is simply inspired, minimalist genius. Such artistry has encouraged me to delve even deeper into the riches of the poets and I struck gold when I was introduced to the work of a Welsh priest and poet by the name of R.S. Thomas.

A sailor's son, Ronald Stuart Thomas was born in Cardiff in 1913. After completing his studies at the University College of North Wales and Saint Michael's College, Llandaff, he was ordained in the Anglican Church in Wales in 1936 to serve as Assistant Curate in the Welsh mining village of Chirk. Over the next forty-three years he served in a variety of parishes, finishing in the far west of Wales at Aberdaron. During this westward progression, with the perceptive eyes of a poet and the pastoral sense of a priest, he came to know and love the flora and fauna of the varied and rugged landscapes and the people who lived among them. The Revd R.S. Thomas often sensed God's absence more readily than his presence, but maintained his firm belief that human beings are essentially spiritual.

Thomas married Elsi, an artist, in 1940 and their son Gwydion was born in 1945. After forty-three years of ordained ministry, R.S. Thomas retired in 1978. Just three years later, Elsi died and he later married his second wife, Betty. He died on the 25 September 2000.

As a poet R.S. Thomas's major breakthrough came in 1955 with the publication of his fourth book, 'Song at the Year's Turning,' a collection of his three previous publications including an introduction by John Betjeman. A fellow poet of great repute himself, Betjeman said that Thomas's words would be remembered long after his own had

been forgotten. Thankfully, R.S.T's poetry is available now in many formats, and remains a constant source of comfort, encouragement and challenge to me as I, like the priest-poet himself, try to relate to the innate spirituality of the people among whom I live, and with whom I struggle, with the challenges of faith in the context of daily events (never more than today as I write – the day after the Southport stabbings). That said, it is because I share so many of Thomas's expressed inner delights and struggles, that I am keen to cite his words in my sermons so that his journey of faith might enlighten and encourage those who are now on the same journey.



If asked which is my favourite R.S. Thomas poem, I would have to say 'Hill Christmas,' because it counters the seasonal sentimentality that robs Christmas of its true meaning. In this poem we watch the Welsh Hill farmers trudging through the snow to Midnight Communion, there receiving the Blessed Sacrament, and 'hearing love cry momentarily in their hearts' manger', before returning to their farms:

They rose and went back to their poor holdings, naked in the bleak light of December. Their horizon contracted to the one stone-riddled field with its tree, where the weather was nailing the appalled body that had asked to be born.

Now, a few of snippets which strike me, for different reasons.

In 'A Marriage', Thomas covers the passing of fifty years with the same inspired, minimalist genius, as his namesake.

*She was young
I kissed with my eyes closed and opened them on her wrinkles.*

The same minimalist art flourishes again in 'The Labourer', as Thomas pictures a farm labourer slowly trudging over the uneven furrows of a ploughed field:

*There he goes, tacking against the fields'
Uneasy tides.*

In 'The Hearth' Thomas takes me back to my childhood and winter evenings sitting around a coal fire:

*In front of the fire
with you, the folk song
Of the wind in the chimney and the sparks'
Embroidery of the soot...*

I want to end with 'Poste Restante', in which the poet paints an all-too-familiar picture of a struggling church and the faithful priest; again, the words stir up so many memories for me.

*There was a church and one man served it, and few worshipped there in the raw light on the hill in winter...
The priest would come and pull on the hoarse bell nobody heard, and enter that place of darkness, sour with the mould of the years. And the spider would run from the chalice, and the wine lies there for a time, cold and unwanted by all but he...
And so back to the damp vestry to the book where he would scratch his name...*

R. S. Thomas's poetry has been described as bleak and austere; to me it is atmospheric and deeply moving and I am delighted to have been given this opportunity to share my passion with you. If just one of you were now to become a fan of RST I should be absolutely thrilled, because I am myself for ever thankful for R.S. Thomas's life and ministry as both priest and poet.

**David Holloway
Tring Team**



An invitation

On 13 September Churches Together in Tring will welcome Tiffi Oryah from Israel and Hiba Allati from Palestine at a buffet lunch.



Tiffi Oryah, who lives on the border with Lebanon, is a Project Manager for the Women's Groups.

You are invited to join us for lunch at High Street Baptist Church at 12.15 to 2.15pm to meet them and hear their story.

We hope to understand more of what they are experiencing and to support them in their responses.

Please note there is no charge for the lunch. To receive your invitation registration is essential for security reasons. Please do not copy this onto any public media.

To register go to <https://www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news>



Hiba Allati, who lives in the West Bank near to the Bethlehem fields where the angels appeared to the shepherds, leads Musalaha's Muslim-Christian Women's Group.

Across the divide



A painful drama

Every day the international news from Israel and Palestine grows bleaker and bleaker. Very few, if any of us, have experienced such circumstances – Northern Ireland perhaps being our nearest parallel. This unbelievably painful drama continues to divide and traumatise communities across the world.

Musalaha is a faith-based organisation that for over thirty-four years has been teaching, training and facilitating reconciliation, mainly between Israelis and Palestinians from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Using the biblical principles of reconciliation, it partners with groups in both the USA and European countries, including such places as Luton and the Diocese of London where staff have been trained in their approaches to reconciliation.

More recently Musalaha's leaders have written of how they themselves were traumatised by 7 October. They go on to describe how they worked through their own stress to find their personal and corporate response to the trauma. They are now looking to rebuild grassroots relationships across deeply divided communities.

Our 13 September lunch

This event will enable individuals and churches in Tring to become aware of the very personal experiences of two women from the Israeli and Palestinian communities. It will outline how far Musalaha has been able to maintain its reconciliation groups in the face of the intense community pressures and how they are doing this. As we listen to them at some depth, this lunch will offer us an oblique way of communicating our love and support to people who are learning from experiences beyond our knowledge. The very act of seeking to understand their life at this moment has more power to share our support and love for them than we may be aware of.

We may also learn something of how we in Tring can be truly helpful. We will have an opportunity to make a financial contribution to this work, but in itself that could be a distraction from the love and support that we desire to give them. This lunch is therefore an opportunity for people in Tring to make a positive

contribution, albeit very small, to an apparently intractable international situation.

This event will surely also say something about the way God is working in the centre of this nightmare. As someone once wrote, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself'. (If all else fails to come to mind, could it be 2 Corinthians 5:19?) Do register for your invitation to join us at this rather special lunch.

Colin Briant
High Street Baptist Church
colin.briant@hotmail.com
<https://musalaha.org>
<https://www.musalaha.uk>

COMMENT

The magazine of the Churches in Tring

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

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



Speaking about God



If the Bible embodies God's word, then reading the Bible is to enter into dialogue with God.

We often have difficulty in finding the right words when talking about ordinary earthly things. How much more difficult is it, then, when we start to talk about heavenly things (Jesus draws the distinction between earthly things and heavenly things when he is talking to Nicodemus in John Chapter 3: 'If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?').

If we say that Leo is a lion, context is everything. If I am at the zoo you can reasonably assume that I am making a statement of fact – there is a lion in front of me that the zookeeper has called Leo. If, however, you know that I have a friend called Leo then you will reasonably assume that I am making a metaphorical statement about my friend's lion-like qualities: Leo is probably brave. You will have a different picture in your mind depending on the context of the statement. And the picture in your mind is itself dependent on your knowledge and experience of the comparator in the metaphor – how much do you know about what lions look like and the qualities they exhibit?

Things are slightly more difficult when we talk of our rector, Huw Bellis, being a good shepherd. We know that Huw keeps sheep and we suspect that he has happy, well-tended sheep. But we also know that he is a priest and that, as a priest, he looks after his congregation (his 'flock') as a shepherd looks after his sheep. When we talk of Jesus as the good shepherd, we can probably be sure that Jesus did not have worming and shearing skills (as we hope Huw does as a good shepherd) but we can be sure that he is

the model for the priest and those who practise pastoral (the word itself points to its sheep roots) care. The success of the metaphor here is dependent on or knowledge and experience of what makes a good shepherd – and here Huw probably has the advantage over us.

When we speak about God and heavenly things, we often turn to metaphor because of the difficulty in finding language to describe things we cannot see. There are times, however, when we do feel able to make definitive statements about God. In the letter attributed to John, the author feels able to make the statement that 'God is love'; not God is like love or that God exhibits love-like qualities, but that God is love: God = Love. We may have difficulty with this statement because we may not have sufficient experience or knowledge of love, or we may have a damaged experience of love, so that this statement does not bring us to a greater knowledge of God and we are drawn back to resorting to metaphor.

The gospel writer that is most likely to resort to metaphor when speaking about God and heavenly things is John. Mark's Gospel relates one factual event after another, barely drawing breath. With John, however, from the very beginning we are launched into a world of metaphor: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' John then goes on to help us out and gives some context as to what 'the Word' is: 'He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' So, we can understand that (i) the Word was with God; (ii) the Word was God; (iii) the Word has been with God from the very beginning; (iv) the Word is the source of all creation; (v) the Word is the source of

life; (vi) this life is the light; (vii) this light shines in the darkness; (viii) this light is not overcome by the darkness. Whilst Mark begins his Gospel with a statement of fact (he is going to tell us about the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God), John begins his Gospel with a metaphorical statement about God. But then, just a few verses later, John does a remarkable thing with his metaphor – that metaphor takes flesh and comes to live with us: 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.' However, the metaphor continues to co-exist with the real (the Word became flesh) so at one and the same time we are required to hold in our minds, and to continue to hold in our minds throughout John's Gospel, that Jesus is both (i) the metaphor of the Word which has been in existence since the beginning of time and which is the source of all life and is God; and (ii) a flesh (and blood) human being who dwells among us other human beings at a particular point in time.

John has used language at the very beginning of his Gospel to point us towards thinking about the Incarnation – which is, for John, the very centre of what we are speaking about God. There will be other points in John's Gospel where the actual is used as a metaphor, the feeding of the 5000 comes to mind, where the actual miracle of the feeding of the 5000 with the multiplication of meagre resources, becomes a metaphor for the Eucharist, but never another where a metaphor takes flesh and becomes actual. But then, again, there is nothing quite like the mystery of the Incarnation.

John's use of language may bring us closer to beginning to understand the Incarnation, but as always when we are speaking about God, even if we use metaphor in our vocabulary, language will always fall short. But that should never mean that we give up speaking about God.

Tim James, St Peter & St Paul

Parish registers

Weddings

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

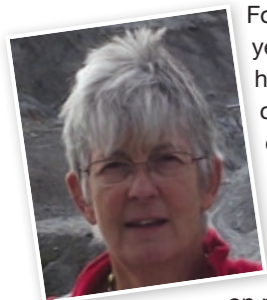
George John Frett & Esther Mary Chandra Thompson
Matthew Newman & Marcia Viccars
Nigel Guest & Shelly Taylor

Funerals

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

Nicholas Frank Wilkins 87
John Healing 90
John Edmunds 86

Winning or participating?



For more than ten years, Tring u3a has run a group called 'The Story of Our Lives'. Early on, I joined that group and set about setting my memories down on paper. Maybe my grandchildren will read them and realise that their 'old' grandma was once as young and energetic as they are now and with similar aspirations and challenges.

Many of the articles I have written for *Comment* in the last eight years have been derived from the chapters in my memoirs with some editing to fit in with the *Comment* ethos. So, this time, what better than to write about than sport after a summer of Wimbledon, the Euros and the Olympic Games?! No doubt I am not alone in dipping in and out of the Olympic Coverage (or rather being glued to the television every evening!).

For me, sport was always my saving grace. I can remember very little about PE and games at Junior School, beyond regimented lessons in the playground where we lined up and jumped and flapped our hands around in unison and by rote! There was, though, in the fourth year, netball, where I was Goal Attack and Rounders' matches on the field behind the school, where Bishop Wood Junior School now stands. The batting team used to line up in the shade of the old tree in the middle of the field.

I do know that I had a good eye for a ball. I could catch and throw well and was never the last to be chosen for a team. Hitting a ball with a racquet also came naturally to me. I would, from an early age, spend hours bouncing a tennis ball and hitting it up against the side of our house – and even earlier at my grandparents' house in Western Road. Thank goodness for that.

Grammar School was almost overwhelming. I found the work quite taxing, especially in the first few years, and socially there were enormous changes. Early teenage years weren't the happiest of my life! The only lessons I felt confident in were Games, PE and swimming (and Geography). Although I couldn't swim at the beginning of September when I started at Cavendish, I could by the end of the month thanks to Mr Tomkins our ex-Army Swimming Instructor. PE was fine. I loved climbing the wall bars and swinging on the

ropes. I wasn't very graceful but certainly enthusiastic and energetic!

It was in Games lessons that I came into my own. My good ball sense helped with hockey, netball and then tennis and rounders' lessons. Very soon I was in the hockey and tennis teams, along with my oldest friend Sue. This was fortunate as Sue's dad was more than happy to collect us from Hemel Hempstead on many match Saturdays, whereas my parents did not have a car! (However, we had to get up early and catch the bus to school when many of our friends were having a lie in.)

We were a doubles pair in the school tennis team from the first year (year 7) to the sixth form (years 12 and 13). We both played at Tring Tennis Club and no one else in the school seemed to play tennis outside of school lessons. Sue had more skill than I, I think, but I was tall and had some power when I connected the racquet and ball together correctly. I remember we played in white plimsolls to start with and I aspired to a pair of 'Green Flash' tennis shoes. These I got for one of my birthdays.

I was also an athlete – at least of West Herts standard. Being tall I enjoyed long jump, high jump and hurdles. I wasn't a great runner really. I regularly represented the school in these three events and high jumped at county level on a few occasions. I particularly remember my first district sports competition. I had missed the first two or three inter-school matches whilst the first years were sorted out into runners, throwers and jumpers! So, I arrived at Ashlyns with my new 'spikes' and wandered about waiting for my hurdles races. When the heats were called, I duly made my way to the start. The other Cavendish hurdles competitor was there saying, 'Why haven't you checked in with Mr Evans (that was our Games teacher) – he's going mad!' No one had bothered to tell me what I should do when I got there. We were supposed to report to our school pen and not wander around! Still when I qualified for the final, Mr Evans calmed down. That was the first time the Cavendish under-12 girls had won the District Cup.

As I moved into the sixth form, we had more choice as to what we could do in Games lessons – still compulsory, by the way! I played a little badminton and tried the trampoline. I loved these sports



too and endeavoured to be the best I could. At trampoline I could do all sorts of things, but must have been a nightmare to supervise as I had no fear and went high doing somersaults and flips. Swimming was enjoyed throughout all my time at Cavendish. I managed to get into school competition races and relays.

Outside of school, there was not much time left for socialising. We travelled by public transport to Hemel and then I spent at least two evenings at school, either training or playing matches. Saturday mornings were also taken up with school matches. However, during the winter from the age of about 14, Sue and I played in the only mixed hockey team for Tring Hockey Club on a Sunday afternoon. That could be brutal, but I enjoyed it!

I left school ready to go to Teacher Training with some reluctance. The sixth form had been where all the hard work and struggle in earlier years had suddenly come together. I was happy and succeeding with my studies. I put much of this down to being good at sport. It was something that raised my self-esteem and confidence. I'm not sure whether being a team player helped me – probably. But I have always strived to be the best in some way – always pushing myself to be good at something.



At college I played badminton in the winter and tennis in the summer for the college teams. I swam weekly and took lifesaving courses, thinking this would be a good thing for a teacher to do. At the age of 21, I moved off into my career. Tennis at the weekends with friends and more lifesaving at the Central Baths in Birmingham were all I had time for.

Finally, when I went with VSO to Nigeria in 1975, aged 22 and a half, I found that there was a tennis group in the small town I was living in. I asked if I could join in. There were seven or eight men – all professional Nigerians – who I'm sure, out of politeness, said I could join them. They played every evening from 5.00 until dusk at about 6.30. I am sure they thought that I would be useless and that I would not last the week – little did they know! Although I hadn't played much tennis in the preceding two years, I had been taught well. They were hard hitters of the ball who took delight in uncontrolled spinning and drop shots. Initially they allowed me to play doubles and expected me to let them play most of the shots! But I had never practised six days a week before and my natural ability soon took over. Within six weeks I was



playing and winning singles matches. These Nigerians were lovely and gave me the respect not shown to Nigerian women who, at the time and in northern Nigeria, generally didn't play sports for recreation. Four months after I arrived in Benue Plateau State, Nigeria, there was a major sports festival. This included a tennis competition. So, the small town where I was living called Pankshin, sent me to play tennis in the ladies' singles, doubles and mixed competitions. I came away with two imitation gold medals and a silver! I was on Nigerian television. The winner of the singles was then supposed to go to Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, for a national tournament. Unfortunately, I did not fulfil the rules for residency, so the lady I had beaten went instead. Never

mind, I have my imitation medals to this day!

Life and children got in the way after that. I walk regularly and love being out in the fresh air and I have swum regularly all my life – hence my children are also good swimmers. I started going to the gym. Even there, I pit myself against a standard or the clock with a view to improving. Nowadays it is with a view to not deteriorating too quickly!

Whether team games helped me to develop into a better person, I do not know, but I loved the idea of competition and being the best. However, taking part, losing with good grace and making friends is as important.

My sporting activities have calmed down considerably in recent years but I still swim twice a week, walk as often as I can, do tai chi, and participate in the u3a Table Tennis group. Whilst I am much slower and trying to stave off the dreaded arthritis, I find that any form of exercise makes me feel good – regardless of whether I win or not. Participating and socialising are just as good. God willing, I hope I can carry on for a bit longer.

Vicky Baldock
St Cross, Wilstone

Lancelot Andrewes, 25 September



Whenever I'm in the vicinity of London Bridge Station, time seems to disappear! It is very easy to lose track of time as I potter around Borough Market and the ancient alleys

and ale houses which surround it (take one step off Borough High Street into the George Inn, even if you don't want a drink, to see the last surviving galleried coaching inn in London). But I never head homewards without visiting one particular memorial in Southwark Cathedral. It was carved by a Flemish refugee, Gerard Johnson (an anglicised version of his real name, Gheerart Janssen), the sculptor who created Shakespeare's funerary monument in Stratford-upon-Avon and who, in May 1612, was paid for making part of a fountain at Hatfield House. It is one of only three memorials in the country where the figure wears a midnight blue mantle of the Order of the Garter.

Lancelot Andrewes was born in 1555 and baptised at All Hallows by the Tower. His father, Thomas, was Master of Trinity House, a charity incorporated

in 1514 to regulate who could pilot vessels on the Thames and which provided for mariners who fell on hard times (today it is still the UK's largest maritime charity, as well as inspecting coastal navigation aids i.e. lighthouses, licensing deep sea pilots and providing assessors to the Admiralty Court).

Lancelot was educated at Merchant Taylors' School and Pembroke College, Cambridge, reputedly mastering fifteen modern languages and six ancient ones. After ordination in 1580 he became known for his preaching and writing. Serving first at St Giles, Cripplegate, and as a Prebendary at St Paul's Cathedral, he went on to be Master of Pembroke and then Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift. Although Queen Elizabeth took him as a chaplain in 1590, they disagreed over matters of church income and in 1598 he declined to become Bishop of either Ely or Salisbury because of the conditions attached to his doing so.

In 1601 Andrewes became Dean of Westminster and, therefore, tutor to the boys at the school. One of his pupils was George Herbert, commemorated on 27 February. As Dean he took part in both the funeral of Elizabeth I and in

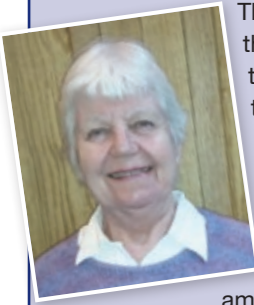
the English coronation of James. Under James' favour, Andrewes acted as translator and editor general for the new version of the Bible produced under the King's name. His is the first name in the list of divines appointed to compile the 1611 Authorised Version of the Bible.

Andrewes was consecrated Bishop of Chichester in 1605, Ely in 1609, and finally Winchester in 1618. His last public appearance was at the coronation of Charles I. He died on 25 September 1626.

Andrewes was the last bishop to live in Winchester Palace, the remains of which, including an impressive rose window, lie to the west of Southwark Cathedral. I encourage you to visit Southwark Cathedral. It has a cat and a very well-priced café. Then take a short stroll to Cross Bones Cemetery, unconsecrated ground which, by the time it closed in 1853, embraced the remains of 15,000 people, mainly 'single women' described as 'Winchester Geese' (medieval sex workers, licensed by the Bishop of Winchester to 'work' the areas around the Clink prison). The area is now a beautiful garden, maintained as a memorial to 'The Outcast Dead'.

Linzi James, St Peter & St Paul

Seeing things in a different light



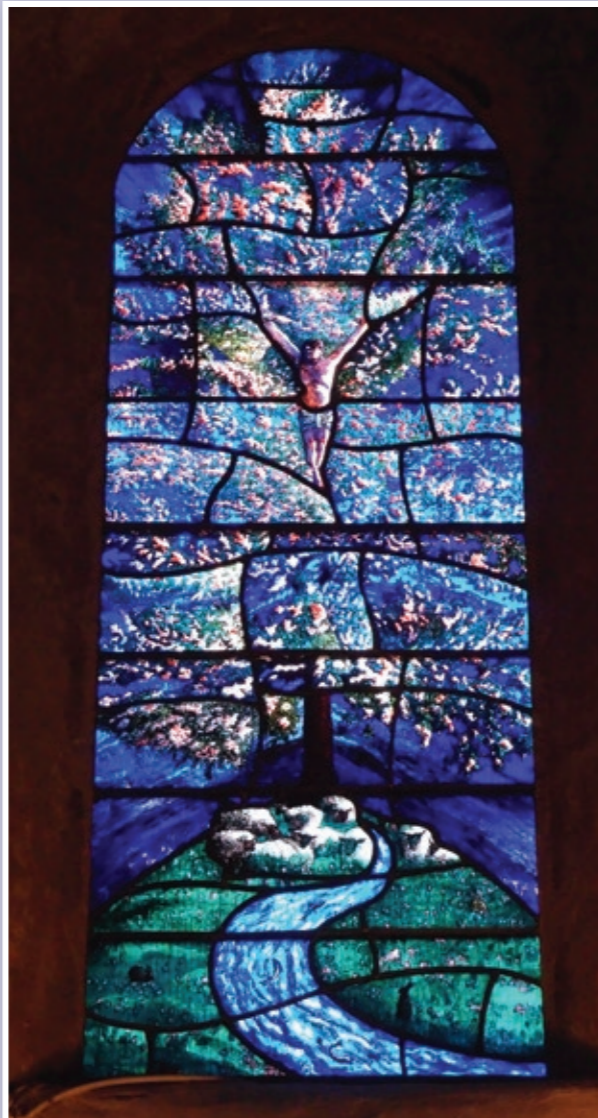
There are things that happen, words that people say, that make you reflect differently on what you have been thinking; a new light on the matter dawns. I am thinking about, for example, the comment made a while ago during a sermon that the Lord's Prayer is said by us for everyone. I suppose I had fallen into the trap over time of thinking, 'Forgive ME my sins', 'Give ME my daily bread', and forgetting that this prayer is universal. When I say it now, I am with the hungry and needy of the world and asking God to forgive the sins and shortcomings of us all, from politicians to prisoners. My prayer has gone global!

Another example comes from a recent quiet day during a time of deep meditation. We were guided in our thinking of Mary meeting the risen Christ on Easter morning, not recognising him until he said her name. We were asked to put ourselves in Mary's position. 'Are there other people around?' 'Is it raining?' Questions like these took me from the quiet garden I had always imagined to a more public place where grief was evident and questions asked. Expectation was low and only confused faith kept hope alive. When Christ says my name, what will I do? How will I feel? Will I want to run to tell others of the joy of Easter day?

My last example comes from a trip we made recently to Barnard Castle. Our motives for going were to visit the art galleries and Bishop's Palace. However, we discovered another gem of a museum. Beside the Bishop's Palace is The Museum of Faith which looks at beliefs and the development of faith in our country. It does not just look at Christianity, although this is a prominent feature in the museum. On the top floor there is a room of paintings by Roger Wagner, all of which relate to a religious theme, some to biblical narrative. The curator said that Wagner had written poetry to go with the paintings and

handed us folders with the poems. We spent a long time in that room.

I will mention just three of the paintings. The most disturbing one was of the woman taken in adultery and about to be stoned. Christ, writing in the sand, advises that the person who has not sinned should throw the first stone. No one throws a stone and the crowd disperses (John 8:3-11). The image painted has much more in it. Along the back of the canvas are lined up the people with stones ready for



the punishment. Mid picture stands the woman, head covered and bowed and Christ drawing in the sand. In the forefront of the picture, quite shockingly, are a line of people with mobile phones in their hands ready to photograph the event and elsewhere in the picture is a media camera. There are others in the painting, some talking to Christ, who is quietly focused on writing in the sand. What questions and emotions this roused! You can see the event in today's

world; how it would be recorded on mobile phones – why, for evidence or to say we were there? The media camera recording for a newsreel – there may be some point there, depending on what slant the broadcast takes. The people lined up with stones in their hands ready to cast blame and mete out punishment. I wonder where I would be if I came across such a scene. Would I, with a stone in my hand, be thinking she has done wrong and deserves punishment? Would I have my mobile phone out, taking pictures to show others? I suspect I would be a silent observer and my sympathies would be with the person about to suffer the stoning. The whole image is in tension waiting for Christ's quiet, confident words. There is a longing to be able to know how to speak for Christ in such situations.

The second painting that caught my attention was of St Peter walking on the water towards Christ. Roger Wagner has painted this image several times. The poem that goes alongside it talks of longing to step out onto the sea but full of fear; yet moving towards love (Christ) and knowing Christ's love for us overcomes fear, helps us to 'Step out of ourselves onto that sea'.

Have you ever been to see St Mary's Church at Iffley, near to Oxford? Roger Wagner has done a stained-glass window in the baptistry there. There was a painting for the window in the museum in Bishop Auckland. The window depicts Christ's crucifixion, but he is hanging on a tree full of May blossom. Below the tree is a hill with sheep and a river representing the water of life flowing down towards the font. It shook me at first to see Christ crucified on a tree full of blossom, but in retrospect it reflects the hope and joy and new beginning that that event means for us.

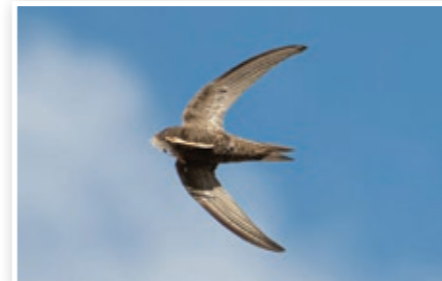
If you want to see some of Roger Wagner's work, he has a website www.rogerwagner.co.uk which you might like to visit. You may already know some of his paintings; his poems are worth reading.

Jill Smith, St Peter & St Paul

Swift action required!



Target 25 is A Rocha UK's project to help a range of declining species, taxonomic groups and threatened habitats. Target 25 are the most at-risk places and species as they struggle from the effects of climate change, habitat loss and pollution and there is a suite of resources for each of the twenty-five species, groups and habitats. A Rocha UK's Partners in Action and gold Eco Churches are expected to participate in Target 25 as a way of taking action and having an impact. For a church, this might include making adjustments to the management of church land or lobbying for changes in connection with other land within the local community, such as cemeteries. Using iRecord to monitor numbers of species, and track improvements in populations in response to the work done to care for the species on site is strongly encouraged.



At High Street Baptist Church we have very limited outdoor space, so we sought to engage with the Target 25 initiative where we might have the most influence and impact. We therefore decided to choose species, groups, habitats where we could learn and collaborate with some established community groups. And so, when local swift expert, Vicky Duxbury, explained in discussion at a sustainable community event that there are big threats to swift populations, and that Tring has some precious colonies visiting each summer, this seemed to be a key species for us to support. We have also chosen to adopt bees (Tring is a Bee Town thanks to the work of the Justice & Peace Group) and hedges (the term for a hedgerow in an urban area) as our two other Target 25 goals. This was unanimously agreed at a recent

church meeting as a great way of focusing our attention and environmental action collectively as a worshipping community.

The Bible has hundreds of references to teaching and learning. Indeed, we come to church on Sunday mornings to learn, to grow, to deepen our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. When you learn more about the mercy of God, you notice it in action. When you learn more about God's creation you notice his handiwork. One of the first steps toward environmental action is to learn more about the subject. Knowledge helps you notice.

Vicky was invited to run an information evening and swift walk in July, as part of Swift Conservation Week (Saturday 29 June to Sunday 7 July 2024). The event was well attended by both church and community folk and an absolute delight. We learned that although we still see swifts return to Tring each year, swift numbers have plummeted by 65% in just twenty-five years nationally. One of the reasons swifts are in decline is because they have fewer places to breed. Swifts nest under the eaves of buildings or in crevices in walls. New houses are built with fewer gaps and spaces between roofs and walls, leaving no new habitats. We are inadvertently destroying their old cavity nesting sites through renovation, demolition and insulation. Vicky highlighted the campaigner Hannah Bourne-Taylor, and her campaign for swift bricks to be made compulsory across new housing in Britain. This measure would help not just swifts, but three other red-listed birds: house sparrows, house martins and starlings. If we want to save our swifts, the government needs to mandate swift bricks.

One of the other reasons that swifts are in decline is that they can't find enough food. They eat as many as 100,000 flying insects a day. It's a huge energy requirement, and with insects declining at a faster rate than ever before, many swifts just can't find enough food to sustain themselves. Another aspect to the support we can provide for swifts is to help insect populations grow. This means avoiding pesticide use and leaving areas of our gardens, verges and green spaces wild for insects to breed and live.

After the talk, Vicky led us on a walk around the High Street and Miswell Lane and we were treated to an acrobatic display from the local swifts. We also learned to spot the swifts, even noticing

them when they were just pin dots in the sky. And evidently a group of people standing on the pavement looking up at the sky is so noteworthy that it caused not one, not two but four cars and a number of walkers to stop and ask us what we were doing. This enabled us to share some information with them about swifts and the reason why we are doing it, to care for God's creation.

As a church we will be learning together more about swifts over the coming months and considering what action we take. Swifts are a fascinating species, and their survival seems dependent on humans creating more opportunities for nesting and supporting insects for an increase in a supply of food.

What can I do?

- **Provide artificial nests** such as nest box or 'swift brick'.
- **Avoid disturbing existing nests** by not working on walls or roofs near nesting common swifts during the May to August breeding season.
- **Avoid using insecticides and pesticides.**
- **Get wild!** Grow a 'wild lawn' to provide insects for them to feed on.
- **Raise awareness** concerning the common swifts' decline.
- **Learn to spot them** (and differentiate between swifts and martins – another Target 25 species!).

Super swift facts

- Swifts migrate 3,400 miles twice a year.
- Swifts are the fastest birds in level flight, with an impressive top speed of 69mph.
- Swifts come to the UK to breed, arriving in early May and leaving around mid-July.
- They drink by gliding over water and taking sips, or by catching raindrops.
- Swifts don't land for years at a time – they sleep and eat 'on the wing'.
- Swifts can't take off from the ground, so if you see one stranded on the ground, lift it up and gently launch it into the air.
- The common swift's closest genetic relations are the hummingbirds; they are not related to swallows or house martins.

**Polly Eaton & Joe Egan
High Street Baptist Church**

What to find out more or get involved:

- <https://arocha.org.uk/what-we-do/target-25/>
- <https://rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/swift>
- <https://hannahbournetaylor.com/>
- <https://www.bto.org/our-science/topics/tracking/tracking-studies/swifts>

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For further details see:

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Harvest Festival

Sunday 13th October

Service at 10am Tring Parish Church

Service for all ages collecting foodbank items for DENS from their high-needs list

Parish Harvest Lunch at 12.30pm

Come and enjoy a two-course Parish Harvest Lunch as we celebrate the harvest

Booking is needed to help us cater, byo drinks.

www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events

Collecting donations at the service and surplus money from the lunch to go to the Bishop's appeal,
Thrive: Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture in Sri Lanka
in partnership with *The Leprosy Mission*

Making connections



Breaking my wrist in January on my niece's hoverboard prevented me from doing my usual winter activities. No, it's not skiing – but looking after my mother-in-law (Dee), whilst my sister-in-law and husband go on a well-earned cruise. We are now in July and I am around 95% recovered so I can now resume duties.

Dee is a very active and spritely 91 years young and quite capable of looking after herself; but she likes company, especially at night.

After completing the sponsored Megastick Walk in April, raising money for Christian Aid, visiting churches old and new has become a bit of a passion. I like to find out the history of the church and, if possible, attend the services.

So, on my arrival in Orpington, I located the local church of St Paul's, Grafton Lane, only a ten-minute walk away. I was quite taken by how modern-looking it was, with its red brick and symmetrical-looking architecture, its immaculate garden with remembrance plaques of those who had fought in the First and Second World Wars. I started to ponder why it was built.



I found out from the 1988 notebook of the late Bill Morton that St Paul's Church is a relatively new church in comparison with St Peter & St Paul's Church in Tring. It was built as a result of the rise in population, house building and the opening up of the trainline to Orpington. Around 1886 a site on Crofton Road was offered by Mr John Locke Lovibond, of Starts Hill Farm. The price was very low and was accepted. Next came the organising of a working party to clear the woodland of trees and undergrowth. There was no shortage of helpers from the farm and staff from the various larger houses in the area.

The red brick walls soon took shape, then the wooden boarded roof which was covered with tiles, a wooden bell

turret upon the ridge towards the front of the church and finally, the windows with their cathedral glass, leaving the building finished by December. The interior fittings were then installed, consisting of an altar with a prayer desk made of oak, a lectern in fine brass, chairs and kneelers for the congregation. All the arrangements were made for the opening ceremony on the 5 January 1888, seating eighty-seven people.

The start of 1900 saw more houses being built in the area. The church soon got overcrowded at the services each Sunday. So, in 1913 the expansion began. The services were transferred to one of the neighbouring churches. The rebuild of St Paul's now held 150.

There was another rebuild of the church in the 1950s due to further building of housing estates around the area. It was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Rochester, who stressed in part of the address the importance of accepting changes and not looking back. 'With the institution and induction of Rev Tebboth, you have turned the page of St Paul's history book. Please don't turn it back and quote from the past. The new vicar may not do things as you are used to them, he may introduce a slight change in the routine of the church life. Do not fight against change, but try to accept the challenge and welcome the opportunity of building on the past and progressing as a church.'

Whilst staying in Orpington I was able to attend two church services. The church is very vibrant with a diverse congregation of around 100+ in attendance. There is a church band consisting of three or four singers, guitarist, piano/organ and a drumming booth. There are no pews but chairs. The service begins with the confession, followed by 15 minutes of singing which involved a lot of standing! The children are split from the main congregation to go to Sunday school in the attached hall. Then the service is followed by the traditional Church of England service.

The notices were quite interesting as the church is a member of the New Wine network of churches. There was the announcement that some of the congregation were going camping at the New Wine summer festival, including the vicar, Revd Canon Bimbi Abayomi-



Cole, so that many would be missing the following week.

After the service, there was the obligatory offer of fair-trade refreshments and getting to know people. Straight away I was spoken to by a lady called Jean, followed by Liz who introduced me to a lady called Kath who had moved down from Barnard Castle to live with her daughter. Next Malcolm, the guy in charge of the interactive boards, came over to chat. I introduced myself to Revd Bibi's wife Andrea, who knows my sister-in-law. I was invited to the Elderberry Café which is held on a Wednesday morning.



I was able to take Dee to the Café. We were greeted by refreshments and homemade goodies, including toast and crumpets. The hall was full of people including the ladies I had met on Sunday. There was a great community vibe, people chatting with one another, children playing board games. Various ladies came to sit with us and were interested in who we were and where we lived. One lady, Jean whom I met at the service, came over to me and said how lucky my mother-in-law was in having someone to come and stay and how important it is for old people to have company.

What I like about visiting and attending church services is that one is never lonely and there are always people wanting to speak to you, no matter which part of the church denomination or country you live in.

I have now made new connections in Orpington. Looking forward to seeing them all again soon.

Joyce Miller
St Peter & St Paul

Summer BBQ at Corpus Christi Church



Every year the parishioners from Corpus Christi get together on a Sunday afternoon in summer to have a BBQ and, for as long as anyone can remember, the weather has always been good. In the middle of July, despite it raining every day in the previous week, yet again we had a dry, warm summer

day. Could it be something to do with the saying the 'sun shines on the righteous'.

The event was well attended with over seventy people enjoying getting together to eat good food and socialise. On the BBQ was Patrick Mcloone and Ross and Victoria Osborne who did a tremendous job feeding so many. We also had delicious 'bring and share' side dishes and puddings.

Fr Joseph, the parish priest from Berkhamsted, gave a speech

to introduce Fr John Bryne who is to be our new parish priest from 14 September. Fr John, who is currently based in Feltham, made sure he said hello to everyone and said how pleased he was to be coming to Tring. We are sure he will be very active in the parish and in Churches Together once he has settled in.

Margaret Donnelly
Corpus Christi Church



Useful contacts

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

NB There is no magazine for January or August

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High Street Baptist Church, Tring



Baby Group

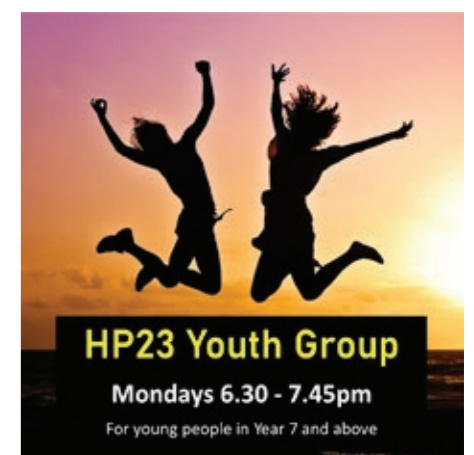
Tuesdays 10.30am - 12 Noon

For new born and non-sovers



Tots

Wednesdays 9.30 - 11.30am
Indoor fun for toddlers



HP23 Youth Group

Mondays 6.30 - 7.45pm

For young people in Year 7 and above

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tringbaptistchurch



High Street Baptist Church

Crossword puzzle answers

From page 13

ACROSS	DOWN
1. ARCHDEACON	1. AISLE
8. SONATAS	2. CONFIRMATION
9. TOLLS	3. DUTY
10. EVIL	4. ASSUME
11. IMMORTAL	5. ORTHODOX
13. NAMED	6. OLD TESTAMENT
14. OASIS	7. PSALMS
16. CATHOLIC	12. ADVOCATE
17. CALM	13. NECTAR
20. AROMA	15. SIMPLE
21. PRAYERS	18. MOSES
22. BENEDICTUS	19. MAGI

Stephen Hearn

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