

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



Tring Team Parish

www.tringteamparish.org.uk

Aldbury, Long Marston, Puttenham, Tring and Wilstone Churches.

Please visit our website for everything.

Services - Resources - Pastoral Care Support - And Much More!

It's ok to contact any of the clergy

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

Team Vicar Revd Jane Banister 01442 822170

Long Marston and Wilstone: jane@tringteamparish.org.uk

Team Vicar Revd Michelle Grace 01442 851200

Aldbury: michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk

Curate Revd Sarah Marshall 07538 888502

sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk

Open Churches for Services

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

www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events

Aldbury, Sundays at 10am, and 1st Sunday at 8am
Tring, Sundays 8am and 10am, Wednesdays at 10am,
Long Marston Sundays at 10am or 6pm.
Wilstone Tuesday at 10am,
Puttenham 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month 3.30pm.

Open Churches for individual Prayer

Tring Church open daily, 10am - 12noon

Wilstone Church open Tuesdays, 10.30am - 12.30pm,

Aldbury Church open daily, 11am - 3pm



Join in with our worship on the web. Some streamed, some recorded.

Services featuring our clergy and others coming into your home! Different styles, something for all ages and activities for families. Access to daily prayer and services from the Church of England.

Pastoral Care and Support

We are here for you, please contact any of our clergy. - Keep in contact with church friends - Prayer support and resources - Protecting your mental health, lots of ideas about staying focussed and in balance.



The Foodbank in Tring Church is open on weekdays, 10am - 12noon, to collect food and to drop-off food donations. www.dens.org.uk



Editorial



There is no doubt that this year has been a challenge for most of us and I suspect that as the year closes out, there may be more challenges to come. I wanted to thank all those who have supported and contributed to *Comment* particularly this year because without you – there would be no magazine; I have had some letters and emails to say that it has been much appreciated that *Comment* has continued when people have not been able to get out and many have been able to see far fewer of their family and friends.

About the time that this edition of *Comment* goes to press in October in



readiness for November, I am to be found at the Frankfurt Bookfair. I have attended it every year for some thirty-three years including when I was 7 months pregnant and when my wrist was in plaster... but not 2020: this year it has been cancelled. Instead I have recreated the scene in my Tring office and have been meeting

friends from Christian publishing houses in Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, South Africa, the UK and USA by Zoom – all of whom have similar experiences of lockdowns, curfews and quarantines, of face coverings and social distancing, of closed shops and places of worship and now a 'second wave' – and the impact that these have had on Christian publishing around the world.

We have struggled in different ways in 2020 but we are still here: we have much to thank God for. As the December/January issue comes together I would welcome articles from you sharing your own thanks for blessings of various kinds and indeed any article you would like to contribute. *Comment* needs you!

The Editor

A time to remember



I suspect many of us will have had that little rhyme 'Remember, remember the fifth of November, Gunpowder treason and plot...' said to us at this time of year. But gunpowder plots are not the only and not the most important thing that we remember at this time of year, although the fireworks certainly bring some brightness into our dark November evenings. I hope we will still get to see some, even if we can't gather for the usual community displays!

We begin November with *All Saints' Day*, an opportunity to remember those who have gone before, whose lives have been an example to us. Denominations differ as to the importance of 'saints', but I think we can all agree that there are those whose lives give us a good example of what it means to follow Christ and it can be valuable to learn about them.

All Souls' Day follows on the 2 November, an opportunity to remember those who have died. In the Methodist Church, *All Saints' Day* is not always recognised, so *All Souls Day* definitely disappears into the background, but it's not uncommon for us to hold services around this time which give people an

opportunity to remember loved ones who have recently died. All of us can have times when we want to stop in God's presence and remember loved ones and the impact that they've had on our lives, and in the process of grief, it can be helpful to have a moment to stop and allow ourselves space for feelings to surface that may get hidden or pushed away by the general busyness of our lives.

Despite the rhyme, *5 November* is rarely linked with remembrance today. The burning of 'guys' is rarely seen as we've become aware of the hurt that it can cause, the links to anti-catholicism; a reminder that there are times when we need to let some memories go. Today we see more fireworks than bonfires and often the event is a joyful, community occasion as we see our dark skies lit up by the colourful explosives.

Remembrance Sunday and *Remembrance Day* are solemn days. I've noticed that in recent years, society has made more of these particular days. Perhaps it has something to do with the anniversaries that we have recently marked: 100 years since the end of the First World War, 75 years since the end of the Second World War. Another possibility is that it's connected to the age of the veterans who become fewer and fewer each year. Or perhaps it is more important to mark these days when we don't have those with the personal experience to

speak to us of the horror of these events and the importance of not repeating past mistakes. Certainly society has recognised that it is important to remember.

It's interesting that so much of our remembering is done in this season of darkening nights, when we are aware of the cycle of life as leaves turn and crops yield their last fruits; a reminder of our place in that cycle, but also a reminder that none of us is forgotten. Each of us is valued, most of us by family and friends, but all of us loved and valued by God. Psalm 77 says 'I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.'

As you take time to remember this November, can I encourage you to also take time to remember God, to remember those times when he has encouraged you, to remember those times when he has challenged you and to remember all his works and his mighty deeds, not least in the life of Jesus. God is at work in all our lives and reaches out to us with his constant love. As we remember, so God reminds us of how precious each of us is to him. In these difficult days, I pray that that is something that each of us will always remember.

Rachael Hawkins
St Martha's Methodist Church

Divided worship



Schools have been back for months now and it has been truly wonderful to see (and hear!) our classrooms full of children keen to learn.

As a school, we have looked to stay positive during the pandemic and have been keen to identify some of the benefits of this situation. These do not outweigh the huge negative impact but have challenged our thinking and, in some cases, will possibly outlast the virus itself.

However, collective worship has been a tough one to untangle. The daily act of collective worship is many things. At its simplest, it is a coming together of the school community to share key

messages. This is no doubt important but it is much more than a simple coming together. For many children it is a rare chance to be still, to reflect and to ask the big questions; a chance to understand one's place in the world; a chance to think. How then can you achieve this community cohesion and deep thinking in a world where children exist in bubbles? The answer is: with great difficulty!

At Bishop Wood, we have gone back to our key values of Wisdom, Community, Hope and Dignity to drive our collective worship this term. We are doing a mixture of delivery. Most worships are being conducted by their class teachers in their classroom. This is the new normal of Divided Worship but it is still a coming together of the class which is progress from the summer term. We are using a wonderful resource

from the Diocese around rebuilding communities. We are also fortunate to have Huw Bellis and Sarah Marshall who send in a weekly worship via video. The children always love these worships as they are very creative and deliver very clear and important messages. On a Monday, I deliver a video worship to all classes. This invariably tests my tech skills but it is an area of my life which is developing rapidly. It is going well. It is going as well as we had hoped.

So, collective worship has (in the short term) become divided worship but we are still challenging the thinking of our young people on a daily basis and offering them a window of peace and reflection into their crowded lives.

**Gary Stanley, Headteacher
Bishop Wood School**

Teaching in the 'New Normal'



Even teachers who are very experienced can feel nervous when September rolls around. On that first morning, the butterflies in the stomach are there every year.

After six weeks, can I still do this job? Can I control and engage thirty little human beings, or is it time to consider another job?! This year, you could multiply that anxiety by several.

Most staff had not completely said goodbye to the classroom six months previously. Many teachers (together with TAs and office staff) were part of a rota system that provided cover for vulnerable children and those of key workers in the early days of lockdown, and then, after Whitsun Half Term, a phased return of the wider school population. But all this was only ever in groups of up to fifteen children.

In September this year, teachers returned to teaching full classes for the first time in nearly six months. It's a challenge for all involved: staff, pupils and parents. So how are things going and how are they different compared to those far off care-free days of February 2020?

The children seem delighted to be back. They are full of excitement at seeing their friends again and attendance

has been virtually 100% so far.

There are of course lots of changes. We are having to keep our children in four separate year group 'bubbles' so that they don't meet. This very much goes against our ethos of trying to create a 'Bishop Wood family', but it's 'needs must' for now.

So, our younger (Years 3/4) pupils arrive and depart through one entrance and our older (Years 5/6) through another. The same applies to exits at the end of the day. Children come straight into the classrooms in the morning rather than gather on the playground. We also have a system of staggered play times and lunchtimes. We're lucky to have two separate playgrounds and a large field so that doesn't present us with too many difficulties.

Traditional worship is off the agenda for now. Protecting the bubbles means no mass gatherings in the hall, so Headteacher Gary Stanley, Father Huw and Curate Sarah Marshall are continuing their pre-recorded assemblies that became very popular during the lockdown period. Instead of being sent home, by the wonders of modern technology, they're now simply beamed to the classrooms instead.

Add in continual hand sanitising, the quarantining or wiping down of equipment, marking books in gloves ('You look like the Boston Strangler, Mr Hall!'),

children coming to school in their PE Kit on PE days, extra-curricular clubs being limited to one year group at a time, staff wearing masks if they want to, parents having to make appointments to come on site, and that's about it.

Some of this takes the joy out of working in school. Colleagues working in different parts of the school barely see each other, for example. But it would also be true to say there are positives as well, a few things that we'll probably keep the same even when all this is over. Classes arriving gradually in the morning allow you to greet most children individually every day and provides for an altogether more civilised start to the day. Lunchtime squabbles seem much reduced too with individual year groups playing on their own.

So the 'New Normal' isn't entirely a bad thing. And the butterflies have gone. At least until next year.

**Jon Hall
Bishop Wood School**

Be at peace

Do not look forward to what might happen tomorrow. The same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow, and every day...

St Francis de Sales

The pain of absence



I am spending much of my time these days as a carer for my wife, Sandra, and talking with other carers, and I would like to share a concern many have and one I will likely have to face in

the months ahead.

One of the people I have spoken to, whose wife is in a care home, has not been able to be close to her since the Coronavirus pandemic meant the care homes have been locked down. At best he is able to sit outside, 2 metres away from her, whilst wearing a mask; so, for the last six months has not been able to hug her. What has made this worse is that she has dementia and in recent times does not open her eyes or respond to his voice. He is happy to self isolate, have whatever testing is appropriate, so he can care for her and, at the very least, give her a hug and a kiss when he visits.

Another was in a similar position except his wife died recently so he was not able to be with her during her last months and only got to be close to



her after she had passed away. He will always wonder if he may have realised there was something wrong and made

some intervention to save her, or if having a hug from him would have given her something to live for.

I know the care homes are working to protect all the people in their care but somehow this has to include those family members who care and have done for many years. There will not be an easy answer or one that fits all but this needs to be explored.

The Alzheimers Society has taken this up and has asked those who feel similarly to write to their local councils to promote discussion. You can find stories of many like the two gentlemen I have spoken to on the Alzheimers Society website where you will find a link to ask the local councillors to raise the issues for discussion.

If you feel this is a topic that needs airing please follow this link and act as you see appropriate: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/blog/care-home-coronavirus-restrictions-john-story>. Thanks.

Mike Watkin, Tring Team

Music from under the altar

During lockdown, like many across the world, we switched to doing our Sunday worship service in our own home. We started by watching the excellent services that the Tring Team provided on the church website. I was thrilled, and tearful, to be able to see and hear 'my team vicars' on screen and felt that the services were very well put together. However, my young children really struggled to engage with the computer screen, even if it was portraying a familiar face. This really upset me: as if being



stuck in the house wasn't bad enough for them, they now couldn't engage with their faith and continue their faith learning journey.

We needed a different style of worship that could meet the children physically in our house, so my mother (also a vicar) and I got together and thought long and hard, several days in total. We decided to create our own services for each Sunday that we could all take part in, in our living/dining room rather than in a church.

So, the dining table became our altar with a white tablecloth, bread and wine. We took our readings from a children's book of Bible stories. Our sermons were in the form of activities, during which we could talk about the story we had heard and discuss what we could learn from it. We shared the prayers, saying sorry, thank you and please. We hugged and kissed during the peace and we had percussion instruments in ALL the hymns with mum on the piano. Meredith, my 7-year-old daughter, often liked to sit under the table/altar and play the bells, hence 'Music from under the altar'.

The children thoroughly enjoy these services and we are continuing with them for now. I look forward to the day that we can worship in church again



alongside the people we love: our church community. I feel that, at the moment, the social distancing required at church would cause great stress to our little family (especially my 2-year-old son, Gabriel) and would distract our attention away from God and the good news of the Bible. But as we continue worshipping at home, we never fail to feel a connection to the wider family of God, who are all worshipping differently, but always the same God, who is with us all in everything we do.

**Pippa Wright
St Peter & St Paul**

What dementia feels like...



'Elizabeth is missing', a brilliant first novel by Emma Healey, was August's choice for our Parish Book Club. It is told in the voice of an octogenarian

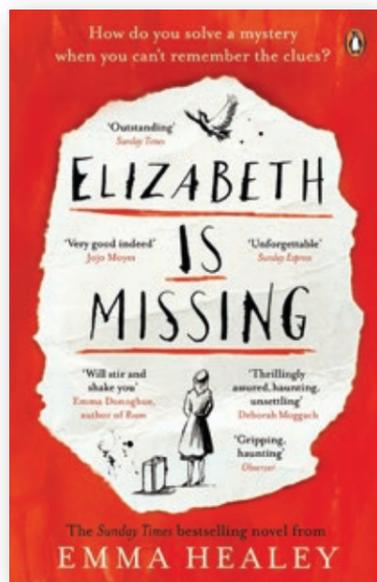
and charts the progress of her mental decline as she herself experiences it. This present-day story is interwoven with a murder mystery from seventy years previously. I think all of us found it compelling, but also, of course, harrowing; some of us loved it, others hated it and one member (who contributed as wisely as any of us to the discussion) left it unread, because of the pain of her experiences of the effects of dementia on those who had been close to her.

Elizabeth, the best friend of Maude who is now in her mid-eighties, has gone missing and Maude is trying to find her. But Maude has dementia which results in severe, and frequently complete, loss of short-term memory, and this makes finding out where Elizabeth has gone a muddling task. We, the readers, experience this search and the puzzles it brings in Maude's own first-person report, and so are brought right into the increasingly murky workings of Maude's mind. So we feel with her the progressive ravages of dementia on her memory; towards the end of the book, she even fails to recognise her daughter at times. But it turns out that not only Maude's friend Elizabeth, and Maude's short-term memory are missing. Some seventy years previously, in the immediate aftermath of WWII, Maude's beloved elder sister went missing and it is fairly clear that she was murdered. Again, the story of this other disappearance is told in Maude's first-person voice, but this time with the crystal-clear memory of a teenager. On a technical level, this is an extraordinary literary feat by the 29-year-old author; she not only finds the voice of someone her grandmother's age but also successfully intersperses two stories, one from Maude's old age and the other from her childhood. The intermingling of two periods adds another dark layer to the intensely personal study of an old woman, still haunted by the terrible loss of her sister so long ago.

Maude's search for her friend

brings her to attend Elizabeth's church; perhaps that will provide clues to her whereabouts? This church visit is a bit of a disaster: the congregation are kind to her, but have absolutely no idea how to deal with an octogenarian with dementia, and even suggest that she would be better off in a different type of church. Our group discussed access ramps and sound loops which can be provided to help those with loss of mobility or hearing, but what can be done for disabilities of memory and cognition? A partial solution is to project the words of hymns and prayers onto a large screen which solves the problem of finding one's place in a book, which was an issue for Maude, and has helped in this way at St Peter & St Paul's Church. Probably our own behaviour is much more important, though.

There was more discussion around Maude's relationships with her family. Her daughter Helen is Maude's chief carer, and the first few chapters suggest that



Helen is a rather bossy type, who has no patience for coping with the increasing ravages of dementia on her mum's mind. But it becomes clear that this is not the case: Helen loves her mother deeply, and this feeling is entirely reciprocated, even when Maude is at her most irritating and forgetful, or has one of her fits of rage against the restrictions of her condition, biting and flailing against her daughter like a three-year-old. For me, this endurance of the deep bond between mother and daughter was one of the most affecting and affirming aspects of the novel.

Tellingly, there is also a deep bond between Granny and her granddaughter Katy, who is the only person to treat Maude entirely at her own level, without reserve or restriction. Maude loves this so much! – something I think we can all learn from. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the author, Emma Healey, had a grandmother with severe dementia.

And there was discussion of the existential questions. No matter how they are treated by others, does someone with dementia become any less 'themselves' than someone struck down by blindness or loss of mobility? Both these conditions may also cause radical changes in personality, and no doubt are often caused by similar processes to those leading to dementia. And the theological aspect of this question was also discussed – does the onset of dementia affect the nature of our immortal souls, in a way that other types of illness don't? Wisely, Huw Bellis, rector of the Tring Team, declined to be drawn on a direct answer to this, but it is still a question to reflect on, both for ourselves and the way we treat others.

These are deep issues, and ones that of course tax me, as I head toward my mid-70s at seemingly break-neck speed. The novel, as should be clear, is in many ways a harrowing one, but one which personally I found difficult to put down; indeed, one of our group was so gripped by it that she completed it in less than twenty-four hours. Do read it!

Postscript: The Church Times last month had a review of a recently published book by six authors called 'God in fragments: worshipping with those living with dementia'. The review in the Church Times, quoting an extract from the book, says: 'Creating accessible worship for people living with dementia is not only central to the values of the gospel: "it is a unique opportunity to witness to human dignity in an age that idolizes the young and the beautiful, often at the expense of older people in the community"'. That statement seems to me to go to the heart of some of the issues raised by Emma Healey in her striking book.

Edmund Booth
St Peter & St Paul

Love in a Covid climate



It was more than a year ago, in mid-2019, when we started planning for the wedding of our daughter Rebecca and her fellow PhD student Jonathan, timed for the

end of August 2020. A venue was needed and accommodation for guests in a busy city; Becky's eldest sister, Elizabeth, had to make bookings to travel with her young family from California. We weren't too worried about our plans and bookings when the stories of this strange virus emerged in January 2020, as August was so far off; we held our nerve at the start of lockdown, even though we weren't sure about the assurance that twelve weeks would send the virus packing.



Gradually during the spring the plans disintegrated, the bookings were cancelled. The young couple remained cheerful and hopeful, even though their communication was limited to WhatsApp for several months, when they were 'locked in' with their respective families at home. We started work on Plan B in July 2020, when some of the rules began to be eased, and came up with the idea of a wedding in the tiny village in Derbyshire where we are lucky enough to have a holiday flat, one with lots of



outdoor space. With the co-operation of the local clergy in Tideswell, we were able to negotiate the requirements for a 'qualifying connection' and arranged a largely DIY wedding in St John's church, Cressbrook. There hadn't been a wedding in that church for more than a decade, but the locals were very supportive; the rector stepped in at almost the last moment when the original celebrant was prevented from coming by quarantine rules. So we visited garden centres for plants, Aldi for flowers(!), and depended on Waitrose home delivery for the modest refreshment we could offer our guests. Our music was rich and varied, but all served up from a smart phone and sound bar, in more DIY provision. The order of service was circulated by email for guests to print or view on their smart devices.

Our most fervent prayer perhaps was that it wouldn't rain on Saturday 29 August, and we were blessed with a dry, even if not hot day. We were limited to immediate family and a handful of close friends, barely twenty in total (Plan A had envisaged around ninety people). This happened to be the capacity of the little church, allowing for appropriate 'social distancing', so we were a joyful family group.



We didn't have photographs of the ceremony inside the church, but the photographer was able to take advantage of the local scenery for some striking images afterwards. Cressbrook is just along the valley from Monsal Head, a very



popular viewpoint in the Peak District. (The formal photos were taken by Michael O'Sullivan photography.)

We had to use some imagination when arranging a suitable wedding cake...



While there was real sadness that Elizabeth could not travel from the US with her husband and twin children, we had a brief chat with them on WhatsApp. One day 'when this is all over' Rebecca and Jonathan will be able to have one or more celebrations with the rest of the family and the wide spread of friends from Cambridge, Sheffield, Tring, and beyond.

Plan B didn't feel at all like a consolation prize for the original plan. It was a memorable family celebration, in a way the more satisfying, because we had done so much of the preparation ourselves. Now (in late September) as we see the rules tightening again, it is clear we were lucky, or blessed, or both, in our timing.

Rebecca and Jonathan would like to thank the many people from the parish who have sent good wishes. They hope to be here again soon, maybe to play some music together for Piano and More...

John Whiteman, Tring Team

Great Christian leaders



I wrote last time about our 'Youth Services' at Great St Mary's in Cambridge. At the time I was asked to become a member of the 20th Century Church

Light Music group, which pioneered new hymns and music. Many of the hymns composed are in our hymn book today: 'Lord of the Dance', 'Lord Jesus Christ' (Living Lord), 'When I needed a Neighbour'. The leading lights were Patrick Appleford, later Dean of Lusaka Cathedral in Zambia and Sydney Carter who was a professional Christian poet and singer.

I set a branch up in Cambridge and we had about thirty students who formed a group and a choir and sometimes played at our Youth Service but also toured around churches in the country. We did a week in the West country in different schools and churches, ending up with a full house in Sherborne Abbey. Parishioners were very welcoming and looked after us in their homes.

Following the tour, we were invited to do a programme on Anglia TV in Norwich in which I was interviewed and the group played and sang. One of our last engagements was at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Brussels and we preached and sang to two different congregations morning and evening.

Each Sunday evening of the university term we had a service for students. We never had fewer than 300 and an average was about 500. We had preachers from far and wide – the curates were not asked to perform then! Hugh Montefiore himself preached once a term and drew thoughtful numbers to his provocative sermons. But during our three years, the two people who stand out for me were John Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, and Billy Graham, the American evangelist.

John Robinson had written a book called 'Honest to God', which was a top-selling paperback and presented new and radical ways of looking at the Christian faith. He focused on God, not as transcendent 'out there' but as being within us, he questioned the virgin birth story as not a genetic statement, but stating that God was 'in' all this, and questioned the literalness of the Bible. It caused a media sensation that made everyone talk about Christianity; he

was headlines in the Sun newspaper on two occasions! Whether you agreed with him or not, I can't remember a time since when Christianity was such a talking point. He came to us one Sunday evening and not only was the church filled with over 1000 students, but there was a queue 300 yards down the main street who could not get in! Hugh was cross with himself at not having arranged loudspeakers outside! The Bishop was a quiet scholarly man, a former Cambridge Dean, who had apparently never been seen as extremely radical while there, but he had the undergraduates eating out of his hand and answered questions after his address for an hour!

The Bishop was always on TV or the radio and he told this interesting story at a meal I was at. He was at the height of his fame and to escape the media he went to Bristol, his first church as a curate, and was walking around the streets of the rough parish he had worked at when a man stopped him. 'I know you,' he said. The Bishop inwardly sighed at yet another 'fan'. 'You cleared the snow away from my mother's front door years ago when you lived here.' The Bishop's fame had completely passed this man by, but that simple act of Christian concern had stayed in his memory down the years. Loving God and loving your neighbour always go hand-in-hand in true Christianity.

The other outstanding visitor could not have been more different, Dr Billy Graham, the American evangelist, who led various missions in London and was an internationally known Christian leader. The church was again overflowing with students, but there were four other churches which were linked up by video. My job was to take Billy Graham to all the other churches

for a five-minute personal appearance to those who had followed on the video. He looked like an advert for 'He Tan', immensely good looking and charismatic. He was totally sincere and could adjust himself to the liberal catholic approach

of Great St Mary's without compromising his more evangelical approach to the faith. He was clapped through the streets and warmly welcomed in all the overflow churches. He was a great man and a true servant of God.

There was an interesting follow up to this event. At the London Billy Graham rallies, people who chose to were invited at the end to come forward and sign a pledge card. These were forwarded to the church they named and during the summer we received about twelve of these at Great St Mary's and I had the privilege of talking with them all. Some had gone up because they were moved by his message, others because they felt they wanted to make a definite commitment to the Christian faith; others had gone up to see what it was all about. By no means all agreed with his fundamentalist approach to the Bible; but everyone saw in him a true servant of God, whose life was completely dedicated to making Christians.

Much of the work at Great St Mary's was the same as any well run parish – regular visits of the congregation, to those in hospital, Confirmation classes, discussion groups, Harvest Suppers and the usual round of worship and Bible study. But it was a privilege I will never forget to have worked for Hugh Montefiore, an outstanding Christian leader of his generation. Our three busy years there also brought our son Mark into our lives and so in 1966 we moved on yet again, no longer a couple, but with our first baby keeping us on our toes!

Ian Ogilvie
Tring Team

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TEN YEAR GUARANTEE

We Miss You!

Challis School of Dance

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For more information, please email admin@thechallisschoolofdance.co.uk

The Challis School of Dance

Welcome to Tring School 2020



Hello all! I would like to start with some maths! Here's a question for you...

Fern is a Tring School student standing outside her maths classroom.

Down the hall, she can see her next class, geography. The geography class is 100 metres away. Fern walks at approximately 200 metres per minute. How long does it take Fern to walk from her maths classroom to her geography classroom?

Answer: at least half an hour... Yes, that's right. Taking into account the fact that to reach her geography classroom, Fern must first walk in the opposite direction to reach the end of the building (as per the one way system), out the back of the 'Modular Village', past/through multiple other buildings, dodging the wreckage raining down from what used to be the science building (now a whole load of rubble with a crane picking through it), out the front of the school (no, seriously) and then back around to where her angry geography teacher is waiting to give her detention for being late. Welcome to Tring School 2020.

OK, OK, so there was some slight exaggeration there (it's actually the walk from maths to art not geography that takes that route) but you get my point (deeply buried as it was within the carefully controlled and totally unnoticeable frustration). Tring School is not a great place to be when a pandemic and new build of the whole school are clashing, each trying their very best to be more destructive and irritating to the poor little school community as possible. Not a good place to be, unless, that is, you're trying to get your step count past a trillion million every day (which I'm really not).

Still, let's focus on the positive (there's gotta be some around here somewhere...)

Let me reassure you that I, and the 200 gawking/cheering Year 10s surrounding me, derived no small

amount of satisfaction when the roof of the English/history building was ripped off. It was fun to see the crane's arm descending into the building through the roof and dumping the contents onto a massive (and I mean massive) pile of rubble! It's right next to the astro turf so everyone with PE does that thing where you move to the furthest corner of the pitch pretending to be the furthest fielder and then just stand and watch as Neville gets ripped apart, knowing perfectly well that nobody is ever going to be able to hit the ball anywhere near you. The perfect way to spend a particularly tedious rounders lesson!

But that's just PE, so here's a quick summary of what most Tring School lessons are like at the minute: in true English Language style, I will answer this twelve mark exam question: Describe your experience of walking into a Tring School, new build, lockdown classroom – try to use your senses to accurately portray your surroundings.

As you step into the classroom, the busy, one-way movement of the corridor is left behind and you are in a new world. The subtle scent of alcoholic hand sanitiser welcomes you to your class as you remove your mask and enjoy the feeling of the freezing cold air attacking your face. Through the open windows the calming sounds of the old school getting torn apart drift in, accompanied by the sweet smell of wet tarmac and petrol. You manoeuvre through the maze of sweaty kids just out of PE and find your seat at the back of the classroom – cheerfully greeting whichever infuriating boy you have been sat next to. The teacher stands up in a large visor and mask and begins to mumble something indistinguishable about natural hazards...

So once your boring/interesting/loud/silent/hyper lesson is over, you must brave the corridors! I found myself in a totally new position this year – and not just because of the masks and the one way system...

I'm Year 10 now and my year group and I have shifted up slightly in the

secondary school hierarchy – we are no longer grouped together with the KS3s – because we're beginning our GCSEs, we are now KS4: top of the school (nearly). And when you're as high and mighty as us, all the mini Year 7s scurrying around under your feet seem all the smaller. I swear I was never that small! Some of the smallest were practically getting trampled under the feet of the tallest Year 10s...

Anyway, that's my quick summary of life at Tring School 2020. I hope to any students reading this it was accurate enough in its complaints, and to any teachers, please overlook any slight exaggeration! It is a tricky situation but the school has handled it (fairly) well...

So, thank you for reading my account of Tring School life and I hope you are suitably grateful that you are no longer a teenager navigating your way from maths to geography.

Fern Asquith
High Street Baptist Church

Covid-safe Christingle

Make sure you are ready for the 2020 version of Christingle!



On Sunday 6 December there will be two services in St Peter & St Paul's Church, at 2.00pm and 4.00pm, and the services will be live streamed.

Everyone in Church will be given a kit to make their own Christingle. Those joining through live stream can book to collect a kit from church on Saturday.

Book your places now!

Tring Team

Covid on campus



I hope that by the time you read this the situation will have been satisfactorily resolved, but right now we are seeing extraordinary scenes on the television news of students quarantined/imprisoned in their Halls of Residence with security staff and police patrolling to check that they do not come out. There have even been rumours that if the infection rate remains high they may not be allowed to return home for Christmas. This is a

very unfortunate state of affairs.

Back in the day... one of my vivid memories of 'Freshers Week' is standing in a long queue to find out if my grant cheque had arrived, then going into the town, opening a bank account and receiving a cheque book. A cheque book – how grown-up was that!

Back in the day... the age of majority was not 18, but 21, and nearly all students were legally 'infants'; the university stood *in loco parentis* and there were strict regulations to ensure students' welfare. Halls of Residence were all single-sex and visiting hours and lock-up times were firmly enforced. Martin was ejected from my room

when discovered by the Warden (who was coming round to say goodbye to students) mid-afternoon, drinking a cup of tea, on the last day we were there. He apologised to her, went out, round the outside of the building, and came back in through the window. Only post-grads had ground-floor rooms, as we were regarded as responsible and trustworthy.

I wish all new students well and hope that, in spite of this unwanted hassle, they will manage all the learning and make all the friendships which are what it's all about.

Carole Wells
St Peter & St Paul

Remember, remember the 5th November

Remember, remember the fifth of November

*The Gunpowder Treason and plot,
I see no reason why Gunpowder Treason
Should ever be forgot.*

*Guy Fawkes, Guy Fawkes 'twas his intent
To blow up the King and the Parliament,
Three score barrels of powder below
Poor old England to overthrow.*

*By God's providence he was catch'd
With a dark lantern and burning match,
Holler boys, holler boys, ring bells ring
Holler boys, holler boys, God Save the King!*



Most people know that the celebrations on 5 November are to mark the saving of the House of Lords from being blown up by Guy Fawkes on 5 November

1605. A year later in 1606, Parliament decreed through the Observance of 5th November Act (the 'Thanksgiving Act') that 5 November should always be a celebration of the discovery and removal of the store of gunpowder underneath the House of Lords, and a service was added to the Book of Common Prayer to be used on every 5 November at special church services. The celebration continues to this day. So we in the UK have our own Thanksgiving Day, as well as the US!

In early years the celebrations usually

involved children taking an effigy of Guy Fawkes through the streets to be burnt on a bonfire. The effigy was called a Guy – after Guy Fawkes. At this time a bonfire was a traditional form of celebration. In different parts of the UK bonfires had celebrated events such as Walpurgis night, and were derived from the Celtic bone fire when animal bones were burned at midsummer to ward off evil spirits. Bone fires were also later used to burn the bones in church yards when they became overcrowded – it is said that Shakespeare insisted that he was to be buried inside Holy Trinity Church Stratford-upon-Avon, as if he were buried in the church yard his bones would be likely to be dug up later and burned to make way for another body.



Fireworks seem to have been part of the early celebrations. Fireworks originated in China around 600 AD when bamboo sticks were filled with gunpowder and set on fire. Later they were tied to arrows to form a flying bomb. Gunpowder – and fireworks – came to Europe in the 13th century and would have been in use by the first Guy Fawkes' day, when the fact that gunpowder was discovered under the House of Lords

made fireworks a natural part of the celebrations.



Lewes has the largest bonfire night and it is organised by seven families, each heading a bonfire society, who have been organising it for hundreds of years. Originally effigies of Guy Fawkes and the Pope were burned – but recent effigies have included Osama Bin Laden, Jeremy Clarkson and David Cameron! Up to 80,000 people attend the celebrations which also include seventeen burning crosses to mark the death of seventeen Protestant martyrs burned at the stake in Lewes between 1555 and 1557. The procession through the streets to the bonfire carries flaming torches which are thought to have originally been carried as a warning of the Spanish Armada offshore.

At the time of writing the Tring Festival of Fire is still going ahead at the Cricket Club on 7 November – although future government regulations may make this impossible. The Festival of Fire is in aid of local sports clubs and is sponsored by local companies. Read all about it at www.tringfireworks.co.uk.

John Allan
High Street Baptist Church

Parish registers

Weddings

We offer our congratulations and pray for this couple as they begin their married life together.

**Alice Rose Adamson &
Robin Michael Gaymer**

Funerals

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

**James Parton 84 Alan Highfield 77 Steve Newland 67
Kay Delph 78 Daphne Leach 83 Eric Scott 84**

Back to school



'Tis good, Lord to be here!' are the words of a hymn, which, had we been able to sing together, I thought appropriate for our first Sunday being able to worship back in church. Although things are getting back to normal, sadly singing together is not yet allowed under the current Covid-19 restrictions, so I thought the words, but was only able to imagine the hymn being sung.

In June I returned to Aldbury School to teach the Year 6 children for their last half term of primary school life. We all agreed, that although having a lie-in every day was nice, as was being able to choose what to wear, being back at school was actually what we all wanted to do. We appreciated being able to do everyday normal things, like have a school lunch that someone else had cooked, talk to different people with whom we do not live, play together, and enjoy PE.

We embraced tennis and developed a game called tennis rounders, which is like ordinary rounders but with a tennis racquet and ball, allowing those who don't enjoy success with a slim rounders bat to be able to hit the ball. In fact, as a year group (there were fifteen of them) they became so skilful at hitting the ball hard, that we regularly took two balls out in case one was hit into the trees, never to be seen again, and they became very good at predicting where people would hit the ball, and lining up their fielders accordingly. At one point we altered the rules to make the game more challenging. The children enjoyed playing the game so much that we played it every afternoon, despite being caught in a thunderstorm and torrential rain one day!

At school, we had received much advice and guidance about the 'Recovery curriculum' and how children would probably be worried and concerned about returning to school, and therefore not to expect to do much actual teaching. Facing my class of what appeared to be robust 11-year-olds, at the end of our first day, I asked them what they thought they might like me to cover in the seven weeks left of term. They all agreed that being able to do PE and, in particular,

playing tennis rounders, was something they wanted to do. Surprisingly, they asked me to teach them algebra, as it was a Year 6 Maths topic that they had heard about and not yet covered, so felt it would be a 'grown up' thing for them to do. They were delighted to tackle it – although some may have regretted their rash words – and said they enjoyed the challenge of learning something completely new. They also wanted to get their collective teeth into a good book – I chose Philip Pullman's *Clockwork*, which is chilling and also very short, and unfamiliar to all the children.

We spent a happy two days in the section of our school field doing Bushcraft and Forest School-type activities, as this year group has missed out their turn to do Forest School. We managed to choose the two hottest days of the summer, and sat under an enormous tree, whittling our slices of wood into 'tree cookies' as a memento. Den-building was also enormously popular, with the groups fashioning complicated bases from their surroundings – one very organised group had a gamekeeper keeping watch in a lodge, and a series of different rooms, including an en-suite!

One of our favourite activities was creating the end of year service with Revd Michelle. In normal times, the school has a service led by Michelle and the Year 6 leavers on the last morning of term. At the time of discussing it, the church was able to open for private use, and subsequently for services, but it was impossible to hold it in church. Instead, the children practised the service in its constituent parts, and then we all went to the church for a filming session. This involved Michelle's laptop, and me recording some elements on my phone, to be edited and stitched together at a later date by a competent husband, also known as Technical Support.

The result was very pleasing, and the private link was sent to parents to view at home with their families. The children were delighted with seeing themselves and felt it was a rite of passage for them. Although they were extremely good at making the best of things, they were wistful at having to miss out on many things – a residential trip, their summer production, Open Evening, their final Sports Day, to name but a few. Even the

ritual of shirt-signing had to take place in a socially distanced way – their spare shirts were 'dressed' on a chair and put in the playground for other year groups to sign for them.

Now they are all part of a much bigger Year 7 bubble in their respective secondary schools, and we are back to having full classes of thirty (two year groups) in a class. Handwashing, table-squirting (with anti-bac) do take up a lot of time, but are necessary, and the children have very quickly adapted to new routines.

We have different start and ending times for each class, and separate playtimes and lunches. We do not 'assemble' at the moment, but instead have our Collective Worship through video, or delivered in each classroom, with a Zoom Celebration Assembly on Fridays. This means that I have yet to see our youngest children, as they come to school after us and have left before us, and have their own play area, but I am assured that they exist!

The beginning of a new school year is always exciting and hard work, and this year seems set to have its own challenges. However, when I remember the sheer joy on the children's faces as they returned after lockdown, I know that we would all rather be able to be here.

**Gill Kinsey,
St Peter & St Paul**

Your Comment highlights

As 2020 draws to a close, with ten editions of Comment, most of which were put together by people 'locked down' in one way or another, can you pick out an article or two that you enjoyed or which moved or inspired you? What were your highlights of those magazines? If you have even a few words that could be put in the December edition, please send them to me any time before 6 November and I will find room for them.

The Editor

'Black Lives Matter' and Edward Colston



The killing of a black man, George Floyd, by a white policeman in the US city of Minneapolis last May lit a touchpaper which brought to a head simmering racial tensions in yet another series of demonstrations and riots throughout America, Europe and beyond. Many of the demonstrations involved Black Lives Matter, an American movement with a loose organisation devoted to securing racial justice. It promotes non-violent action against police brutality against black people, allegations of which remain a sensitive and controversial issue in both America and Britain, thanks to the legacy of slavery, particularly in America and the West Indies. However, there is a danger of the movement being used by extremist or opportunist groups, which can foment demonstrations into riots.

In June a large anti-racism demonstration in Bristol by both black and white activists toppled a controversial statue of the 17th century slave-trader and philanthropist Edward Colston, which had stood since 1895. Some people climbed on the empty plinth holding a Black Lives Matter banner and others stamped on the statue, dragged it to the quay-side and heaved it into the water. A few days later, Bristol City Council quietly recovered the statue with a view to renovating it, complete with the graffiti scrawled on it, and then putting it into a museum. In view of the powerful popular feelings aroused by the anti-racist campaigners, it was clear that the statue could never be put back on the plinth and, in the event, the perpetrators were let off with police cautions.

The toppling of the statue gave rise to an immediate burst of soul-searching in this country about links to historic transatlantic slave trade and, by extension, colonialism. The Colston Hall has been renamed the Bristol Beacon. The Archbishop of Canterbury has stated that the Church of England should rethink the portrayal

of Jesus as white and that the statues in Canterbury Cathedral should be reviewed in the light of the Black Lives Matter campaign to bring down monuments to controversial figures such as those involved in the slave trade. The National Trust has been surprisingly enthusiastic in its recent report detailing the ninety-three buildings in its care that had connections with colonialism and historic slavery. Indeed, the anti-racist movement has given rise to the view that any colonialism was bad. The truth is much more complicated, but the fact remains that there was no option but to grant the subject countries their independence.

Edward Colston was a figure hated by campaigners as a slave trader, but he was not alone. He was a shareholder in the principal transatlantic slave-trading organisation, the Royal African Company, and became its Deputy Governor. Its biggest shareholder was King Charles II's brother, the Duke of York, who became Governor of the company, and the many other investors included the king himself, the first Earl of Shaftesbury and Samuel Pepys. Was Colston all bad? In one way he was a child of his time: in those days slavery was considered a respectable trade which enriched many powerful and influential contemporaries. Prior to the transatlantic trade, the institution was endemic in many parts of the world including north Africa and in a recent article in the Times the former Chairman of the Equality and Human Rights commission, Trevor Phillips, suggested that the role of the African chiefs in selling slaves should be considered.

The toppled statue commemorated Colston's achievements as a major philanthropist. He founded Colston's School and benefitted many other Bristol institutions. It is not certain why he so acted. Perhaps he acted because he remained a bachelor and had no direct descendants or because he was motivated by Christian charity. Whatever the reasons, I am reminded of the speech in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in which Mark Antony states that 'the evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones'.

The toppling of a statue or the killing of a monarch, or the destruction of a building such as the Bastille in Paris as a symbol of repression, acts as a notable focus of a revolutionary campaign, but does not ensure its ultimate success (the French revolution started by the storming of the Bastille was succeeded by Napoleon Bonaparte who crowned himself emperor). However, the Black Lives Matter movement and the disturbing events in Bristol and elsewhere have concentrated minds on the need not only to recognise the importance of securing racial justice but also to ensure that BAME people are given the same opportunities and respect as the majority population. This will involve examining conscious and unconscious racial attitudes and some rebalancing of the teaching of history.

The BBC is engaging with these issues enthusiastically, but a solution will not be quick or easy to achieve. I am not convinced that quotas will always be the answer: with suitable opportunities, real talent will shine through. An outstanding example is that of the cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason and his family. Sheku and his sister Isata's cello and piano recital at this year's BBC Proms was revelatory.

**Martin Wells
St Peter & St Paul**

Did you know that Tring has a connection with the historic transatlantic slave trade? The memorial to Sir William Gore (1644-1707) in St Peter & St Paul's Church was erected by his first son, William (1675-1739), who became an MP and inherited Tring Park from his father. In addition to following his father as a director of the Bank of England he became a founding director of the South Sea Company, which was granted a monopoly to ship slaves from Africa to Spain's transatlantic empire. Due to lack of profits the company famously collapsed in the South Sea Bubble of 1720.

High Street Baptist Church - Tring

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Morning worship



Sundays 10.30am

zoom

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Please wear a face covering
(these will be available if you do not have one)

Recycling area is located at the left
hand side entrance to High Street
Baptist church for bras, plastic milk
bottle tops, baby food pouches,
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stamps and batteries.



Sermons, all-age talks and other
videos are available on YouTube
'High Street Baptist Church, Tring, UK'.

Kids Activities @High Street Baptist

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

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

www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

#tringbaptistchurch High Street Baptist Church

Stretch marks – and the all-too-quick passing of time



Several things happened in September to remind me of the passing of time (as if I needed that). I was part of a conversation about former parishioners (whom I thought had died not that long ago), and yet other longstanding church members did not know who they were; I was asked to write in support of an application to Tring School and realised that I had known the child concerned since they were a baby; and our eldest child went to university.

Most of the time, I find it difficult to realise that I am the age I am – I suffer from imposter syndrome, whereby I am convinced that one day everyone will find out the truth, which is that I am only posing as a responsible adult, and actually I am still 13. But however much I behave as if I am 13, there are times like this week that remind me that I am not.

It is at momentous occasions, such as the first child to university, that one looks back, realises that time has gone by so quickly, and how much life is constantly changing. It feels like one minute you are buying secondary school uniform, and the next, you are in Dunelm, discussing which duvets and bedding (and so much else) for the move to university.

The positive note is that Huw and

I feel we can give ourselves a pat on the back that we have got our eldest successfully to this point. She will flourish at university, and make friends and learn so much, just as we did.

I am struck, however, by the differences both from my own experience, and from the effects of the pandemic. I started my first year in catered accommodation, and bedding was provided on the single sex floors. Now most universities only have self-catering, and students live in mixed flats. The advantage is that you are more independent, you have a ready-made community, and if every one of the ten people brings the same kitchen equipment, you will never be in need of a tin opener! The students both in the flat and on the course communicate with each other in advance through Whatsapp, which takes away some of the complete unknowns that we oldies had at university.

And the other huge difference that struck me was how I debated long and hard over taking my hifi system and collection of tapes and records. While comforting and important, they took up a lot of space. Now all you need is a phone and a laptop. The debates over how many plates and mugs to take however, are the same: 'One or two will be fine' makes me think there is a child who has not done the washing up regularly.

This year, of course, has also altered student experience, but one thing I am

relieved about is that it is the same for all students – it is not about one group missing out, but a whole generation having to live in a new way. And having dropped our daughter off on a Saturday, it was the following Thursday that she messaged to say that her flat was in quarantine as one student was showing some symptoms. So copious communication about the difficulty of getting a test, and also a food delivery slot, as well as what food to buy (Huw went into overdrive there).

Leaving her at university was very hard but also completely the right thing to do. Seeing her settle into a spacious, light-filled room, and being brought cups of tea by one of her new housemates, made my heart both lift and fill a little with sorrow. All the new and old possessions carefully packed in boxes and bags that had seemed so much stuff at home, made a small heap in the room. But there was a sense of openness, of a new start, of this is a space for her to fill with her new life.

Coming back into our home with the empty boxes made me feel that every room looked tired and worn and too full. But that is not surprising – twenty years of family life is tiring, and all the stuff reflects the life and work and leisure of five people. It is as if, like me, our home has stretch marks. But I am proud of both sets and of what they mean.

Jane Banister
Tring Team

Tring Park news



We are delighted to report that four ex-Tring Park School pupils have been named in the first cast of the West End premiere of Frozen. Joe Griffiths-Brown, Hannah Fairclough, Jake Lawrence Small and Matt Gillett, who will all be part of the first cast of Frozen, which will be presented at a refurbished Theatre Royal Drury Lane from April 2021. Joe Griffiths-Brown, who left Tring Park School in 2018, has been starring in smash hit musical

Hamilton. Hannah has previously starred in The Bodyguard. Matthew Gillett has performed in Jersey Boys, Hairspray, Top Hat and Matilda. Jake Lawrence Small has starred in Mamma Mia and Shrek the Musical, the UK tour.

Donna Hayward, director of Musical Theatre Course at Tring Park School, taught all four students. She said: 'They were all very driven and talented students who were, and continue to be, a credit to the school'.

We heard this news over the summer and were delighted to know that they are part of the re-emergence of the performing arts. It has become so apparent in Lockdown that we have really

missed this. Virtual performances and now ones at social distance have been trying to fill the void. Alumni of Tring Park have been very active in this area. The Tring Park Family has been very inspired to hear about all their different projects.

London's Open Air Theatre re-opened their theatre with Jesus Christ Superstar: The Concert. With social distancing, seating capacity was reduced to 390 seats (down from 1,256). Our alumni Drew McOnie is the choreographer and Rosie Fletcher is in the Ensemble of this award-winning revival that has been very well-reviewed in its Lockdown version.

Sarah Bell
Tring Park School

Leaving home



1970

My goodness, was I ready to leave Tring in 1970! I thought there was nothing to do here, no shops of any use, no entertainment; and I wanted

to stretch my wings and escape from the cosy normality that my parents had achieved and the sheltered life I was leading. Even at 18 I was not only anxious to leave Tring and taste freedom, but I also wanted to travel and see the world.

I had decided to be a junior school teacher and been accepted at St Peters College of Education in Birmingham. The reasons I wanted to go there were three fold: it was a city where lots of exciting things happened; secondly I reckoned that if I could teach in a city centre I could teach pretty well anywhere; and thirdly, the college had until two years previously consisted of a high proportion of PE students (although I was studying geography, I had wanted to take PE as my subsidiary subject, to continue playing tennis, badminton and other sports I had so much enjoyed at school).



It never dawned on me that my parents would miss me or be upset – what an awful admission. But they had brought me up to think for myself, be self-reliant and allowed me in the previous two years to do as much as I wished. I had travelled to Germany on my own, worked in the summer holidays at the RMR Silk Mill factory, a restaurant, builders office and so on. My dad had left school and come down to London

from South Shields at the age of 16 in 1938 and seemed not to be worried that I was, at 18, moving to a college that was only 100 miles away. Mum, I realised later, was not so happy. She had lived all her life in Tring, and never ventured away unless on holiday with parents or her husband and children.

September could not come soon enough for me. First years or 'Freshers' started college three days earlier than the other students. I packed all my clothes and shoes, a few text books, camera and radio into a large suitcase and a holdall. These were all my possessions. Mum and Dad drove me to Birmingham. Dad remarked that he had never driven north of Coventry before! We stopped at Watford Gap service station for a drink.

Finally, we arrived at the entrance lobby of the college and I registered. One of the older students offered to help me with my bags and, with a quick goodbye and kiss to both mum and dad, I was off, leaving them standing there. It was only when I parted from my son, Simon, at his university in Leicester (crying virtually all the way home) that I realised how upset my mum must have been to see me cheerfully leave her at St Peters with no backward glance.

I hadn't done much food shopping, cooking or clothes washing when I was at home but wasn't completely ignorant of the processes. Gradually at college it all sorted itself out. In the first year there was a dining room where we ate, the launderette where we washed clothes and the common room which contained the only communal TV. Then there was the student bar – the hub of all socialising. The launderette was a fun place to be – the first-year lads were hugely entertaining. Not only had they never done their washing before, but seemed puzzled by the whole idea of washing clothes!

I could come and go as I wished to the residential



accommodation and it was here that I stayed out late, got up early and generally did whatever I wanted. Underlying everything I did was the guidance I had received from my parents, although I wouldn't have admitted it at the time! Those three years were special. At no other time as an adult would I mix with people of my own age, similar education and the same ambitions. It shaped my life and I remember so much fun. I stay in contact with the girls I shared a house with in the third year, although one of them died of cancer when we were all in our early thirties.

I never did return to Tring to live with my parents: a few summers and Christmas holidays, that's all. I had learnt to live and survive independently. Mum and dad were always glad to see me for a visit, even an extended one, and I was always glad to visit and see them, but we all knew that I was happier managing my own life as one should when becoming an adult!

2020

How times have changed for today's students: en-suite rooms, tumble dryers, dishwashers, and wi-fi in accommodation nowadays; no grants and huge student debts; but much else is still the same. I watched the news at the end of September and had great sympathy for



this year's new students.

All of these keen youngsters (for they are young) were off at the beginning of a new adventure. Suddenly everything changes: a slimmed-down Freshers week, which is so important, a chance to join clubs, make new friends and generally find the way around the campus. For many, positive Covid testing is leading to lockdown in 'bubbles' with people they hardly know. There is talk of students not being allowed home if they are ill or even being stuck in halls for Christmas. Some universities don't appear to have made plans to support their students as this situation arises. Anyone with any sense knew what would

happen when hundreds of students returned to their term-time homes. The government encouraged this return and the universities were happy to gather the rent cheques. There was limited information on how lectures were going to be carried out and now students find they will be studying online for much of the time! I pray that the authorities will sort themselves out.

This is not how student life should be. The first years away from home as adults should be a time to develop both socially, emotionally and intellectually. I do wonder



how many of the students starting at university this term will stay the course. Yes, I am sad for them, but expect more Covid outbreaks.

Vicky Baldock, St Cross, Wilstone

Freedom and responsibility



'All things are lawful', but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful', but not all things build up.

1 Corinthians 10:23

Our eldest daughter, Eliza, went off to university in September and almost immediately afterwards we got a message, 'We are in lockdown'. One of her flatmates had not been able to taste her cheesy Doritos at breakfast (you have got to love students, haven't you – Doritos for breakfast). They immediately did the responsible thing and the ten of them in the flat began self-isolating. A couple of days later the good news came through that, despite the loss of taste, the Covid-19 test was negative. Student life could resume. Freedom was restored, or at least freedom in 2020's version of Freshers Week, where mingling is illegal, and you can only go anywhere in a group of six people, and you have to give your contact details if you want to enter a pub. If it is restricted a little for Sheffield students, then it has been a very different experience elsewhere. Our news showed us images of 1,700 students in Manchester being 'locked in'.

This year has proved challenging for all of us as we balance freedom and responsibility. I am the type of person who normally regards rules to be at best suggestions, but I find myself now in the ironic place of being gate keeper, and deciding on rules that we are going to keep in our churches (or not).

For me, the Bible has always essentially been about three freedom stories. Firstly, we have the exodus

story. Set deep in pre-historical times, the story gives the people of Israel their identity. It is God who set them free. This freedom is part of their self-identity. Then there is a strange kind of naivety. One can summarise a lot of the next section of the Bible as 'if we disobey, bad stuff happens; if we behave, good stuff happens'. This isn't freedom, because if you are hit with a big stick if you don't obey – it is more like coercion.

The second freedom story marks an end to this. After a great deal of misbehaving, the people of Israel end up in captivity in Babylon. On being set free once more, there is a much greater understanding of God's justice and how that defines our understanding of freedom.

The third great freedom story is the Jesus story. Here we are given a new kind of freedom: freedom from sin. It may seem like we have to be good, to do the right thing, but all of this comes from a new life in Christ.

Freedom has never equated to doing whatever we like. Would we want to be free to exercise our lust, our greed, our pride, our anger, whenever we wanted to? Maybe just for a while, but I am not sure we would like that version of ourselves. Once we are able to overcome sin, we find true freedom and a better self. As Paul says, we can do whatever we want, but will it actually be beneficial? Why not do what I like if I do not feel at risk from Covid-19? But could I live with myself if my actions killed Granny?

Freedom has always been limited. The greatest limiter on freedom is when our exercising of free will impacts on the freedom of others. Do I have the right to

play music as loud as I like if it deprives someone else of their peace? When does freedom become selfishness? It can be fraught with complexity. For example, in modern society I have the right to call myself a woman if I feel that is who I am; but do I have the right to make other people call me a woman when I am obviously a bearded man? My children would answer yes to the second question: I am less convinced.

So am I kidding myself when I think I am someone who views rules as suggestions? Back in pre-Covid days, my ideal Saturday afternoon was to meet some friends and share a couple of pints watching Tring play rugby at Cow Lane. But could you imagine rugby without the laws of the game? It would be a riot. However, as grumpy middle-aged men on the sidelines, we moan about the referee and stupid new laws ruining the game. The vital question is: why were the new laws brought in? Was it for player safety? Was it to speed up the game and to make it more fun? There is a reason for the rules.

Covid-19 has forced all of us to reassess our understanding of freedom and responsibility. How much are we prepared to curtail our own freedom for the good of others? I suspect the question for all lawmakers is the one that St Paul posed – do all laws build us up? Are they helpful? Are the rules and laws we have to live by genuinely for the good of all, or is it a case of those in power cementing their privilege through the laws they enact? If laws do not set us free, then surely they should go.

**Huw Bellis
Tring Team**

Sliding doors



a strange thought.

If Covid-19 had happened when I was 18, I would have gone to a different university based on teacher assessment. The course of my life would have dramatically altered. It's My predicted grades were all those you might expect of a conscientious girl with few interests outside her church and academic work. I had 11 good O Levels and took English, Latin and History at A Level. I even got school prizes for them! I had a conditional place at York University to read English. But I was one of those 'surprise' students who underperformed and didn't get all the expected grades. (It was devastating at the time.) I might have done Classics at a different university through clearing (but why?!); in fact, I waited a year, got a job (it didn't even occur to me to travel the world) and then started a 4-year degree course in Canterbury which was combined with teacher training. I got a good degree, met my husband there, decided not to be a teacher and went into publishing instead; and you know the rest of the story.

If I had gone to York, I might still have married but it wouldn't have been Jon. I might not have adopted and wouldn't have my four much-loved and very different sons. I might have had a career but it might not have been in Christian

publishing. I would have different friends. I almost certainly wouldn't be attending St Peter & St Paul's Church, working in Tring and editing Comment magazine (lucky you!). I might not have become a foster carer.

So many 'ifs'; so many choices hanging on a particular set of results. Even along the way there were many other pivotal points on which my life might have turned. I might have been an awful teacher! We might have accepted our childless situation and not adopted (Tom would have had a completely different life with a different family; James, Jo and Ben would never have been born, Ana, Hannah and Catherine would not be part of our extended family...). My parents might not have both died suddenly but lived with us and no doubt changed the course of our later lives.

Did I make the right choices in my life? (I know better than to begin a sentence at home with 'I wonder whether...' or 'Do you think that...? My husband is a scientist and doesn't do speculation!)

You may be familiar with the 1998 film 'Sliding Doors'. The film explores two possible storylines in which different events ensue from whether the main character catches or misses a train. Then there is also the 2013 film 'About Time' where the main character discovers that all the male children in his family have the ability to time travel – until (spoiler alert) he has a child of his own, and by going

back in time to spend time with his now deceased father, the child that is born to him is no longer the same child...

But perhaps you are more familiar with the story of the biblical King David, who falls in love with the beautiful Bathsheba and arranges for her husband to be killed in battle so that he can marry her and hide the fact that she is carrying his child. How could that ever be part of God's plan for David? Read on a little and you find that David and Bathsheba lose that child, causing David to suffer deep depression; but another of their children, Nathan, is the ancestor of a very famous descendant, Jesus himself. Go back a few generations and you will find that Rahab, the sex worker who hid the spies inside the walls of Jericho, is also in Jesus' family tree; as is Ruth, the loyal 'foreigner' who took care of her mother-in-law, Naomi.

I am no theologian, but I suspect that God knows that we don't always and will not always get things right; so his plans for us may not always pan out according to Plan A. There is, however, a Plan B which brings about other good things for us to do. As Ephesians 2 verse 10 tells us: 'For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do'.

(Feel free to send in your own article to the Editor if you want to discuss the place of predestination or free will!)

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul

Piano and More



It was lovely to be back playing live to an audience, both in St Peter & St Paul's Church and live streamed, when I sat down at the piano on Sunday 13 September at 3.00pm. This was the first Piano and More live concert since March this year. There had been recordings, which had been streamed very successfully on the church website – Rebecca Whiteman skilfully put together a programme showing how versatile she is, playing cello, piano and flute seemingly at the same time;

Helen Godbolt recorded herself playing Britten on her cello in the church during a thunderstorm; and I played a recital which included Bach, Beethoven and Rachmaninov in the church, which was ably recorded and put together by Vivianne, Peter and Zoey Child. This wonderful family team also enabled the September concert to be live streamed, which was welcomed by many. It meant that my parents on Anglesey and their friends across the road could watch it, as well as regular Piano and More concert goers who did not feel able to attend in person. Many thanks to the Childs!

So – back to that Sunday afternoon. I felt a real sense of excitement, as well

as nervousness – after all, it had been six months since I had played to a real audience! As soon as I started, though, it all fell back into place, and I just loved being able to communicate through the music to those listening. A masked audience is interesting, because it's not possible to see whether they are smiling or, yawning, but the applause was genuine and I think that everyone enjoyed it!

Helen Godbolt will again be playing in St Peter & St Paul's on Sunday 8 November at 3.00pm. There are more concerts planned for the future, which we really hope can happen.

Anna Le Hair
St Peter & St Paul

Stephen Hearn
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Ordained in a warehouse in Watford – very 2020



It has always seemed odd (but good!) to me that at significant events in ministry – ordination, licensing at a new

parish – my friends and family are invited. Before I was ordained, whenever I began a new job my family didn't turn up on my first day! But, of course, an ordination or a new start of any kind in ministry isn't ever only about the person being ordained, but about a whole community of faith in a particular place – and the wider community too. This year's ordinations have needed to be smaller occasions than usual, at least physically. But being streamed across the airwaves (or internet-waves?!) has meant that more people than usual could be present at these services.

On Friday 25 September, Soul Survivor Watford hosted the ordination of Sarah Marshall as priest in the Church of England. Sarah will continue to minister in the Tring Team Parish where it is a delight to work with her. Along with Jon Stevens, a pastor at Soul Survivor, Sarah made her ordination vows; she promised, with God's help, to do the many things that are part of telling the story of God's love.

I am a bit cheeky to refer to Soul Survivor Watford as a warehouse – although that's exactly what it once was. It is, of course, a thriving church that has introduced many people to Christ, and we are thankful for their hospitality in hosting this ordination service. As I was



at an ordination, I enjoyed contrasting the building at Soul Survivor to a cathedral, and found some interesting features.

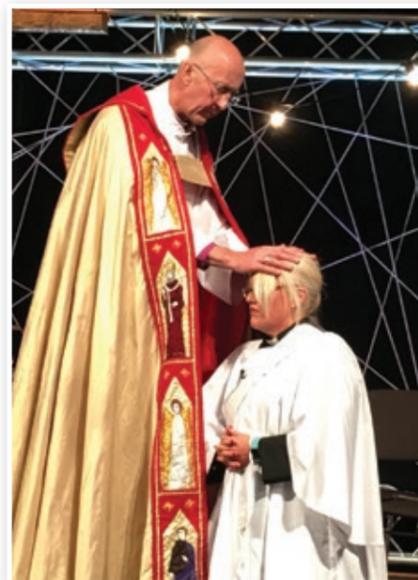
Finding light in the darkness has been key for many this year. The shadowy ceiling of Soul Survivor is punctuated by fairy lights – little spots of shining light. The whole service seemed filled with light: the lack of singing and the small numbers didn't stop the liturgy and the music being drenched with the light of Christ. As we were reminded in the service introduction: 'God calls his people to follow Christ, and forms us into a royal priesthood, a holy nation, to declare the wonderful deeds of him who has called us out of darkness into his

marvellous light'.

This banner 'Welcome Home' seemed apt for a priesting. All vocations in all their various shapes are a 'welcome home', which is not to say that they are always comfortable or easy. A vocation always says, 'life is about far more than just me'; every vocation meets a need in the world. Maybe there's a particular challenge in this for you?

Sarah, as we promised on that Friday in September, we will pray for you and encourage you. We welcome your ministry amongst us as priest and we give thanks for the many gifts you share with us. May God continue to bless you.

Michelle Grace, Tring Team



A very special day



I thought that as an occasion, being ordained Deacon last year would take some beating; however, my Priesting ceremony just about managed to achieve that!

The venue and setting was in itself incredible, and I'd like to share a couple of personal moments that meant a great deal to me too.

The most profound moment had to be when Bishop Michael anointed my palms with oil, making the sign of the cross. Looking down at my hands I was reminded of the scars Jesus bore on his hands and the sacrifice he made for us all. It made me focus on how dedicating my life to his service was the very least I could do! I am often reminded of that great hymn, 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross' (which was played at the ordination), and in particular the line, 'love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all'. This was particularly profound to me at this moment.

There were, of course, many other special moments during the service, but actually I have to say that the people were the next most important aspect. Looking over to my close family and

friends and knowing they were there to cheer me on, felt incredible, in particular Chris, Samuel and Noah, who have always been my biggest source of strength and support. Sitting right behind me were Revds Huw Bellis and Michelle Grace, and at home Revd Jane Banister and all the Tring Parish congregation, family and friends watching on the live stream. It's actually quite overwhelming and humbling when I think about all the support I had on the day, whether there in person or in spirit.



Again I got the chance to don my ordination stole, hand-stitched by Juliet Hemingray, an immensely talented designer (along with the rest of her team) who created something very personal for me. The design follows the words



of Jesus in Matthew 4:19: 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people' and Hebrews 6:19, 'We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul'. Hence my stole contains both fish and an anchor.

What made it even more special on the day was that Tring's very own Janet Goodyer created a face covering to match the stole theme and made from extra fabric I had kept from my wedding dress some eighteen years ago! I remain in complete awe of such talented people: sewing is most definitely not one of my gifts!

I'd like to offer a huge thank you to all those who held me and my family in their prayers and to those who contributed to my Priesting gifts: I was given a Home Communion set and an oil stock for anointing the sick and dying. Thank you, with all my heart.

Sarah Marshall, Tring Team



My world war

The preparation for the war that I experienced began in 1938 with a packed hessian haversack and gas mask being put under the stairs just in case of evacuation of children in London's East End to a safer area. This was a necessary precautionary measure to avoid casualties from an attack.

This was avoided until Saturday 2 September. I was despatched from Paddington Station to Wallingford, then in the county of Berkshire.

Our school, Malmesbury Road Junior School, was evacuated lock, stock and barrel to Wallingford and I returned to London in the Spring of 1945, almost six years later. These were formative years that set my path for life, developing a love for nature and freedom, the countryside and natural beauty wherever it could be seen.

I remember the quick goodbyes at the railway station to parents, and the excitement felt: an adventure, I thought, and it was: some grand, some not so grand and some not so good at all and the last couple of years the house I lived at was a happy home despite being an all-female household, with two men away at war, one in Italy and one in the Middle East.

My first home was Wallingford Castle, a Victorian house on a Saxon site by the riverside. The house had formal gardens, paddocks and rolling parkland and the old castle ruins together with a keep and moat hugely exciting where I learned no end of information and enjoyed doing so. I stayed here and looked after myself but supervised by a head house maid, a lady from Bridgewater called Irene Matthews.

There was quite a staff of servants: cook, boiler and gun attendant, butler, pantry maid, housemaids, kitchen maid, scullery maid, gardeners, chauffeur, farmer and his wife, while the household consisted of the lady of the house, her husband, three daughters, one son and one grandson, his nanny, Miss Bromley, and a guest from the Little Boltons in London, Cornelius Charles Paine and his parlour maid, a son-in-law at sea and another in France (who was killed at Dunkirk). I was an additional guest for two and a half years. Although my home was very comfortable and I had an equally comfortable life, the change of lifestyle was vastly different and life in the country seemed enchanted to me with lots of things to do and learn. We had horses, cows, dogs, poultry of many kinds and the wild life in the grounds was interesting birds of prey and other birds too, rabbits, frogs, hedgehogs and badgers could be easily seen and the river was full of fish.

When I was 11, I was told that I had to move on as the responsibility of a young girl was not acceptable any more as the town was full of troops from overseas and airmen from Benson Aerodrome just across the river. I was duly moved on to a Lady Severn in Winterbrook who had a lovely house and garden. This was temporary as she had already decided to close the house and live in a hotel for the duration.

The next two houses in succession were horrid and I was very unhappy and asked for another place and after some months of turmoil I was moved again to a Mrs Nellie Walters in St John's Road. She

had two daughters and one, a married lady called Blossom, was particularly kind and fun. She delivered milk each morning and helped on the farm in the afternoon. Her husband was a signaller in the Durham infantry serving in Italy.

My last Christmas away was the best, an all-female household, five persons and a day that I've never forgotten. We had goose for our Christmas dinner with all the trimmings followed by Christmas pudding and custard. The pudding was given a glass of brandy and set light to and then we raised our glasses and toasted the absent menfolk and peace in Europe at long last. One of the ladies remarked that there were fairies sitting on her spoon. Her husband was in Burma she told us, so we drank another toast to Mr Honey's safe return.

I returned home, a new temporary home as we had lost our comfortable house in an air raid during the Battle of Britain when the docks and surrounding area was carpet bombed. We lost our dog and my goldfish but my mother had been at work and my sister in a neighbour's shelter at the time.

The next part of my youth was a real challenge of readjustment. I didn't have the use of a bathroom again till I was married. We managed, however, and I lived at home until 5 November 1955.

My reflections on the war years have never changed – mellowed perhaps. Lots of children returned home to no schooling available; some had been killed or injured in air attacks. Evacuation of children unaccompanied by a parent was not ideal, but often it was thought to be necessary. We were so fortunate not to be invaded with all the consequences that could have brought.

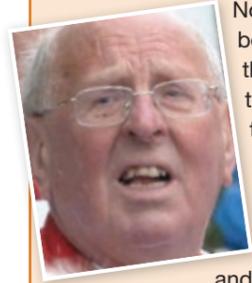
Peggy Bainbridge
St John the Baptist, Aldbury

A beginners' guide to...

We are starting a new mini series in Comment which demands brevity! Whether you know about baking, biodiversity, bellringing or ballet, economics or ecology, John's Gospel or justice – imagine you are explaining what is important about that theme known to you to someone who knows nothing about it in only 10 sentences.

The Editor

Remembrance



November has long been associated with the remembrance of the departed. Since the eighth century All Saints Day has commemorated the saints known and unknown, and later, in the tenth century, the following day was established as All Souls Day when we remember all the departed in general. Since the end of World War I, 11 November, the anniversary of the signing of the armistice, has been kept to remember those fallen in war. As we all well know, the numbers of those lost and killed were enormous, and general repatriation of the dead (only possible at first for the very wealthy because of the expense and difficulties involved) was out of the question. This meant that the focus of remembrance was not a grave but a memorial, and we are all familiar with the national memorial of the Cenotaph (meaning 'empty tomb') in Whitehall and the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey. More recently the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, funded by the Lottery and millions of individual gifts, was opened in 2001, founded as a living memorial to those who died in conflict.

So it was that after World War I cities, towns and villages all over the country, as well as schools, colleges, universities, companies and regiments, planned memorials for the young men who never came home. These memorials included hospitals, alms houses, community halls, statues, and gardens as well as more conventional monuments of soldiers, angels, lych gates and so on. There are rare cases, and readers will think of Puttenham, of villages called 'Thankful Villages', where after World War I, all the soldiers returned home.

There was a time when Services of Remembrance seemed to attract fewer people as the veterans and their families grew older, but support was revived as numbers of those killed in war increased and people started to value a special day for Remembrance on a national scale. Local organisations joined in the Parades, with the Royal British Legion and veterans' associations. I sometimes

wonder if God likes lists – we read out lists on Remembrance Day and on All Souls Day as well as at other times. Each name represents a person. We all, living and departed, are known individually to God.

My earliest memory of a war memorial is of watching a stone mason adding names in the churchyard of Flockton, in Yorkshire. The mason told us that RIP meant 'Rise, if Possible'. We believed him, though readers will know that these letters stand for a Latin phrase which means 'May he/she/they/ rest in peace'. Years later, on a visit to Germany, I was struck by the fact that while on British war memorials World War I names greatly outnumber those of World War II, there, it is the other way around.



Over half a century I have taken part in various services and seen many different memorials. One of the most memorable occasions was a visit I made with Jane to part of the Somme where her grandfather had been wounded and his cousin had been killed. We visited the grave of the latter and were forcibly struck by the contrast between the prevailing peace, quiet and stillness compared with the earlier chaos, noise, mud and smell of battle. Many of the graves bore the inscription 'Known only to God'. At Thiepval we saw the monumental arch with the names of thousands with no known graves. It was all a very dramatic and salutary reminder of the price paid by so many.

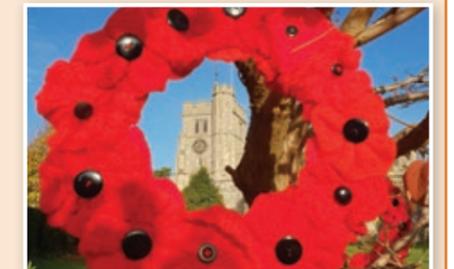
When I first became a vicar I had two country parishes where the communities had different views about memorials. One had a cross by the church door, and, inside, a lectern given by a family

who lost three sons. The other village had a non-religious monument distant from the church and by the riverside. In another parish the memorial was not a cross but a broken pillar. I well remember a phone call to tell me that the memorial had been vandalized: I had to explain that the broken pillar was not damaged but was a symbol of lives broken by war.

In my last parish there was a memorial set in a quadrangle around which almshouses had been built. We marched from near the church (about half a mile distant) through the town to stand around the cross for the service. At first we marched to a band, who played for the hymns, but latterly the music came from the vicar's ghetto-blasters on a tape compiled by the curate. I had to finish the Parish Eucharist promptly, rush to the nearby British Legion hall and lead the procession carrying the ghetto-blasters under my cloak. One year they started off early and I had to half-run to catch up with the end of the procession. But we ended in the right order, marched back and the parade was dismissed right outside the door of the Vicarage! Now, living in St Albans, I daily pass war memorials on the walls of houses commemorating the men from individual streets. These carry a crucifix and a list of names. The idea came from a Canon Glossop, who himself lost two sons in the Great War, and was a great benefactor to the cathedral and city.

This year, at the end of the Parish Eucharist in a small church, I shall go to the memorial on the wall of those from that church who died. I shall read out their names and pray with the congregation. I have no personal connection with any of those listed, but I shall find it very moving to think that behind each name is a life lost and a family bereaved and torn apart. 'Their name liveth for evermore.' May they rest in peace.

Martin Banister, St Albans Cathedral



War diary of a Jewish refugee



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

Aldbury. Her late mother,

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

25 December 1938

Lots of news, good and bad. Things in Belgium are very tense and Delli and Max are still in prison in Germany. Ruthi is trying to get out and Mana is ill. Regina and Simon struggle on, and Berta works with children, but, like me, doesn't earn any money.

But I love every minute here. The children are lovely. There were a few new carers who were not friendly at first, probably not liking my well-established role in the Stadium, but it's all come right now. My relationship with the Committee is good, because they appreciate my input. For Chanuka, the children gave a lovely performance. It could just have been Esslingen! I was so happy with the reception we got from the parents, the Stadium, and the Committee.



3 March 1939

I'm still here in Zbaszyn... How much longer? The thought depresses me sometimes, but otherwise, there are many good things. I meet many lovely and interesting people – nice men, too, but only as friends! My life is just spent being with the children, with so much love to give and receive. The Stadium has more staff, so my day begins at midday now. The performances are still my forte – sometimes I involve other people too. I have become secretary of the teaching circle, where there are language lessons and music etc. and I teach English, which profits me the most. Everyone's contribution is important to life here in Zbaszyn... but still, why don't I meet the 'right one', my 'one and only'? I have a crush on Dr Zimmet, a young Rabbi, but he's keen on a beautiful young girl! There's Dr Tannenbaum... he seems to like me, and we talk a lot together (he invited me to an important Committee meeting). Then there is 21-year-old John Mendelsohn... extremely intelligent and Professor Ginsbart's secretary.

A lot of people are leaving Zbaszyn daily – some through Germany, or going directly to the countries for which they were lucky enough to get permits. Zysner and Zimmet are leaving tomorrow, and there'll be a farewell party for them.

I have made attempts to get a visa for England and good letters of recommendation from different quarters should help. Do I want to go there? I don't know. What kind of job would I have to take? I would rather go to Belgium, where the family have found me a job in a children's refugee home – it's just what I would love, yet, I may end up as a domestic servant... Of course, my knowledge of English would benefit me in England...

9 April 1939

Spring in Zbaszyn... nearly as lovely as in Esslingen! I am sitting by my window, and the sunshine is brilliant! I look out onto the beautiful lake, and the woodland behind it. Below are little houses, fields and green countryside... even the sound of a train in the distance reminds me of Esslingen! There seems to be hardly anything missing for my sense of contentment... my lovely work and the children, friends, and the beautiful landscape of Zbaszyn. Yes, it has turned into a second Esslingen! How lucky can I get? Or am I so undemanding and so easily contented that a camp can make me feel like this... yes, happy! I don't mind spending the spring here, whereas a town like Antwerp, or any town, with all its social obligations, fashion etc. is really not for me... Everyone is so kind and friendly to me... I never thought it would happen again, after Esslingen!

But, how long will life in Zbaszyn last and what then?

13 April 1939

Spring... it was always the time of year that made me feel light-hearted and happy... I remember it well from when I was much younger, such bliss, when I used to walk to school through the old cemetery at the end of our street, and I was also always riding my bicycle everywhere – oh how many spring-times ago?

Here in Zbaszyn it feels the same, spending all day in the playground with the children, and the weather is wonderful, sun and more sun! Dare I say

that I'm happy?! I receive lovely letters from Antwerp, saying that they've found a children's refugee home where I could work... fifty children in a Villa, far from town, just the right place for me! But permits are hard to come by, and there is no end to Zbaszyn just yet.

18 April 1939

We are working on quite an ambitious children's show at the moment, which will take place in the 'Schuetzenhaus' – I manage to produce a new performance at least once a month, which keeps the children fully occupied – they love it as much as the parents and the large audience of people from the mill and barracks etc. This time there are other people working with the children too.

It begins with the children aged between 7 and 13 years old, in what I call a 'Spoken Choir', reciting a poem by Morris Rosenfield 'We were not always the folk that cried' – the children really understood the meaning of it after I told them about Zionism's Theodor Herzl, and the ambitions of the Jews in Palestine. These children are like those I used to lead for Habonim in Germany. Once a week, we sing Hebrew songs and talk about Zionism. Led this time by Weindling, a young Cantor, and I do the Canons, which have up to four parts, sung in a round – they're lovely, if they come out right!

Wilhelm Busch's 'Max and Moritz' is a sweet duet, which I used to sing with my sister, Ruthi, performed many times before, it's always a great success. Then there are little plays and poems, and our solos – the children show great talent and musicality with whatever I give them to do, and there's enough material to fill a two-hour programme. We've even had to repeat it twice in some places, because the audience loved it so! It brought me a lot of appreciation, in particular from Sally Strumfield, who worked professionally on the radio in Frankfurt, writing and producing programmes for children.

July 1939

The Kindertransport has started, and I've been promised the chance to chaperone one in the near future. Papa has been lucky enough to get a visa to London, through relatives in Antwerp, but as he insists he won't go without me. It has been arranged that as part of my work I can also go with many of the Stadium children on the boat to London, England. Since I have no permit to stay in England, though, I am most likely to return to Zbaszyn, along with the two doctors and nurses. My uncles and cousins have nowhere to go, but my 89-year-old grandmother has recently been allowed to go to Posen, to an old age home, 'a safe haven' they said. Safe? She has never been heard of again.

Warsaw, 24 July 1939

The day has come: with my father and many children from the Stadium we boarded the train to Warsaw. The parting of the children from their parents was heartbreaking. I do what I can, a young mother-figure for my children. Strumfield, Mendelsohn, Schulinka and Rutta Jacobowitz have been allowed to wait in Warsaw for their visas to London. The children, my father and I are staying in a disused school, in makeshift dormitories. Every day one of the rooms is disinfected, because of the infestation of fleas and lice. But these few days have given me the chance to explore the beautiful town with Strumfield – his mother lives in the Jewish quarter in the Lezno. Mendelsohn has cousins there too, and we have spent some time together.

OtwoŃ, 1 August 1939

Destined for our ship in Gdynia, we are here for a few days in this beautiful Spa town, where we have been put up in a home for children who are sadly retarded.

Gdynia, 1939

Before boarding this lovely big ship, the 'Warszawa', all the children were examined by the Red Cross, their hair

was cut very short, and their heads disinfected in case of lice. Everyone was very excited, most having never been on such a big boat or seen the ocean before... what an adventure! Yet, every night, I go from cabin to cabin to comfort the crying children, who are missing their parents so much. There is talk of Germany's aggression towards Poland. Will we reach the safety of London?

England, 1939

After five days of stressful crossing, we arrived in the East End harbour of London. What an amazing sight greeted us, when Tower Bridge lifted to allow the 'Warszawa' to sail through to reach the dock – London! The press were there, and representatives of the Jewish Polish Committee.

Dr Zeitlin took us for a meal in an East End restaurant, and later, we met the many well-meaning Jewish couples in a large hall, who were waiting to see the children, to offer them homes and take them into their families. Charitable as it was, it felt to me like a 'cattle market', I'm sorry to say. Was this child prettier than that one? Or, was this one more appealing than another? I had a big confrontation with a couple who wanted to take only one of the Krenzler twins... holding them both firmly by the hands, I refused any such offer! In the end, they found a home where they could stay together.

The Committee insisted that I should be allowed to stay with my father at the home of his guarantor, Silberstein, who owns a restaurant in Whitechapel. As Papa left for Belgium after a couple of days, I can take his place and as talk of war with Germany grows, I am considered as a 'friendly alien' anyway!

I'm waiting for the return of the 'Warszawa' which has left with the Polish doctors and nurses

There has been just one more Kindertransport, which also luckily brought Strumfield and my other friend in time, before war broke out ...

Nothing has ever been heard of the rest of my family in Poland.

Escaping to the country

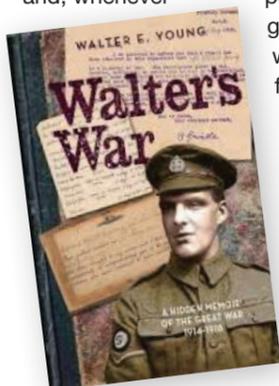


The first time I ever heard the word 'Tring' was when I was a very young boy at 7.00am in Euston station in 1934.

I spent my early years growing up near the Archway in North Islington and for a day in the country my father would make sure we were up very early to catch the tube from the Archway to Euston to catch a train before 7.00am in order to benefit from the cheaper 'workman's ticket'. Before the train steamed out, an announcer would give all the stations we were stopping at and always end with the end of the line – Tring. We never went that far as our stop was at King's Langley and I never visited Tring until our family moved out of London in 1975.



Where were we going? The story starts when my father was demobbed out of the Army in 1919 after spending three harrowing years in the trenches in France, escaping death a myriad of times. (His story can be found in 'Walter's War', Lion Hudson.) He was awarded a small gratuity and in 1922 heard of a farm in Chipperfield being divided up and sold in plots of one acre each. Although born and working in the city as a Post office sorter all his life, he loved the countryside and, whenever



possible, would go for long walks in the fields, lanes and woods in the Chipperfield area. Some of these may have happened when he was training as a Territorial

at Abbott's Langley in 1912. He bought one of the plots, part of Frenches Farm in Scatterdell Lane for £50. From then on he would go on his days off with my mother and a friend (they married in 1923) for a 'day out in the countryside'.

When my brother and I arrived we would soon go with them. But, it meant a walk up from King's Langley station and then uphill for about three miles, the last part cutting across five fields to the lane. For those who know this area you will know that the entrance to the lane is a narrow opening coming from Bovington and goes for about a mile to end up as a cul-de-sac in some woods. Dad's plot was three plots up from the woods.

This was a long walk for a 3-year-old and, of course, the same again when we returned in early evening, but it was a day of sheer delight in the middle of nowhere, you might say. As, over the years, trees, shrubs and bramble took over, it was a day of hard work trying to keep it clear. Dad had a wooden shed put up for tools and shelter in what became the name of our plot 'The Hut'. A small brick hut was added in the 1940s and the water laid on to the site. At the top end, bordering on fields, a bomb had landed and left a sizeable crater in a copse where we would play.

In the adjacent plot, the owners had set up a railway carriage which was intriguing for us. I could never work out how they brought it down this very narrow lane which was never meant to be a road. We never had a car (or telephone or computer or any of the modern gadgets, I am glad to say), so there was no quick way to The Hut, but, as my brother and I grew older, we did get there by bike and later I went on a motor bike.

We have spent days and sometimes weekends there with friends and enjoyed the camping experience although there was never a toilet, but we could light a fire. Most days meant an attempt to clear the young trees and bushes that had taken over. My father attempted to grow some vegetables and fruit, but it was a hard struggle. I was always amused by his journey back on one occasion when he shovelled up horse manure along the road into two large straw bags in order to put it on his allotment at home. I always wondered whether the other passengers in the train gave him some hard looks!

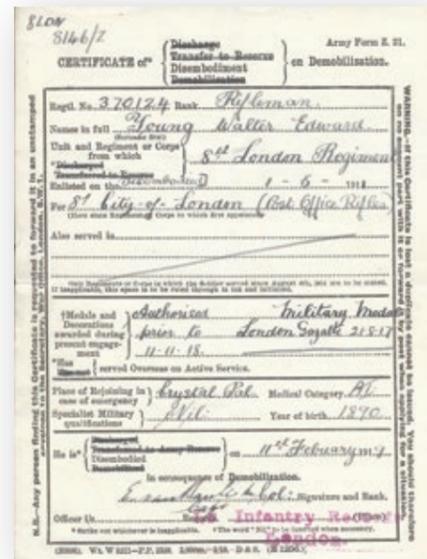


Sadly, Dad died in 1957, not that long after he retired, just when he was hoping to spend more time at The Hut and also



when we could have taken him by car. I was sure that the days he spent there were cathartic as he struggled with grim memories of his wartime experiences, such as being bombarded with shells for ten hours for days on end, once being buried alive, but fortunately dug out just in time. The quiet times and the peaceful surroundings helped him to be positive, although mentally he never got over those dangerous times.

John Young, Akeman Baptist Church



What happened on the road to Damascus?



We – the members of the Parish Book Group – have invested quite some time in studying the thoughts and works of St Paul during the last year. In the winter we

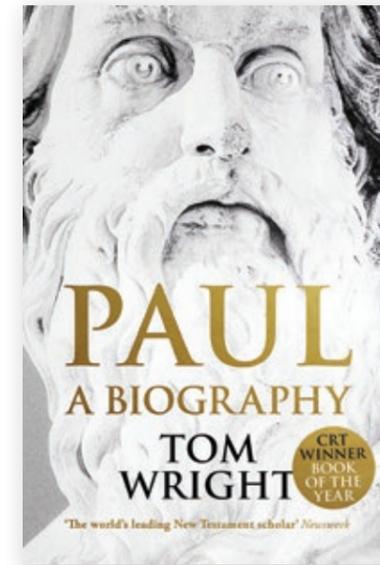
enjoyed reading 'Phoebe', the delivery of Paul's epistle to the Romans turned into a story; last autumn we read 'St Paul, the misunderstood Apostle' (the title says it all). In September we focused on 'Paul: A Biography' by Tom Wright. Bishop N T Wright, to give him his proper name, is a New Testament theologian and a prolific writer and thinker.

We might be inclined to use the phrase 'Damascene conversion' to characterise an abrupt and complete change in direction and thought. However that, according to Tom Wright, is to misunderstand what happened to Saul, as he then was. Wright bases his argument on a comparison of what Saul/ Paul said and did before he travelled that road with what he said and did afterwards. Saul, in becoming Paul, did not abandon his zeal for the Jewish scriptures and traditions – centred on the Torah and the Temple. What he saw in that (literally) blinding vision was that the completion of the Jewish narrative, starting with Abraham and working through Exodus and so on, was that Jesus – the carpenter who died a criminal death but then conquered that death – was the long-awaited Messiah, the fulfilment of the prophecies.

Wright reminds us that Paul spent a decade after the Damascus Road experience, thinking, working, praying, before he set off on his mission of travel and writing. He then effectively took on two institutions – the Roman Empire and the Jewish church – and told them repeatedly and in detail that they were both wrong. He was no towering prophet – quite a small undistinguished person, scarred by the beatings he suffered, awkward and argumentative in manner, determined and yet vulnerable. It should be no surprise that he encountered opposition, from Jews who saw him as a traitor to their traditions, and from the Romans who saw him undermining their deification of Caesar. Yet Paul's work was crucial in laying the foundations of the Christian church which still witnesses to

the faith that he expounded.

Book Group members shared their reactions to 'Paul' in our September meeting. Mostly, we were daunted by the length of the book (430 pages plus notes), finding it rather wordy for what was billed as a popular biography. Several of us felt that 'Phoebe' was more effective in helping us to imagine what it was like to receive a letter from Paul in the middle of the first century. The book did however improve our understanding of Paul by filling in his personal



background and various life events. It also gave the context and timing of each of Paul's epistles. We felt that the volume could almost serve as a reference when reading individual epistles.

Jon Reynolds, who led our consideration of this book, invited our views as to whether St Paul would fit into the Anglican Church today. Mostly we thought yes, as we are a broad enough alliance and able to accept a wide range of attitudes to our shared Christian faith. There was a view that Paul would be impatient with us, for not having sufficient urgency and zeal to share the good news of the Gospel with those who mistakenly worship today's worldly gods.

Our September session was a pilot of a hybrid session, with six people actually present in church, and others joining by Zoom. It was a pleasure for those of us able to be together in person, harder work for the 'Zoomers'; further refinement of the electronic wizardry will aim to improve that for next time. Our October meeting will be over by the time this edition of Comment hits the newsstands, but on 22 November we shall meet again, probably to discuss Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Please get in touch to join our friendly and informal discussions.

**John Whiteman
Tring Team**

TRING CHARITIES
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ALMSHOUSES IN TRING

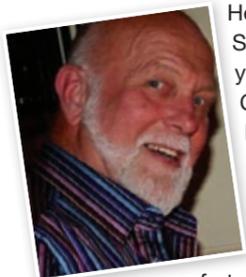
From time to time, one and two-bedroom bungalows become available to let, for people who currently live in Aldbury, Long Marston, Marsworth, Pitstone, Puttenham, Tring, Wigginton or Wilstone.

Applicants, one of whom must be aged 55 or over, must not own their own home or have savings in excess of £16,000.

The average weekly maintenance contribution (equivalent to "rent" for housing benefit purposes) is £104 for a one bedroom property and £123 for a two bedroom property.

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Letter from Orkney



Hello, Tringsters! Stop groaning. As you know from Carrie's report last month, I had an extremely close shave with the Grim Reaper lately but fortunately when St Peter saw I was heading his way, he just could not put up with the aggravation and chat so I was rejected and sent back, so here I am again in rude good health.

Winter is flickering on the horizon with dark cosy nights and crackling fires to look forward to. I really don't mind Orcadian winters; I find them exciting and invigorating. Bright sunshine one minute

and lashing tempest the next, then as suddenly, back to calm. The last of the fodder bales are being taken in as quickly as possible and the winter ploughing will start soon. We have eight Suffolk Ewes in our front paddock doing a magnificent job of cutting the grass, and they look so lovely, chunky and cuddly with black heads and sticky-out ears. They stare a lot, standing at the fence and staring at us across the lawn with ears horizontal, sometimes for up to fifteen minutes. Jasper stands on the lawn and stares back but as soon as they move forward he runs indoors: so much for being our attack and guard dog.

Tonight's dinner is going to be a 'Date Night' so I am required to do something tasty. I have decided to make up an

Antipasti to start followed by a smoked fish pasta. I have bought a 'Westray Wife' cheese – a delicacy made on the Isle of Westray and Carrie's favourite, then finally a Danish cinnamon confectionary eaten with Yoghurt. I have listed how I put together the Pasta which I assure you is very tasty and also one of Carrie's favourites. I have to try to get into her good books somehow!

I must apologise for not providing a photo but I made this for our 'Date Night' and was so starving by the time I finished cooking and changed my togs that I piled in and forgot! 'Sorry.' It did go down a treat with a bottle of Fleurie on the side (Aide-de-Chef).

Mac Dodge
St Mary's, Kirkwall

Smokey Pasta for 5 people (or two like me)

Ingredients

1 x smoked salmon fillet
6 x small squid, roughly chopped
1 x small smoked haddock fillet
8 x king prawns, roughly chopped
1 x red pepper, finely chopped
1 x green pepper, finely chopped
10 chestnut mushrooms chopped
4 x cloves of garlic, finely chopped
75gm spaghetti per person
Bottle of good hollandaise sauce
1 x onion finely chopped
Schwartz Italian herbs
Salt and pepper & olive oil
Parmesan cheese, grated

Method

- Place the smoked haddock in a frying pan of boiling water for 1 minute, drain then remove the skin. Peel the skin off the salmon with a little encouragement from a sharp knife. Flake both fish into thumbnail size pieces. Chop up the squid and tails also to thumbnail size pieces.
- Place a little oil in a frying pan and cook the fish mix for two minutes, turning regularly. Set aside.
- Heat a large saucepan of water with a teaspoon of salt and tablespoon of oil and bring to the boil. Place the pasta into boiling water and cook until soft-ish to taste.
- Meanwhile place two tablespoons of oil into a frying pan and cook the garlic for 1 minute, then add the onion and cook for a further 2 minutes before adding the rest of the vegetables with a good tablespoon of Italian herbs, a teaspoon of salt half of pepper. Mix in well and cook until al dente.
- Take off the heat, add the fish plus two good tablespoons of Hollandaise sauce, fold into the vegetable mix and place back on a gentle heat for 2/3 minutes to allow all the flavours to infuse the vegetables.
- Remove from heat till spaghetti is cooked. Drain thoroughly in a colander or sieve and place back into the saucepan with a tablespoon of olive oil and mix into the spaghetti so it looks nice and glossy. Serve spaghetti onto hot plates and with the back of spoon create a nest which is then filled with the fish and vegetable sauce. Top with a few basil leaves and serve.
- Place grated Parmesan on the table for your guests to help themselves.

School – but not as we know it



As we all know, Covid-19 has impacted our lives massively. At Tring School we have been off school for six months and, going back, there are many rules and measures that have been put in place. It makes no sense to me how at school a whole year group can

bubble up but outside of school we can only be in groups of six.

Returning to school has been very strange. We have a huge one-way system to separate year groups but this is also due to the school having major building works. This is a huge pain as you could have a lesson next door to the classroom you were just in and if the system is in your favour you can just go there or you might have to walk around the whole school – which is very irritating. I

understand it has been put into place to keep us safe but nevertheless, it is very annoying.

Overall I am glad to be back at school as it's nice to see friends and to have actual lessons; but I will miss being able to wake up later and to be on a call to my friends all day via my computer!

I hope vaccines or treatments for the virus are found soon, so we can try to return to normality.

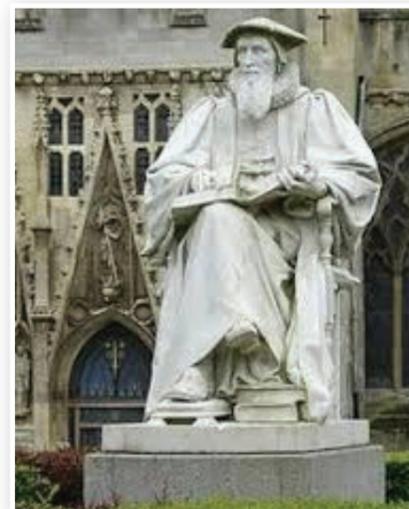
Nicholas Kinsey, St Peter & St Paul

Richard Hooker – a local boy made good?



Who is the most important person in the history of the Church of England? Henry VIII for the break from Rome? Archbishop Thomas Cranmer for his prayer

book? Elizabeth I for re-establishing the church after Mary's reign? Archbishop William Temple, probably the most significant Archbishop of the last century who steered the church through a difficult period and prepared the church for the changes to come?



While on a recent visit to Exeter Cathedral, another fairly unknown candidate came to mind as I looked at the statues in the Cathedral Close, something regular readers of Comment will be aware that I am prone to do. This man was Richard Hooker who was Rector of nearby Drayton Beauchamp in the sixteenth century.

Richard Hooker was born near Exeter in 1554 during the reign of Mary Tudor.

He studied at the local Grammar School and then at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. While at Oxford he annoyed the vice president of the college and was punished by being sent away for a month with his friend, a certain Dr John Reynolds (no relation). He became a Fellow in 1557 and then deputy Professor of Hebrew in 1579. In 1584 he married Joan Churchman. (Isaac Walton, his biographer, said he was 'ill-tempered and neither rich nor beautiful'). As Fellows were not permitted to marry, he went to Drayton Beauchamp.

In 1558 Elizabeth had succeeded her half-sister Mary, England was bitterly divided between Catholics and Protestants as a result of various religious changes initiated by Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary herself. Henry VIII had broken from the Catholic Church and the authority of the Pope, appointing himself Supreme Head of the Church of England. During Edward's reign, the Church of England adopted a reformed theology and liturgy. In Mary's reign, these religious policies were reversed, England was re-united with the Catholic Church and Protestantism was suppressed.

The Elizabethan Settlement was an attempt to end this religious turmoil. The Act of Supremacy of 1558 re-established the Church of England's independence from Rome, and Parliament conferred on Elizabeth the title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The Act of Uniformity of 1559 re-introduced the Book of Common Prayer from Edward's reign, which contained the liturgical services of the church. Some modifications were made to appeal to Catholics and Lutherans, including giving individuals greater latitude concerning belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and permission to use traditional priestly vestments. In 1571, the



Thirty-Nine Articles were adopted as the confessional statement for the Church of England.

Hooker was the great explainer and defender of this Settlement, notable in his book 'Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity' published in eight volumes between 1593 and 1662, the last volume appearing a lifetime after his death. Polity is the form or process of government of an organisation. This book was admired by his adversaries, both the Puritan and the Catholics. Even Cardinal Allen, who fled first to France and then to Rome as he could not agree to the Elizabethan Settlement, admired Hooker and his explanation of that very settlement. John Keble, the Oxford Movement Priest and hymn writer, was also an admirer.

Hooker was a quiet and humble scholar. He did not have the dramatic story of martyrdom that Cranmer had; he was never a Bishop, let alone an Archbishop; but he left a large mark on the Church of England and was admired by those who disagreed with him.

Jon Reynolds
Tring Team

A beginners' guide to teenagers



Buy lots of cereal and milk. Buy more cereal and milk.

Get a dog that doesn't like routine: it will be walked either by all the teenagers individually on one day or by none of them.

Before you open your mouth to say 'Please put clothes in the dirty basket,' or 'Please bring dirty mugs and plates back to the kitchen,' etc. etc. think, 'Will anyone be listening?' The answer is always no.

As with small children, nap when you can. You never know when you will need to pick someone up at midnight from an unknown location.

If you have several teenagers, then at any moment, at least one will be exhausted, one will not be talking to you, and one will not be talking to the others.

Prepare to be surprised – occasionally – they do listen and respond.

Buy yet more cereal and milk.
Jane Banister, Tring Team

Looking at loss...



In previous articles in this occasional series I have mentioned my belief that two-dimensional graphic art is arguably the most effective way of communicating a message with clarity and intensity. Great events in history seem to serve to demonstrate that point – particularly when they portray painful moments of great loss.

Of course, the life of Christ and in particular his birth and crucifixion are among the greatest events in history. They have been the subject of countless great paintings; from almost all the old masters and also many more modern artists. These works have deep power to move even the hardest heart without words.

Great events in human history

Throughout history monumental artworks have served to communicate the deepest emotions and the most complex messages. It is not just biblical events that are so demonstrated. Historic battles, revolutions and uprisings,

tragedies and triumphs have all been the subject of masterpieces which somehow catch the mood of the times. They are particularly powerful in expressing great loss; tragic events that perhaps seem too deep for tears – too tragic for words.

Of course, that tradition has changed in the past few decades. Every major event is now the subject of frenzied news coverage worldwide from the moment the story breaks. We no longer wait for a drama to play out to a conclusion but rush to interpret it minute-by-minute through broadcast coverage, social media and endless comment and editorial analysis. Perhaps sometimes that creates audience fatigue.

It now seems unlikely that the uprising in Belarus and the tragic events in America leading to the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement will ever become the subject of great paintings; complex masterworks which express for all sides the tragic essence of what is happening and what it means for mankind.

Three pictures of tragic loss

The three paintings illustrated here all demonstrate the power of art to offer an insight and a political critique that goes right to the heart of society and reveals

the tragic realities without the need for words.

These three paintings are all intensely celebrated and individually famed and can all be seen today in their original glory. Two of them were painted within just a few of years of each other: ‘The Raft of the Medusa’ by Gericault hangs in the Louvre and was painted in 1818; ‘The 3rd of May 1808’ was painted by Goya in 1814 and hangs in the Prado. The third of these works ‘Guernica’ by Picasso was painted in 1937 and is in the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid.

All three works are savage revelations of the cruel reality of the exploitation of a population by those who govern it. Not only are they great art but they are great political statements and in their own way have led to the reconsideration of power structures and the rebalancing of society. With the clarity of their insights they have – without words – contributed to huge changes of attitude and even of governments.

For me the persuasive power of such works lies in the fact that they speak to all sides in any particular argument and allow a gradual understanding of the fundamental truths that lie beneath major events. They turn loss into positive gain.



The 3rd May 1808 – Goya 1814
The Loss of sovereignty and the arrogance of the French led to a major populist uprising. This was brutally put down by Murat. The execution of hundreds of Spanish civilians in Madrid by French Troops led directly to a long resistance and was the beginning of guerilla warfare in Europe.

Of course, literature can also communicate with clarity and subtlety but somehow, for me, doesn't have quite that immediate impact. Much-celebrated though it is I don't believe that ‘The Boy stood on the burning bridge’ has the same power to move public and government attitudes as the ‘The Raft of the Medusa’. Both speak to the same problem of the exploitation of the rank and file by those in authority; but for me

the painting has infinitely more power.

Obviously, the considerations outlined are very much a personal opinion. I do feel that it is very unlikely that the current Covid-19 pandemic is going to result in a single artwork that transcends the everyday speculation and gets to the heart of the matter. There is simply too much constant media noise to allow space for that.

I very much hope that I am wrong.

Perhaps the greatest service that great art does for any of us is to put the major events of human history (whether biblical or political) into a clear context that is accessible to all future generations.

Surely we must all hope that lessons can – and will – be learned. There can be great gains from great losses.

Grahame Senior
St Peter & St Paul



The Raft of the Medusa – Gericault 1818

The loss of a crew through neglect and officer arrogance led to Naval Reform. This painting depicts the outcome of a shocking loss of men in the French Navy after the sinking of the Medusa. The lack of lifeboats and the cowardly self-interest of the officers led to a long saga of murder and cannibalism as the raft drifted aimlessly. The French establishment rejected the painting but it was received with huge acclaim in London.



Guernica – Picasso 1937

The loss of almost the entire population of women and children (the men were mostly away) of the Basque town of Guernica by bombing by the German and Spanish Air Forces led to a re-evaluation of war. In an era of rampant nationalism it contributed to a changing view of warfare as the enemy of humanity – rather than a source of national pride.

A new dawn breaking



Did you know that the dawn breaks in a curve across our country? And that it doesn't go in a straight line from East to West, but varies through the year? OK, I can hear you chuckling! If I'd thought about it before, I should have been able to work that out, I suppose, but once I've grasped what seems a simple idea in childhood, it's difficult to change my conviction!

It's a bit like faith, maybe? I was heartened by Dorothy Townshend's article in the October Comment. I can study around my chosen religion, but it's my experience and my sense of a relationship with God that holds sway. What Charlie Dickenson said resonated with me, too – about allowing Jesus' teachings to direct our steps through life.

These last months have brought many changes in people's lives. Malcolm and I have been lucky to remain well and to be able to keep working throughout. We're acutely aware of so many trying to make the best of their current difficulties: young families in cramped conditions, struggling to home-school, with no garden and with parks closed; vulnerable people fearful of going outside the home; those who, because of dementia, extreme youth or learning difficulties, cannot fathom why all the activities and routines that kept them going have been disrupted; people who find themselves alone for much more of the time than they would choose; people cut off from their work, their livelihood and sense of who they are; others working harder than they've ever had to, in sometimes hazardous circumstances – and many more you could add.

I know that many have rediscovered the natural world and found solace in it. I can vouch for being outside and working in nature – even in poor weather – as an antidote to feeling helpless or besieged. Wasn't it marvellous when the traffic noise stopped? We live quite close to the bypass, and I remember remarking on the first day that it felt like snow without the snow! Bliss! I wonder how many fewer people had asthma attacks because the pollution levels dropped?

But it's contact with others that helps

us feel we're truly living, and the 'social distance' can make all relationships and conversations feel awkward and strange. At first, it was not even possible to go out and do many of the things we might regard as leisure – much of it we still can't do! Trips, clubs and visits were cancelled, but technology gradually stepped in to allow church services and some events to take place, for those of us who have the necessary equipment.

One of these 'events' had been commissioned by the National Trust a year or more ago, but hasty modifications had to be made to allow it to be lockdown-friendly. It was called 'DAWNS' and was put together by artists from NonZeroOne, composer James Bulley, and 'Heritage Open Days'. The idea was, on 16 May, to have leading musicians playing-in the dawn at various sites. Suddenly, in mid-March the plan had to be for the musicians to stay in their own homes, and for sound engineers to mix



them live as the dawn broke over them. And it was to be received by an audience in very different circumstances from anything they had imagined just a few months before.

When our planned 'Nightingale' and 'Dawn Chorus' walks in Suffolk were cancelled, we signed up, with 7000 others, to take part in the DAWNS event as 'watchers and listeners'. So we got up at about 3.30am on that day, tuned in to the live audio broadcast, and were led gently through the experience by an occasional narrator, quietly-spoken and thoughtful. At 3.56am, the music started as the dawn broke over the North-East horizon in John-o-Groats. First was a violin – and not a tune you could hum, but a musical rendition – a feeling – of dawn breaking as it spread across to Northern Ireland, into Wales, through the Midlands and on down to Cornwall. Over the course of an hour or more, we sat transfixed in our chosen position on our

landing, watching for the dawn in the NE sky. The violin was gradually joined by a double recorder, a harp, an overbowed violin, a piano, and hand-pans. (You may have seen Manu Delago, the percussionist, playing hand-pans in one of this year's Proms concerts on TV.)

DAWNS was an unforgettable experience. We were encouraged to think about time, connectivity, life with and without Coronavirus. It was not religious, but certainly felt spiritual. To watch for the first hint of light and gradually see it seeping up through the darkness was very beautiful and comforting. Gradually, colours emerged, and we noticed little details in the buildings and trees outside. We had our window open and could hear the first birdsongs of the day, as they chimed in with the live ones from wherever the musicians were. All our senses were enlivened. The narrator, throughout, was insightful, and something she said towards the end was about hope and the promise of each new day – that, whatever was happening in our lives, dawn would break.

A few nights later, I was awake at around the same time, and went to look out of the landing window to watch again – just for a few minutes. It reminded me of a time when I had sat all night in the chapel at Lee Abbey, and the dawn came as a blessing. It made me smile and I returned to bed and to rest.

Next time you are in a bubble with someone who has a computer, smartphone or tablet, have a look at www.dawns.live website. Scroll down for information or watch a short film about the event. There's also a poster, made of many of the listeners' photos, all taken at the same time. You might find our view among them!

This is a strange time of flux, but I hold onto hope – that governance, decisions, experiences of our lives will reflect what happens as day breaks: not binary and linear, but fluid and nuanced; not discord, but harmony with others and with nature; not governed by our own constructs, but prompted by the Spirit. What can we learn from Jesus' teachings, our relationship with God, and our connections with each other and with the world, to allow Post-Covid-19 to shape up as a new dawn?

Anne Nobbs
St Peter & St Paul

Healing



My reflection is on something that happened a number of years ago, but it is as vivid today as it was then.

Back in 1983 I was still active as a registered guide lecturer in London and throughout Britain with my French and German, as well as Japanese in the early days. I loved it. There were so many friendships over the years. On this occasion I had been assisting at an international Conference for Newspaper Owners across the world. It was a four-day event held in Grosvenor House in Park Lane, London, and I stayed there during the week. There were around 200 participants, and some had brought their wives with them to enjoy being in London. At the end of the conference there was the opportunity for those who wanted to go on a three-day guided tour to the West Country or to Edinburgh. I had been asked weeks in advance if I would be willing to be responsible for

the group going to Edinburgh. I had said, 'Yes, I would love to do it'.

On the Friday morning we went by coach to Kings Cross Station for the train journey to Edinburgh in a first class compartment. There were twenty-seven people in the group, three of the gentlemen with their wives, and representing seventeen nationalities. The train journey was an opportunity to get to know each other.

When I came to the Israeli couple, I spoke of the places we would be visiting, the official occasions we would be attending and the hotel where we were staying, the George Hotel close to Princess Street, and at that time the hotel in Edinburgh. They were pleased and looking forward to it all. It was then that the husband said to me, 'Janet, I have a request: would you please not seat us next to the German couple. We hate the Germans for what they did to the Jews.' I said, 'I will respect your wishes, I do hope you enjoy your stay in Scotland'.

I then went to the two Korean gentlemen seated together. I had the same delightful conversation with them,

and they expressed their pleasure at the opportunity to visit Scotland. And then they made their request to me: 'Janet, would you please not seat us beside the Japanese. We cannot forgive the Japanese for all that they did to us during the war. We suffered greatly'. Again my reply, 'I will respect your wishes. I hope you enjoy your stay in Scotland'.

The first day was the official lunch in Edinburgh Castle with the Governor. I made sure of the seating arrangement. That afternoon we toured Edinburgh. The next day our visit was to the Trossachs. Now

during the journey I had the opportunity to share my love of Scotland with them. At the hotel for lunch there were tables for four, so I let them seat themselves. In the afternoon we got out of the coach to walk down to Loch Lomond. The sun was shining, the landscape so beautiful and everyone visibly happy.

That evening was our last occasion together with a very special visit to Glasgow City Hall, a splendid building. A piano recital had been arranged to entertain us and the tables were arranged in a simple formation together. I let people sit where they wanted. It was a lovely ending to their short stay in Scotland.

Next day we left Edinburgh for London. Time passed very quickly with a lot of joyful chattering. Eventually we were approaching London. It was then to my amazement that I saw the Israeli couple go up to the German couple. They stood and hugged each other. They were close enough for me to hear the Israeli couple say these words: 'You promise you will come and visit us next year? We want you to come. You will come, won't you?'

Then as I went down the carriage another amazing moment. There were the Koreans and the Japanese sitting beside each other, laughing and playing cards. I still see them in my mind's eye, those two amazing moments I had witnessed. The barriers had come down and freed them. It was a moment to give thanks to God for what I had witnessed. For me it represented a 'resurrection' that I have never forgotten.

Janet Ridgway
Sunnyside Church

Let the healing grace of your love, O Lord, so transform us that we may ever play our part in the transfiguration of the world, from a place of suffering and fear to a realm of infinite light, joy and love. Make us so obedient to your Spirit that our lives may become a living prayer and a witness to your unfailing presence. Amen



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My first home



Every time I walk down Tring High Street I see my first home, 27 High Street, Tring. I lived there with my parents and brother for nine years.

Spot the second-floor turret window of my parents' bedroom right on the corner where High Street and Frogmore Street meet: where I stood for many hours looking up the High Street and over the road to Cooper's the chemists, Arthur's Hairdressers and Lovibonds, where they used to sell wine (now an empty Thomas Cook's). I remember standing there while Dad got ready for work looking out for the 387 bus to Tring Station. As soon as it appeared at the top of the High Street next to the old school (where the library now is) I had to shout out and Dad would grab his briefcase and coat and race out of the door and along to the Rose and Crown bus stop to catch the bus. The bus drivers (Mr Smith was one) would wait and knew all the regulars by name.

It was in this little turret window that I recovered from my tonsillectomy when I was seven years old. It was three weeks when I was allowed to rest in my parent's bed during the day and sit in the bay window so I didn't get bored. The traffic and people going about their business were fascinating and kept me out of mum's hair and allowed her to work in the shop below.

The entrance to our flat was in Frogmore Street, just next to the road sign. Step in and go straight along the passage to the back entrance of the toy shop; A. Gates, Toys and Fancy Goods. This was owned by my grandparents.

On the right-hand side of the front door were stairs which led up to our kitchen and living room on the first floor. The living room had a large fireplace. During the winter there was often a fire. Other than that fireplace there was no heating in the flat. Coal had to be carted up the stairs from where I know not. There were three sash windows in the living room, out of one I could see straight up the High Street as we were eating our meals. It was there, at the table, that I was stung by a wasp on my finger when sitting reading my comic, the Beano, when I was about eight or nine. The shock was such that I was terrified of

wasps until I was well into my twenties.

The landing between the living room and the kitchen was large enough to have a low-level cupboard. There were three drawers and three cupboards below them. Dad kept all his paper work and a few tools in the drawers and brother Stephen and I had the three cupboards for all our toys.

Continuing to the second floor, you found two bedrooms and a toilet. There was no bathroom – we washed at the kitchen sink. The biggest bedroom was my parents' where the turret window was to be found. The small bedroom was shared by my brother and I. It looked out onto Frogmore Street, the wet fish shop, Keel's (where a café now is) and 'The George' pub (where Costa Coffee now is). The windows ran with condensation and froze into wonderful patterns in the winter time.

Sundays were special. My mum managed the shop and this was her day of rest or so Dad always said. We had Sunday lunch; (often with tinned fruit and tinned milk for dessert) then dad would take us out into the fresh air regardless of the weather. We went to Tring Park, Pond Close, and the cricket club or to the Lake on the corner of Dundale Road. If it really was too wet or cold we went to 'The Museum'. The animals and insects fascinated and terrified me in turn.

Mum would 'have a rest' whilst we were away. On our return there was always tea ready – sandwiches, bread and jam, cupcakes and tea for mum and dad and squash for Stephen and I. Sometimes we had combined cheese and jam sandwiches or fondant fancies – a real treat. After tea we would play games, snakes and ladders and Ludo. Here I learnt to play the family card games that we still play today at Christmas and Easter. We listened to 'Sing something Simple' on the radio. No television in our family home then.

Then it was bath time. Mum would get out the tin bungalow bath, set it in front of the living room fire and fill with water that

was heated by the Ascot (wall mounted water heater) in the kitchen and on the gas rings of the cooker. She brought the water into the living room in large pans over several trips. I, followed by my brother, got into the bath and was duly scrubbed from head to toe. Dried and in clean pyjamas we went with my mum to the kitchen for our bedtime drink whilst Dad, with extra pans of hot water, would fit himself into the tin bath for his one bath of the week. It never occurred to me what my mum did! (Although later I found out she went to my grandparent's house and whilst we children played in the



garden, she had her weekly bath there in comparative luxury.

In the 1950s, the shop below our flat was an Aladdin's cave of enchantment: a shop full of toys and models, boxes of ancient tin soldiers, plastic soldiers from the World War II, Germans in grey British and American in khaki, cowboy and Indian figures too. There were Dinky and Corgi vehicles in boxes, plastic dolls, guns with caps, cards, stamps, tobacco and cigarettes, fireworks in November, (kept in a tin trunk at night and displayed in a glass-topped counter during the day), Christmas goods after Firework night into December, a regular annual pattern that our family life fitted around. Several times in September I travelled by bus (no.747) to Uxbridge with my mum when she went to order the Christmas toys for the shop. This enormous warehouse was a dream come true.

I learnt to count and read in the shop long before I went to school. I used to stand on a chair next to the counter and when the till was emptied, allowed to put the pennies in to piles of twelve and the

shillings into piles of twenty. The trick was not to knock them over. I would watch mum flick through the notes, at high speed, and scoop up the shillings and florins, bagging them up just like the lady in the bank.

There was a relatively small amount of road traffic in Tring in the 50s but I remember all the outside noises. Friday and Saturday nights being woken up at 'turning out' time at 'The George' opposite, the fire siren going off at the fire station diagonally across the crossroads. I got up to see the fire engine driving out and away to the fire or a practice training session. Periodically the siren was tested when there was no fire at all. (This was the time of the 'Cold War' and the government were expecting the USSR to drop nuclear bombs on us so the old WWII siren was maintained.)

Just along the High Street (Almar Printers today) there was a butcher's shop owned by Reg Salary. Once a

week, early in the morning, cows were unloaded from a lorry and I could hear them mooing as they went into the yard at the back. They never came out! No one ever told me they were there for slaughtering, until I was much older.

I don't think Mum and Dad had a lot of money and they led busy lives.

Mum was (as a working mother) always managing the shop and Dad spent a long day travelling to work in London. As I got older, I was given a good deal of freedom. I played in Pond Close, the graveyard at a time when it was enclosed and raced



up and down Church Lane and West End. I couldn't see that happening now, but in the 1950s Tring was a small place and everyone knew everyone else.

Vicky Baldock
St Cross, Wilstone



Celebrate Christmas 2020 in Tring

Tring Together – local charity, organiser of major town events and dedicated supporter of local businesses and residents, are determined to bring a Christmas celebration to Tring this December.

Our annual Christmas Festival, with over 100 festive stalls and more than 10,000 visitors flowing along the High Street, cannot go ahead but we are working on a new, safe concept which supports local shops and businesses and brings the spirit of Christmas to Tring.

Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th December from 3pm – 7pm we will hold a Covid-secure celebration which incorporates Shop Local Day, Christmas craft market, Christmas shop window competition, Father Christmas, yuletide concerts and open churches. Alongside this will be an online programme of events including festive entertainment, shopping opportunities and more!

Watch our Facebook and Instagram pages for updates.

www.tringtogether.org.uk



Check out the latest Tring Together quiz online to download at: www.tringtogether.org.uk/quiz

Test your friends' knowledge or plan a family Zoom quiz night. If you would like to support Tring Together's work then we have a donate button.

Christmas Quiz coming soon.

Diary Dates

Wednesday 25th November 2020

Group Action Networking Event – online, 6pm – 7.30pm.

Free for all local groups, clubs and charities.

Network with other groups facing similar issues and find out how to they are managing during these times.

To book a place email info@tringtogether.org.uk

Tuesday 8th December 2020

Tring Together BusinessMart Breakfast – online, 8am – 9.30am

£7.50 or free for BusinessMart members.

Join the friendly BusinessMart networking group for a morning of enjoyable but productive networking and the chance to meet new business associates.

"Definitely the best zoom networking I've attended" Sept 2020. For more information and to book your place email info@tringtogether.org.uk

Thursday 21st January 2021

Tring Together BusinessMart Breakfast – online, 8am – 9.30am

£7.50 or free for BusinessMart members.

A unique on-line format of networking where you will have the chance to talk in small groups as well as say 'hi' to the whole room.

For more information and to book your place email info@tringtogether.org.uk

Zoom for the uninitiated



Zoom is one of a number of ways to have a video conference with your friends, family, church, colleagues and customers – anyone you want to see while you

are also talking to them.

Imagine the people on your TV screen talking back at you – and it's something like that.

It's best if you are not in the same room as another Zoom user but you can be in a different house, town or country. If you are talking to someone

in a different country, check the time zone with them carefully or they won't be there!

You can download the app or application onto your computer, Ipad or 'tablet' or your smartphone to hold a Zoom meeting but you need a good broadband internet service to make it work well. Sometimes the screen freezes and the person you are talking to is 'stuck' with their mouth open or with their eyes closed while they are still talking – not anyone's best look.

You can access the invitation to join a Zoom call by clicking a link that is sent to you and by being invited in by the host of the meeting – the person who

originated the call.

It's important to click the right symbols on your screen so the other people can see and hear you. The word 'unmute' has been used more times in 2020 than any other year before (I made that up... but it's probably true!).

It's worth checking that the background behind you is not too distracting or interesting if you want to keep people's attention – or they are checking the books on your bookshelves, that you haven't made your bed or noticing that you haven't washed up!

Annette Reynolds
St Peter & St Paul

Desperate for company



During Lockdown earlier in the year, many of us resorted to the comfort of food and cooking. At some points it was almost impossible to get hold of yeast as

everyone had taken

up bread making; likewise sugar, flour and eggs were hard to get hold of as the whole country had time to imagine themselves in the Great British Bake Off tent. It was one of the few positive things. Without the need to commute, more families were sitting down for a daily meal together.

But what about those living alone? Lockdown and its after effects have been particularly hard for those without family who can 'bubble' with them. I am told that even Meals on Wheels

can't come into the house but they can watch through the window to make sure someone has had a hot meal. Rather than being something of comfort and joy, eating has highlighted some people's loneliness.

Our First Saturday Lunches always used to be an opportunity for those who have been bereaved to get together once a month for a home-cooked meal. We have about twenty-four attendees and a willing group of helpers and drivers. It is deliberately on the weekend as these can often be quieter times. It had to stop in March, but once the government changed the rules from



'two households' to the 'rule of six', we realised that by meeting weekly rather than monthly, we could have a single (very large) table of six and everyone could come once a month.

It has been very moving. As you would expect with any group of people, there are those who have been out and about already but who are pleased to have another activity, there are those not ready to return to anything at all yet, and there are some who are delighted to have been invited because, for the last seven months, they have eaten every single meal by themselves and they are desperate for some company.

If you know anyone living by themselves who may benefit from this service, please get in touch with me.

NB there is a detailed Risk Assessment about how we keep folk safe, but that is far too boring for you all to read; and the last thing we want to be reminded about are more rules and regulations!

Huw Bellis, Tring Team



Useful contacts

TRING TEAM PARISH

Team Rector (Tring & Puttenham)

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

School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

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

School Chaplaincy and Team Vicar

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

Curate

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

Diocesan Lay Minister

Mike Watkin
01442 890407

Parish Co-ordinators

Roy Hargreaves
01442 823624
roy.hargreaves@btinternet.com

John Whiteman

01442 826314
john@tringteamparish.org.uk

Church Wardens

Chris Hoare (Tring)
01442 822915

Ian Matthews (Tring)

01442 823327

Jane Brown (Aldbury)

01442 851396

Ray Willmore (Aldbury)

01442 825723

Christine Rutter (Puttenham)

01296 668337

Ken Martin (Wilstone)
01442 822894

Rev Jane Banister
(Long Marston)
01442 822170

Tring Team Administration

Administrator
Trish Dowden
admin@tringteamparish.org.uk

Janet Goodyer

pewsheets@tringteamparish.org.uk

Hall Bookings

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

Hall Secretary

Barbara Ancombe
01442 828325
Bandb33@talktalk.net

Safeguarding

Jon Reynolds
07712 134370
safeguarding@tringteamparish.org.uk

ST MARTHA'S METHODIST CHURCH

Minister

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

Senior Steward

Rosemary Berdinner
01442 822305

AKEMAN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

Minister

Rev David Williams
01442 827881

Administrator

Emma Nash
01442 827881

CORPUS CHRISTI ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Parish Priest

Father David Burke
01442 863845
davidburke@rcdow.org.uk
www.berkotring.org.uk

HIGH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

Ministers

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

Assistant Minister

Kevin Rogers
km_rogers@outlook.com

Administration/facilities hire

admin@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
01442 824054

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www.justiceandpeacetring.org

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www.berkotring.org.uk

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COMMENT

Editor

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

Distribution

Barbara Ancombe
01442 828325
bandb33@talktalk.net

Treasurer

Chris Hoare
01442 822915

Advertising

Sue Mayhew
0845 8681333

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Kev Holt, Ginger Promo

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

COMMENT DEADLINES

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

Crossword puzzle answers From page 34

ACROSS

- LINDISFARNE
- COMMENT
- LOOSE
- DEED
- SERGEANT
- GOSPEL
- DONATE
- DECREPIT
- PLUM
- ORIFICE
- EAGER
- BLESS MY SOUL

DOWN

- LUCID
- NUMBERS
- ITEM
- FATHER
- RELIGION
- EBOLA
- GENTLE
- BENEFICE
- GIDEON
- ALLEGRO
- RIVERS
- CLIMB
- MURAL
- VERY

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